

Mental Wellness



What is mental health?

Mental health is defined in different ways. However, upon close scrutiny, these definitions are basically the same, or address pretty much the same issues. Let us look at some of the definitions of mental health. One definition of mental health states that it is the level of psychological well-being and the absence of mental illness. Another definition refers to mental health as the individual's ability to function at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment. Mental health is also defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Who is at-risk for poor mental health?

Mental health can and does affect everyday life and relationships. It can also affect physical health and prevent one from attaining a balance between life activities and psychological resilience such that it can become difficult for one to cope with the stressors and challenges of life. Thus, all of us are at-risk for mental health problems. Yes, there is a genetic predisposition to poor mental health. However, anyone can become mentally ill irrespective of age, social background, ethnicity, gender, or level of intelligence. While no group is immune to mental health problems, WHO informs us that the risk is higher among the poor, homeless, the unemployed, persons with low education; victims of violence, migrants, and refugees; children and adolescents; and abused women and the neglected elderly.

What are the early signs of poor mental health (early signs of mental illness)?

There are various warning signs of mental health problems. These signs, or some of them, may appear in a short space of time and may present clues that one is developing mental health problems. The signs include, but are not limited to:

- Using drugs and/or alcohol more than normal withdrawing from people or activities once enjoyed before.
- Too much or too little sleeping; eating too much or eating too little.
- Feeling as if nothing matters.
- Consistent low energy (lethargic).
- Display of unusual emotions; confused thinking, reduced ability to concentrate
- Inability to complete standard tasks; for example, getting to work or cooking a meal.
- Persistent thoughts or memories that reappear regularly; thinking of harming oneself or others.
- Hearing voices; delusions.
- Extreme mood changes of highs and lows.

Most mental health problems do not improve spontaneously or on their own. If not unattended to, they may worsen over time and lead to more serious problems. Therefore, if you or someone close to you displays any of the signs listed above, or any other unusual signs, consult a medical doctor, or a mental health professional immediately.

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Educational and Developmental Psychologist

B.S. (Psych);M.A(Educ. Psych.); PH.D (Dev. Psych).

