

# Mental Health Educational Article

## 1. Introduction

Mental health determines how you think, feel and act. Good mental health is when you feel positive about yourself and cope well with everyday pressures. If you experience issues dealing with everyday problems, it could be a sign of a mental health problem and should be addressed immediately.

## 2. Definition

Mental health is about how people think, feel, and behave. Mental health care professionals can help people manage conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, bipolar disorder, addiction, and other disorders that affect their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Mental health can affect a person's day-to-day life, relationships, and physical health. External factors in people's lives and relationships can also contribute to their mental well-being.

Looking after one's mental health can help a person maintain their ability to enjoy life. This involves balancing their activities, responsibilities, and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

**Stress, depression, and anxiety** can affect mental health and may disrupt a person's routine.

Although healthcare professionals often use the term "mental health," doctors recognize that many mental health conditions have physical roots.

### 3. What Are Mental Health Problems?

This explains what mental health problems are, what may cause them, and the many different kinds of help, treatment, and support that are available. Also guides where to find more information and tips for friends and family.

In many ways, mental health is just like physical health, everybody has it and we need to take care of it.

Experiencing a mental health problem is often upsetting, confusing, and frightening – particularly at first. If you become unwell, you may feel that it's a sign of weakness, or that you are "losing your mind".

These fears are often reinforced by the negative (and often unrealistic) way that people experience mental health problems and this may stop you from talking about your problems or seeking help. This, in turn, is likely to increase your distress and sense of isolation.

How most people know someone who has experienced a mental health problem. They can happen to all kinds of people from all walks of life. And it's likely that, when you find a combination of self-care, treatment, and support that works for you, you will be better. In reality, mental health problems are a common human experience.

#### 4. What Types Are There?

There are many different mental health problems. Some of them have similar symptoms, so you may experience the symptoms of more than one mental health problem, or be given several diagnoses at once. Or you might not have any particular diagnosis, but still be finding things very difficult. Everyone's experience is different and can change at different times.

- **Depression** is a feeling of low mood that lasts for a long time and affects your everyday life. It can make you feel hopeless, despairing, guilty, worthless, unmotivated, and exhausted. It can affect your self-esteem, sleep, appetite, sex drive, and your physical health.

In its mildest form, depression doesn't stop you from leading a normal life, but it makes everything harder to do and seem less.

worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can make you feel suicidal, and be life-threatening.

Some types occur during or after pregnancy (antenatal and postnatal depression) or may come back each year around the same time (seasonal affective disorder).

- **Anxiety** is what we feel when we are worried, tense, or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations.

For me, anxiety feels as if everyone in the world is waiting for me to trip up so that they can laugh at me. It makes me feel nervous and unsure whether the next step I take is the best way forward.

Most people feel anxious at times. It's particularly common to experience some anxiety while coping with stressful events or changes, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** It is a mental health problem you may develop after experiencing traumatic events. The condition was first recognised by war veterans. It has had different names in the past, such as 'shell shock', but it's not only diagnosed in soldiers. A wide range of traumatic experiences can be causes of PTSD.

When something traumatic happens in your life it rocks you to the core. The world is no longer a safe place. It becomes somewhere that bad things can and do happen.

## 5. What Causes Mental Health Problems?

Mental health problems can have a wide range of causes. It's likely that for many people there is a complicated combination of factors – although different people may be more deeply affected by certain things than others.

For example, the following factors could potentially result in a period of poor mental health:

- childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect,
- social isolation or loneliness,
- experiencing discrimination and stigma, including racism,
- social disadvantage, poverty, or debt,
- bereavement (losing someone close to you),
- having a long-term physical health condition,
- unemployment or losing your job,
- homelessness or poor housing,
- being a long-term carer for someone,
- drug and alcohol misuse,
- domestic violence, bullying, or other abuse as an adult,
- significant trauma as an adult, such as military combat, being involved in a serious incident in which you feared for your life, or being the victim of a violent crime,
- Physical causes – for example, a head injury or a neurological condition such as epilepsy can have an impact on your behavior and mood. (It's important to rule.

out potential physical causes before seeking further treatment for a mental health problem).

Although lifestyle factors including work, diet, drugs, and lack of sleep can all affect your mental health, if you experience a mental health problem there are usually other factors as well.

## 6. Do Mental Health Problems Run In Families?

Research suggests that some mental health problems may run in families. For example, if you have a parent with schizophrenia, you are more likely to develop schizophrenia yourself. But no one knows if this is because of our genes or because of other factors, such as the environment we grow up in, or the ways of thinking, coping, and behaving that we may learn from our parents.

Although the development of some mental health problems may be influenced by our genes, researchers have not found any specific genes that cause mental health problems.

And many people who experience a mental health problem do not have any parents, children, or other relatives with the same condition.

## 7. Is Brain Chemistry A Factor?

The human brain is extremely complicated. Some research suggests that mental health problems may be linked to a variation in certain brain chemicals (such as serotonin and

dopamine). But no one understands how or why. Arguments that someone's brain chemistry is the cause of mental health problems are very weak.

But even though there's no strong evidence to say that any mental health problems are caused by a chemical imbalance in our brains, you might find some people still use brain chemistry to explain them.

Reasons for this might include:

- Some psychiatric medications work by acting on chemicals in the brain, and there's lots of evidence to show that medication can be effective in treating some symptoms of mental health problems (although drugs do not work the same way for everyone).
- Mental health problems can feel very personal and hard to understand, so the idea that there could be a distinct physical cause for difficult thoughts, feelings, and behaviors might make it feel easier to talk openly about your experiences and ask for help.

## 8. Conclusion

If the stigma around mental illness worsens, things for people with mental health problems get harder. Worsening stigma means friends and family members are more likely to avoid people with mental health problems, leading to increased social exclusion and isolation.

Increased public stigma, as measured by the Attitudes to Mental Illness survey is closely related to self-stigma, or feelings of shame. These feelings of guilt can lead to people feeling unworthy of getting the treatment they deserve or turning away from social interactions.

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