

Are You Okay?

A 4-Step Approach to
Being Mentally Healthy



Mental Health Programs Programmes de Santé Mentale
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg
Caring for Health À l'écoute de notre santé



Just Care

What do you say when someone asks, "How are you?" or "Are you okay?"

Most of us respond with answers that are fairly general and vague – usually a simple "Fine" or "Okay". We rarely tell people how we really feel and or take time to ask ourselves this question.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself these questions –

- How am I? How am I *really* doing?
- Am I enjoying life or am I struggling and just getting by?
- Am I happy with myself and my relationships?
- Do I feel fulfilled?
- Do I feel my life has meaning and purpose?

These are hard questions to ask and may be challenging to answer. But asking and answering these questions are necessary to ensuring good mental health.

Most people are pretty aware of what goes into being physically healthy and most of us take steps to improve our physical health. How much attention do you pay to your mental health?

What is mental health?

Many people confuse mental health with mental illness. These are actually two different things. Mental health is much more than simply an absence of any mental illness. Good mental health is the sense of well-being that comes from knowing that you can cope with whatever life sends your way. Mental health is about quality of life and finding balance between all aspects of our lives – social, physical, spiritual and emotional.

Are there different degrees of mental health?

Mental health can range from "flourishing" (good) to "languishing" (poor). And unfortunately, many people are "languishing", which means that they simply accept that their present state of mental health is just the way it is and will always be.

But none of us needs to settle for "languishing". If we can recognize our strengths and address those areas in which we struggle, we can ease the strain on our mental health and move ourselves to "flourishing". It is possible for each and every one of us to enjoy life more.

How can we achieve good mental health?

Few people have perfect mental health. We can improve our mental health in the same way that we can change and improve our physical health. We can practice good mental health habits and exercise our strengths and coping strategies. We can build good mental health, one step at a time.

THE FIRST STEP: Get to know yourself

Below is a list of things that define and contribute to good mental health. By answering these questions, you will better understand your strengths, your potential, and those areas that you can change in order to enhance your quality of life.

Emotions – Am I regularly happy and interested in life? Do I smile a lot? Can I tolerate and cope with difficult emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety and sadness?

Self-acceptance – Do I like who and what I am? Can I acknowledge both the positive and negative parts of myself?

Personal growth – Do I recognize my own potential and feel a sense of continued development? Am I open to new experiences and change?

Purpose in life – Does my life have direction and meaning?

Mastery of the environment – Do I address my needs in a positive, constructive and non-violent way?

Autonomy – Do I live according to my own standards and values?

Relationships with others – Do I have warm, trusting and meaningful personal relationships?

Social acceptance – Am I positive toward others and accept their differences? Do I trust people?

Attitudes about people – Do I believe that people and society in general have potential and can grow positively?

Contribution to society – Is what I do every day useful to and valued by others?

Interest in people – Am I interested in people, society, and the world around me? Am I concerned for the well-being of others?

Sense of belonging – Do I feel that I belong to my community and that it supports and comforts me?

Quality of life – Am I mostly or highly satisfied with life overall?

(Source: Keyes, 2007:98)

THE SECOND STEP : **Know your Sources of Strength**

We all have sources of strength, things within us and around us, things we do that help us cope with the many ups and downs in life. These are the things that give us hope and strength, such as:

- Family Support
- Positive Friends

- Mentors – people who guide, teach and challenge us.
- Healthy Activities – leisure and creative activities, sports, exercise, reading, and things that distract and entertain us.
- Spirituality – those things that provide meaning and purpose, and the way we experience a connection to others, to nature, the earth and the world around us.
- Mental Health – having a positive outlook in life; using humour; having fun; accepting your strengths and limitations; taking good care of yourself; managing stress and taking breaks.
- Access to medical services and support.
- Generosity – giving back to your community, being interested and helping others, volunteering.

What are your sources of strength right now? Which areas would you like to strengthen and pay closer attention to? Over the last year or two is there an area that has gotten stronger?

(Source: Sources of Strength, www.sourcesofstrength.org)

THE THIRD STEP: **Ask others when you need help**

Depending on how you respond to these questions, you may need to ask others for help. This is an important step in achieving good mental health. It takes courage to let people know how you are and what you need. It is your way of reminding yourself that you matter, and that you are willing to take care of yourself and your needs the best way that you can.

[See the back of this pamphlet for a list of Community Resources]

Everyone deserves to be happy and content.

THE FOURTH STEP

Check in with yourself regularly

Achieving good mental health and flourishing is a life-long process. So, you need to check in with yourself regularly to make sure you are taking care of your body, mind and spirit, and finding balance in your life.

Five Ways To Well-Being*

Simple things can make a big difference to our well-being. Researchers in the United Kingdom identified five actions that can significantly improve our well-being.

Connect – Connect with people around you. Invest time in building relationships at home, work, in your neighbourhood and community as these connections will support and enrich your life.

Be Active – Discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your mobility and fitness.

Take Notice – Be curious. Savour the moment and be aware of the world around you. Practice being aware of sensations, thoughts and feelings without judgement.

Keep Learning – Try something new or rediscover an old interest.

Give – Do something nice for someone else. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer. Get involved.

* Source: www.neweconomics.org

There is no health without Mental Health.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2004

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Klinik 24 Hr. Crisis Line

786-8686

WRHA Mobile Crisis Service

940-1781

Manitoba Suicide Line

1-877-435-7170

Post-Trauma Counselling Intake

784-4059

Drop-In Counselling Information

784-4067

Family Violence Counselling

784-4208

Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line

1-866-367-3276

Enjoy life more: get help to de-stress

www.de-stress.ca

Trauma Information

www.trauma-informed.ca

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

www.wrha.mb.ca

Klinik Community Health Centree

www.klinik.mb.ca

