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Mental Wellness

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry

Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse

Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

Eating or sleeping too much or too little

Pulling away from people and usual activities

Having low or no energy

Feeling numb or like nothing matters

Having unexplained aches and pains

Feeling helpless or hopeless

Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual

Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared

Yelling or fighting with family and friends

Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships

Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head

Hearing voices or believing things that are not true

Thinking of harming yourself or others

Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Mental Wellness	1
Mental Wellness Tips	2
Benefits of Mental Health	3
Suicide Hotline	4
Culture & Wellness	5
Mental Wellness.....	5
Mental Health Affects.....	6
Helpful Coping Strategies.....	7

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Examining what mental health is.
- Mental health warning signs.
- Looking at Mental Wellness Tips.
- Ways to maintain positive mental health
- Community resource sharing.
- Traditional healing
- Stress relief activities



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH ALLOWS PEOPLE TO:

Positive mental health allows people to:

Realize their full potential

Cope with the stresses of life

Work productively

Make meaningful contributions to their communities

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

Getting professional help if you need it

Connecting with others

Staying positive

Getting physically active

Helping others

Getting enough sleep

Developing coping skills

“To be healthy as a whole mental health plays a role” ~ Fresh Quotes~

MENTAL WELLNESS TIP #1



Mental Wellness Tip #1 is to take time to do things you enjoy- especially in nature. Being outside, breathing fresh air, reduces stress. ~Columbia River Mental Health Services~

Mental Wellness Month Tip #2



Mental Wellness Month Tip #2– Take care of your spirit. This can mean many things depending on the individual.

Care for your spirit by connecting to what you consider meaningful/holy. You may find this connection in God, the Creator, in yourself, in other people, in nature, or art. This focus offers many possible benefits, including better mood, less anxiety and depression and even fewer illnesses.
~CRMHS~

Mental Wellness Month Tip #3



Mental Wellness Month Tip #3– Take some me time. Making time for ourselves is important. It doesn't hurt if you have a four legged friend tag along! ~CRMHS~



Mental Wellness Month Tip #4– Physical Activity.



Mental Wellness Month Tip #4– Physical Activity. Exercise is an effective way to improve your mental health. Regular exercise can have a profound impact on depression, anxiety, ADHD, and other mental health disorders. It also relieves stress, improves memory, helps you sleep better, and boosts overall mood. ~CRMHS~

Mental Wellness Month Tip #5– Connect with others & create joy!



Mental Wellness Month Tip #5– Connect with others & create joy! Having connections with others is a crucial element in protecting our mental health. Someone to share with, someone to laugh with, can keep us grounded and can help us gain perspective. ~CRMHS~

WHAT DOES CULTURE HAVE TO DO WITH HOW I FEEL & WELLNESS?

Each and every one of us is born with spirit. One's spirit desires to live life to the fullest. Culture is the facilitator of spiritual expression. It is the foundation of a 'good life'.

Indigenous people have a wealth of knowledge from which to draw to know how to live in balance, to care for themselves, and others. This knowledge remains with the people, despite experiences with colonization, residential schools and racism.

There is not 'one' culture in Canada, because culture is defined by the land, language and Nation of the people. Indigenous traditions, ceremonies and practices connect us to the culture. These connections help to create wellness in our lives by balancing the spirit, heart, mind and body. We know that when culture is present in our lives, we experience higher levels of wellbeing. ~cultureforlife.ca



“It's not selfish to love yourself, take care of yourself and make your happiness priority. It's necessary. ~Mandy Hale~

Where are you on the mental wellness continuum?

Consider these key characteristics when assessing your own mental health:

- Are you troubled by distressing thoughts or feeling?
- Can you meet all the challenges and responsibilities of your day-to-day life?
- Do you find yourself dwelling on things you can't change or predict?
- Are you able to bounce back from hard times?
- Can you manage the stress of a serious life event?
- Are you able to juggle the many aspects of your life?
- Do you recognize your strengths and acknowledge the things you're not so good at?
- How do you manage change?

When distressing mood, problematic thoughts or behaviors continue over time; are very intense; or are interfering in your life, it's a good idea to seek support and advice.

- Ongoing low mood much of the time
- Overwhelming intense emotions
- Intense fears of situations or things
- Loss of interest in activities
- Low energy, low motivation, tiredness
- Difficulty getting through daily tasks
- Sleeping problems
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Ongoing thoughts that life isn't worth living

Community Re-sources:

Suicide Prevention Center :911
Teen Line: 1-800-668-6868
Paramedic Emergency Medical Services Unit: 911
Mental Health Crises Response: 1-306-446-6507
Hospital Emergency Services: 1-306-446-6570
Parents Help Line: 1-888-603-9100
Catholic Family Services: 1-306-445-6960
BRT6 Health Centre: 1-306-937-6788
Mental Health Services: 1-306-446-7177
Health Line: 1-877-800-0002
Kaneweyimik Child & Family Services Inc: 1-306-445-3500

What affects our mental health?

- ♦ **What we eat.** Our mental wellness can be affected by what we eat – some food choices contain nutrients that help our brain functioning; other foods may have a negative impact.
- ♦ **What we drink.** Caffeinated drinks like coffee, black tea, and cola can temporarily increase energy level, but they can also increase nervousness, irritability or restlessness. If you drink alcoholic beverages, know why you choose to drink and how much/often you drink.
- ♦ **Exercise.** Exercise is a great stress reliever. It reduces muscle tension, improves blood flow and floods your body with feel-good chemicals.
- ♦ **Sleep.** Good quality sleep rests the brain. Too little sleep affects our moods, concentration, and energy to get things done.
- ♦ **How we breathe.** Breathing is something we take for granted – something we just do. However, how we breathe can make a world of difference.
- ♦ **Medications.** Medications are sometimes a part of our lives. Work with your doctor so they are effective for you and side effects are minimized.
- ♦ **Relationships.** Positive relationships with friends, family and co-workers contribute to mental wellness. People close to you can provide support through difficult times, build your self-confidence, and remind you of your skills, abilities, qualities, and accomplishments.
- ♦ **Taking breaks.** A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental wellness. Do something you're good at and enjoy. Enjoying yourself can help beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem. What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? Is there an activity you'd like to start doing again?
- ♦ **Social media.** Our lives seem dominated these days by cell phones and the Internet, enabling us to communicate more messages and more often with others. Think about how your social communications contribute to your mental wellness or if you should consider making some adjustments in how you use social communications. ~Fraser Health authority~

What can I do to stay mentally well?

Some people find it helpful to be involved in the following activities to stay mentally well. Of course, we recommend that you find activities that work best for you.

- ♦ Walk or take a stroll in a wheelchair or walker.
- ♦ Connect with friends or family.
- ♦ Visit the local library.
- ♦ Read a book.
- ♦ Eat healthy foods regularly.
- ♦ Have regular check-ups from your family doctor.
- ♦ Take your medications as prescribed.



~Fraser Mental Health Authority~

WHAT COPING STRATEGIES CAN HELP ME?

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF UNABLE TO GET THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES OR YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLING THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY:

1. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE STRUGGLING.
2. BE GENTLE ON YOURSELF.
3. REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT.

MANY PEOPLE AVOID SEEKING HELP BECAUSE THEY FEAR WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN AS A RESULT OF REVEALING THEIR DIFFICULTIES. FINDING SOMEONE YOU TRUST AND SEE AS A SAFE PERSON TO TALK TO IS KEY TO GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU NEED. SOMETIMES JUST TALKING WITH SOMEONE IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED. TALKING CONFIDENTIALLY TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST CAN HELP YOU:

- FEEL LESS OVERWHELMED AND ALONE.
- FIND RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR DISTRESS.
- SORT THROUGH A PROBLEM OR LOOK AT A SITUATION IN A NEW OR DIFFERENT WAY.
- IDENTIFY FEELINGS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN BOTTLED UP.
- EXPLORE OPTIONS OR SOLUTIONS YOU HAD NOT THOUGHT ABOUT. ~FRASER HEALTH AUTHORITY~



AREN'T SURE HOW YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOUR CULTURE?

If you find yourself unsure how to connect with culture, you're not alone.

Many Indigenous people have become disconnected with culture, for a number of reasons. Reconnecting with culture can be the most powerful and meaningful thing you can do for yourself and your wellbeing.

We know the power of language in our own wellness. Language gives us perspective on our own lives and the world around us. It is at the heart of our connection with culture. But it's ok if you don't speak your own language. There are many options today, from enrolling in a language class, to downloading an app; learning your language, starting with just a few words, just got a lot easier.

When trying to connect with your culture, it is important to know that many cultural activities require a cultural teacher to understand why we do what we do, such as learning the protocols during a sweat lodge ceremony or rite of passage ceremony. But there are other activities, such as social dancing, social singing, smudging and praying, that we can be done on your own.

Here are some suggestions:

- ⇒ Take a language class
- ⇒ Sit and have tea with an elder
- ⇒ Learn how to hunt/fish/tan hides
- ⇒ Learn what we call the animals that are hunted
- ⇒ Have your dreams interpreted
- ⇒ Take part in a cultural activity, social or ceremonial practice

- ⇒ Listen to and share stories
- ⇒ Learn a social dance
- ⇒ Learn how to harvest and use natural foods and medicines
- ⇒ Spend time on the land
- ⇒ Visit with medicine people and traditional practitioners
- ⇒ Take part in give away dances/ceremonies
- ⇒ Learn the Creation Story
- ⇒ Take part in a talking circle
- ⇒ Help cook a feast for your Ancestors/Loved Ones who have gone on
- ⇒ Sing
- ⇒ Smudge
- ⇒ Take part in a cleansing/sweat lodge ceremony
- ⇒ Learn traditional teachings



The list can be endless once you start to Connect with Culture. But the important thing is starting... ~<http://ltureforlife.ca/>