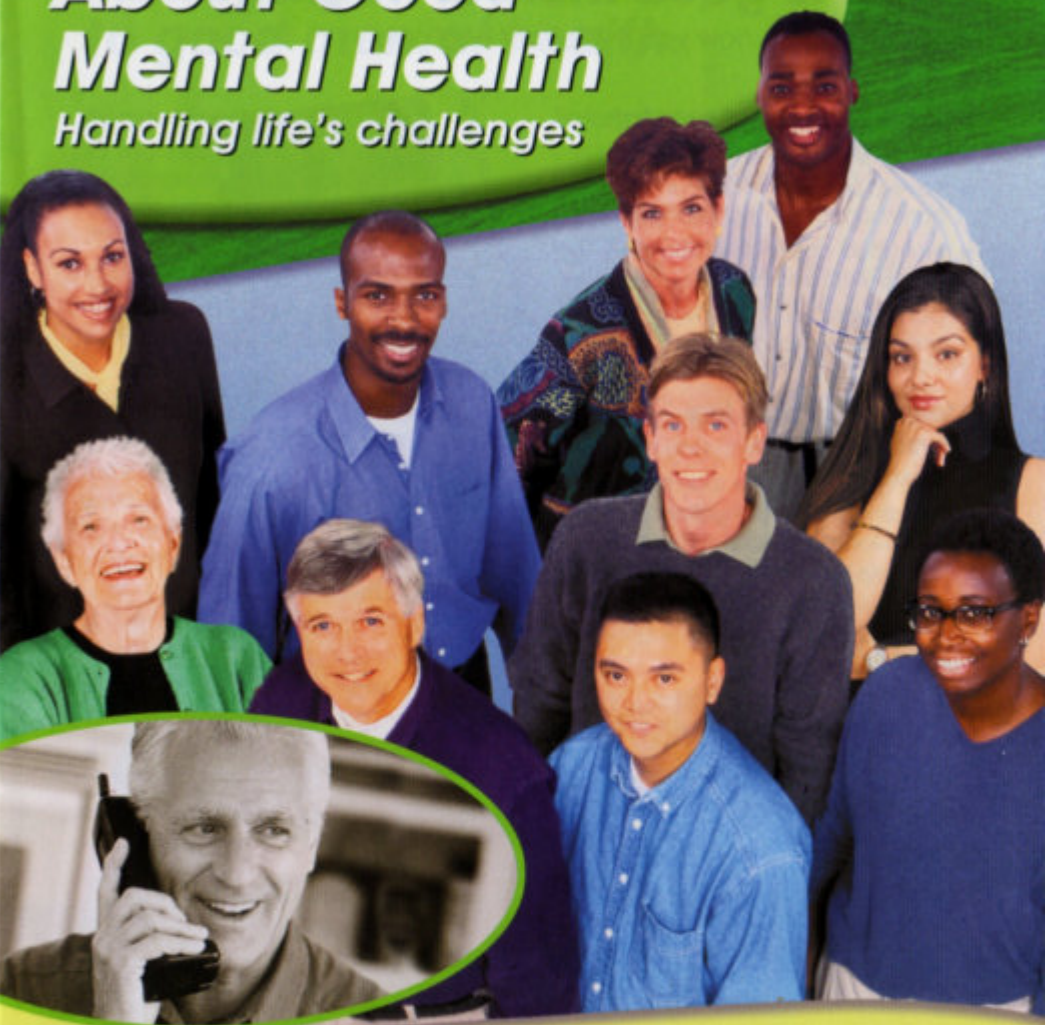


About Good Mental Health

Handling life's challenges



What is good mental health?

It has to do with how you think, feel and act.

People with good mental health generally:

- have a positive attitude and can manage life's challenges
- feel good about and care for themselves and others
- act responsibly in their work and in their relationships.

Mental health is like physical health.

For example:

- just as most people get colds occasionally, most people feel down or sad now and then
- you can't prevent every physical illness—or every emotional upset
- like physical health, mental health is important for your well-being.

Good mental health helps you expect the best out of life—and make it happen!



Please read:

Talk to your health-care provider! This booklet is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health-care provider.

The photos in this booklet are of models. The models have no relation to the issues presented.

2018 Edition

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Channing Bete Company, One Community Place, South Deerfield, MA 01373

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(03-12-8)

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Managing stress is a key to good mental health.

Some stress is normal.

It's your body's way of dealing with a challenge or a threat (anything from a traffic jam to losing a job). But too much stress can cause:

- physical health problems (such as heart trouble or headaches)
- mental health problems (such as depression or anxiety).

You can manage stress.

Here are some tips:

- When possible, try positive ways to avoid stressful situations. (For example, if rush-hour traffic bothers you, try going to work earlier or later.)
- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust.
- Organize your time. Set aside time for things you enjoy.
- Learn to relax—for example, try deep breathing or meditation.

Take care of your body.

Good physical health can also help relieve stress and tension. For example:

- Get enough physical activity. (Consult your health-care provider before beginning any exercise program.)
- Eat a variety of foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber. Limit saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars.
- Manage your weight. The key is to find a healthy balance between physical activity and what you eat.
- Get plenty of rest. You should wake up each morning feeling refreshed.



If the stress in your life seems overwhelming, ask for help!
(See page 7.)

Positive self-esteem is also part of good mental health.

How you see yourself

has a lot to do with how you think, feel and act.

- When self-esteem is high, you're more likely to feel satisfied with life and to overcome problems with confidence.
- If self-esteem is low, you may feel that life is beyond your control and be less able to deal with stress.



To help build self-esteem:

- Take time to identify and develop your strengths and talents. Everyone has them!
- Do your best. Strive to get the most from your abilities—but don't put too much pressure on yourself.
- Be willing to improve. Understand your needs and wants so you can work toward them.
- Set your own realistic goals. Don't compare yourself to others. Instead, set your own standards for success and strive to reach them.

Using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs doesn't solve problems.

These substances can have a negative effect on mental health.

Using alcohol or other drugs can make problems worse.

Substance abuse can:

- lead to problems with work, relationships and the law
- cause addiction or symptoms of withdrawal
- damage your health.

Seek help right away if you have a problem with alcohol or other drugs.

Limit alcohol— or don't drink at all.

Ask your health-care provider what's best for you. (People who should not drink at all include pregnant women, women who are planning to become pregnant and recovering alcoholics.)

Don't smoke.

Smoking causes major health problems, and these can lead to stress. If you use any tobacco products, get help to quit.

Never use illegal drugs.

Also, follow your health-care provider's instructions for any medication, vitamins or dietary supplements that you take.

Dependence on alcohol or other drugs is a disease. Reach out for help if you feel you're losing control.



Anyone can experience problems with mental health.

Feeling down occasionally is common.

You might experience:

- lack of energy and interest in everyday life
- changes in sleep or appetite patterns
- sexual problems
- trouble making decisions
- moodiness
- confusion
- feelings of helplessness or hopelessness.

Get help for severe symptoms.

If symptoms are extreme, long-lasting or start to affect your job, relationships or physical health, seek help. The sooner you do, the better—it's a sign of strength!

Support is available.

Depending on the problem, you may find help through:

- counseling—qualified professionals can help you sort out your feelings
- self-help groups—others who face similar problems can provide their support
- medication—it may be prescribed by a health-care provider to help relieve certain symptoms.



Don't let a treatable problem stand between you and good mental health.

Some questions and answers

about mental health

"What about mental illness?"

Mental illness is not the same as poor mental health. Some mental illness may be inherited or caused by chemical changes in the brain. Most mental illnesses can be treated. Common types are:

- mood disorders—such as depression (symptoms include prolonged unhappiness) and bipolar disorder (great excitement alternating with depression)
- schizophrenia—may involve confused thinking or speech, hallucinations, unusual behavior and becoming withdrawn
- eating disorders—including anorexia (self-starvation) and bulimia (eating large amounts of food, then purging the food with vomiting, laxatives or exercise)
- anxiety disorders—including behavior problems caused by fear that's out of proportion to the problem, such as panic attacks.

"Where can I get help or more information?"

You could contact:

- your health-care provider
- a community mental health center
- a self-help group
- a state mental health agency
- your employee assistance program (EAP) at work
- a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker or counselor
- the National Institute of Mental Health
1-866-615-6464
1-866-415-8051 (TTY)
www.nimh.nih.gov

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