



SIGNIFICANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH: A GLANCE

Education

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development. Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.

KEYWORDS

Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and 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.

Health is important for development of the country. World health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". WHO defines mental health as mental well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. In this positive sense, mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community.

Mental health has impact on

1. Educational outcome
2. Productivity at work
3. Development of Positive personal relationships
4. Crime rate
5. Alcohol & drug abuse

Significance of Mental Health

More than 450 million people suffer from mental disorders. According to WHO, by the year 2020, depression will constitute the second largest disease burden worldwide (Murray & Lopez, 1996). Global burden of mental health will be well beyond the treatment capacities of developed and developing countries. The social and economic costs associated with growing burden of mental ill health focused the possibilities for promoting mental health as well as preventing and treating mental illness. Thus the Mental Health is linked to behavior and seen as fundamental to physical health and quality of life.

1. Physical health and mental health are closely associated and it is proved beyond doubt that depression leads to heart and vascular diseases
2. Mental disorders also affect persons health behaviour like eating sensibly, regular exercise, adequate sleep, engaging in safe sexual practices, alcohol and tobacco use, adhering to medical therapies thus increasing the risk of physical illness.
3. Mental ill health also leads to social problems like unemployment, broken families, poverty, drug abuse and related crime.
4. Poor mental health plays a significant role in diminished immune functioning.
5. Medically ill patients with depression have worse outcome than those without.
6. Chronic illnesses like diabetes, cancer, heart disease increases the risk of depression

Mental Health Conditions

Mental illnesses are disorders, ranging from mild to severe, that affect

a person's thinking, mood, and/or behavior. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly one-in-five adults live with a mental illness.

Many factors contribute to mental health conditions, including:

1. Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
2. Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
3. Family history of mental health problems

Early Warning Signs & Symptoms

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

1. Eating or sleeping too much or too little
2. Pulling away from people and usual activities
3. Having low or no energy
4. Feeling numb or like nothing matters
5. Having unexplained aches and pains
6. Feeling helpless or hopeless
7. Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
8. Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
9. Yelling or fighting with family and friends
10. Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
11. Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
12. Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
13. Thinking of harming yourself or others
14. Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Causes of Mental Illness

1. Neuro transmitters: Mental illnesses have been linked to an abnormal balance of special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters help nerve cells in the brain communicate with each other. If these chemicals are out of balance or are not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to symptoms of mental illness.
2. Genetics (heredity): Many mental illnesses run in families, suggesting that people who have a family member with a mental illness are more likely to develop a mental illness. Susceptibility is passed on in families through genes. Experts believe many mental illnesses are linked to abnormalities in many genes - not just one. That is why a person inherits a susceptibility to a mental illness and doesn't necessarily develop the illness. Mental illness itself occurs from the interaction of multiple genes and other factors - such as stress, abuse, or a traumatic event -- which can influence, or trigger, an illness in a person who has an inherited susceptibility to it.
3. Infections: Certain infections have been linked to brain damage and the development of mental illness or the worsening of its symptoms. For example, a condition known as paediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder (PANDA) associated with the Streptococcus bacteria has been linked to the development of obsessive-compulsive disorder and other mental illnesses in

children

4. Brain defects or injury: Defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain has also been linked to some mental illnesses

WHO response to Mental Health

WHO supports governments in the goal of strengthening and promoting mental health. WHO has evaluated evidence for promoting mental health and is working with governments to disseminate this information and to integrate the effective strategies into policies and plans. Early childhood interventions (e.g. home visits for pregnant women, pre-school psycho-social activities, combined nutritional and psycho-social help for disadvantaged populations)

1. Support to children (e.g. skills building programmes, child and youth development programmes)
2. Socio-economic empowerment of women (e.g. improving access to education and micro credit schemes)
3. Social support for elderly populations (e.g. befriending initiatives, community and day centres for the aged)
4. Programmes targeted at vulnerable groups, including minorities, indigenous people, migrants and people affected by conflicts and disasters (e.g. psycho-social interventions after disasters)
5. Mental health promotional activities in schools (e.g. programmes supporting ecological changes in schools and child-friendly schools)
6. Mental health interventions at work (e.g. stress prevention programmes)
7. Housing policies (e.g. housing improvement)
8. Violence prevention programmes (e.g. community policing initiatives); and community development programmes (e.g. 'Communities That Care' initiatives, integrated rural development)

Tips for Living Well with a Mental Health Condition

Having a mental health condition can make it a struggle to work, keep up with school, stick to a regular schedule, have healthy relationships, socialize, maintain hygiene, and more.

However, with early and consistent treatment—often a combination of medication and psychotherapy—it is possible to manage these conditions, overcome challenges, and lead a meaningful, productive life.

Today, there are new tools, evidence-based treatments, and social support systems that help people feel better and pursue their goals. Some of these tips, tools and strategies include:

1. Stick to a treatment plan. Even if you feel better, don't stop going to therapy or taking medication without a doctor's guidance. Work with a doctor to safely adjust doses or medication if needed to continue a treatment plan.
2. Keep your primary care physician updated. Primary care physicians are an important part of long-term management, even if you also see a psychiatrist.
3. Learn about the condition. Being educated can help you stick to your treatment plan. Education can also help your loved ones be more supportive and compassionate.
4. Practice good self-care. Control stress with activities such as meditation or tai-chi; eat healthy and exercise; and get enough sleep.
5. Reach out to family and friends. Maintaining relationships with others is important. In times of crisis or rough spells, reach out to them for support and help.
6. Develop coping skills. Establishing healthy coping skills can help people deal with stress easier.
7. Get enough sleep. Good sleep improves your brain performance, mood and overall health. Consistently poor sleep is associated with anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.

Resources

- National Helpline
- SAMHSA's 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health
- Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee (ISMICC)
- SMI Adviser | American Psychiatric Association (APA) and SAMHSA
- Technology Transfer Centers (TTC) Program
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Stress and Coping
- NIMH: Caring for Your Mental Health