

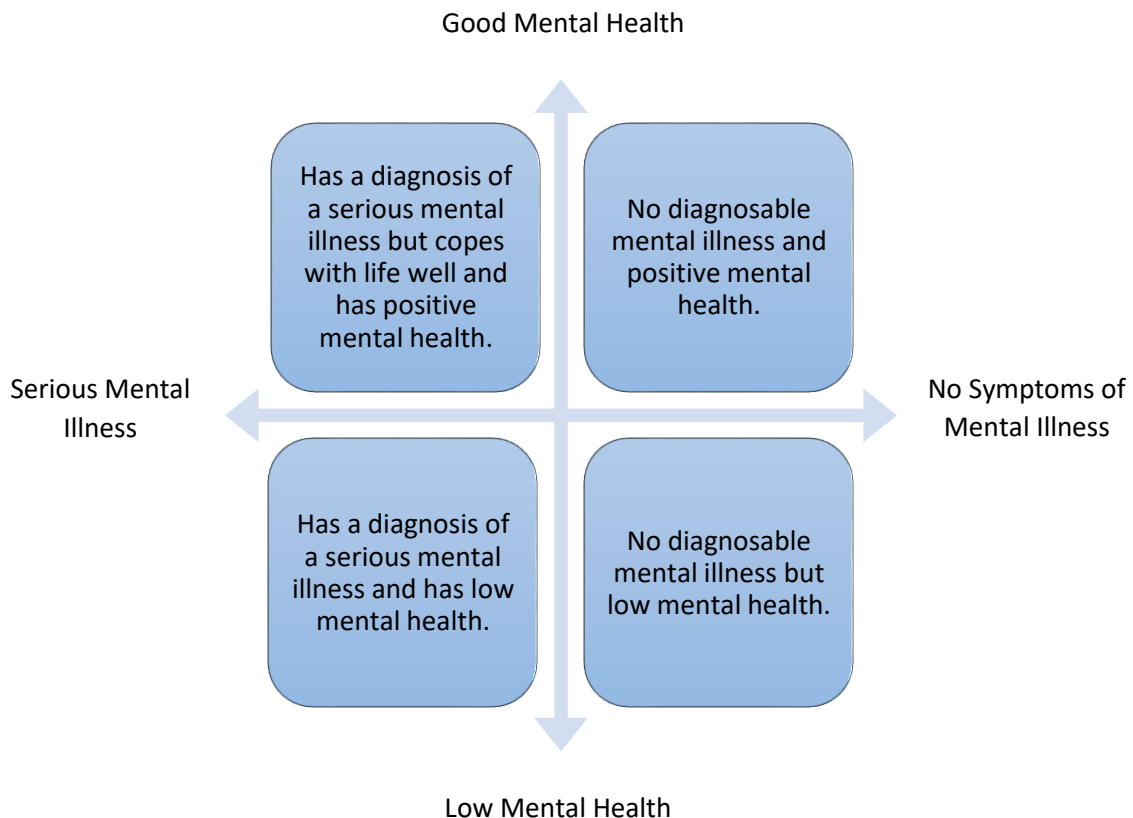
Let's Talk About Mental Health

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every person realizes their own potential and can cope with the daily stresses of life (World Health Organization, 2014). Just as everyone has *physical* health, we all have *mental* health and there are many ways to stay healthy and balanced. Physically, we can exercise, eat well, get enough sleep, and drink water. Mentally, the variety of strategies and tools can be different from person to person so it is important to take time to build your own toolkit. See our “Mental Health Boosters” section for some ideas.

Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

It is important to note that mental health and mental illness are different. Whereas everyone has mental health, mental illnesses are medically diagnosed and may not affect everyone. In any given year, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). Mental illnesses are generally characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviours and relationships with others (World Health Organization, 2018). It is possible to have good mental health and also be living with a mental illness. It is also possible to have low mental health and no mental illness at all. See the chart below.



Language Counts

In order to have honest, consistent, and stigma-fighting conversations, we have to become aware of our language. Make note of the words you use to talk about your physical, emotional, and mental wellness and the reasons you are using them. For example, the word “depressed” is often used to describe feelings of disappointment without acknowledging the medical impact that diagnosed depression can have on the lives of many youth and adults. In situations like these, be aware of what your choice of words actually describe and try to be as accurate as possible.

Remember: Respectful and positive language can make a world of difference for staff, students, and families.

unwell
crazy
disease
mentally fit
violent
psycho
sick in the head
mentally disturbed
emotionally disturbed
mental well-being
mental
dangerous
mental health
sick
mentally ill
plagued

Mental Health and Resiliency

First of all, what is resiliency?

“Resiliency refers to the capacity of individuals to cope successfully with stress-related situations, overcome adversity and adapt positively to change” (Alberta Education, 2017).

Basically, resiliency is like a trampoline, giving us the ability to “bounce back” from hard times in life. This is a strength-based approach and can be built by encouraging protective factors such as healthy relationships, self-confidence, and equality of access to basic needs and services.



Being able to “bounce back” from hard times is often a sign of good mental health, showing that a person can find healthy ways to cope and has a relatively solid set of supports available to help them along.

Reaching Out

Asking for help can be hard. Often, we feel ashamed when we need support to overcome challenges. However, being able to ask for what you need is not a sign of weakness, instead it is a sign of strength and awareness. See the “Mental Health Boosters” section for some simple ways to develop a support network and ask for help.

If you are in need of immediate counselling support, please consider the following:

- Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)
- Distress Line of South Western Alberta (403-327-7905 or 1-888-787-2880)
- YWCA Amethyst Project - Support for victims of sexual assault (403-320-1881)
- YWCA Harbour House Emergency Women’s Shelter (403-320-1881)
- Canadian Mental Health Association Lethbridge (403-329-4775)
<http://lethbridge.cmha.ca/about-cmha/contact-us/>
- Community Links <http://community-links.ca/>

If this is an emergency, please call 911 immediately.



Sometimes you just need someone to talk to. We're here to listen.

DISTRESS LINE OF SOUTH WESTERN ALBERTA
(403) 327 7905 | 1 888 787 2880
WE'RE AVAILABLE 24/7

BE MIND FULL
CHANGING THE FACE OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE SINCE 1918

www.lethbridge.cmha.ca

 Canadian Mental Health Association
Alberta South
Mental health for all