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MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS



THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM

By Simon Dallimore

Our mental health, like our physical health, can be seen as existing on a continuum. We have good days and bad days when it comes to our physical health, and we often take steps when we feel our physical health needs attention. When we recognize a cold is setting in or we have sustained an injury, we do what is necessary to address these physical issues. These are things we do on a regular basis to care for our physical health, many of which are part of our daily routine.

How often do we take note of our mental wellness? We all have days where we feel down or low in energy, but do we take the time to truly check-in on ourselves? If we are feeling a little down, do you have something you do to help you address the issue? Being aware of, and addressing, our mental wellness is just as important as our physical health. Our **mental health exists on a continuum** and we need to be aware of how we move along that continuum, what we can do for ourselves that help to keep us in the healthy end of the continuum, and when we need to seek professional help.

There are many things we can do on a daily basis that support our mental wellness and help us to stay in the healthy end of the continuum. A lot of what we do for our physical health also has a positive impact on our mental health. Getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise, and staying hydrated are four things that help both our physical health and our mental health.

Our mental health, like our physical health, is something that requires our attention. Understanding the continuum and paying attention to the way we feel are important steps in creating a self-care plan. It allows us to see when we are slipping away from the healthy end

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of the scale and moving towards the illness end. It can also help us to know when we need to seek professional help.

The mental health continuum model, illustrated below, is designed to help identify specific changes in health and performance in six different domains: mood, attitude and performance, sleep, physical health, social well-being, and substance use/gambling/gaming issues.

	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING	Frequent and regular experience of positive thoughts and emotions	Some reduced experience of positive thoughts and emotions	Finding it difficult to experience positive thoughts and emotions	Almost never experience positive thoughts and emotions
PERFORMANCE & FUNCTIONING	My capacity to function is excellent	My capacity to function is good	My capacity to function is fair	My capacity to function is poor
SLEEP	Mostly get enough quality sleep	Sometimes get enough quality sleep	Rarely get enough quality sleep	Never get enough quality sleep
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING	My health is excellent	My health is good	My health is fair	My health is poor
SOCIAL WELL-BEING	Socially active	Decreased social activities	Avoidance and/or withdrawal from social activities	Don't go out or answer the phone
SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING	Established sense of purpose and meaning; beliefs and worldview are secure	Exploring sense of purpose and meaning; beliefs and worldview are challenged	Losing sense of purpose and meaning; beliefs and worldview are weakened	Lost sense of purpose and meaning; beliefs and worldview are shattered
ADDICTIONS	No or limited use of alcohol and/or substances and/or gambling	Regular but controlled use of alcohol and/or substances and/or gambling to cope	Increased use of alcohol and/or substances and/or gambling; hard to control with negative consequences	Frequent use of alcohol and/or substances and/or gambling; unable to control with severe consequences

From: **The Mental Health Continuum Model (MHCM**



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