

CATHOLIC TEACHERS'
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERIES

**Distinguishing
Mental Health
and Mental Illness**

It is important to take your own mental health needs seriously. To support Catholic teachers and help you reflect on your mental health and wellness, the Association has developed the **Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series**. In this resource, we define and distinguish mental health from mental illness, recognizing they exist on a continuum.

Defining the Continuum of Mental Health and Illness

The **Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)** defines mental health as:

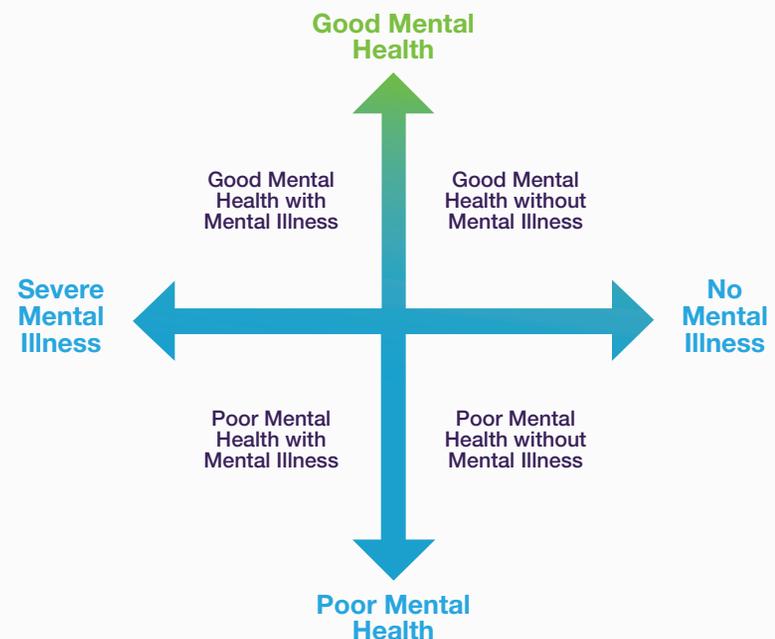
“the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity.”

Mental Health Range or Spectrum

According to School Mental Health Ontario's information on **What is Mental Health**:

“Everyone has mental health. Although everyone's understanding and experience of it might change according to their cultural background, it might be helpful to think about mental health as a range or spectrum. On one end is good mental health. On the other is poor mental health. We all move along this continuum, and all of us struggle with poor mental health at times, depending on what's happening in our lives and other factors.

Not everyone has a mental illness. Mental illnesses, like mental health, can fluctuate. On one end of the mental illness continuum is no diagnosable mental illness (minimal or no symptoms). On the other end is severe mental illness. Because of this, mental health and mental illness are two separate, but intersecting ideas. It is a dual continuum that we all move along.”



The Continuum of Mental Health

Mental health is a dynamic changing state that can deteriorate or improve given the right set of circumstances. Therefore, mental health concerns, if identified and treated early, have the potential to be temporary and reversible.

The mental health continuum model 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
MOOD	Normal mood fluctuations Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/Impatient Nervous Sadness/Overwhelmed	Anger Anxiety Pervasively sad/Hopeless	Angry outbursts/Aggression Excessive anxiety/Panic Depressed/Suicidal thoughts
ATTITUDE & PERFORMANCE	Good sense of humour Performing well In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm Procrastination Forgetfulness	Negative attitude Poor performance/ Workaholic Poor concentration Poor decision-making	Overt insubordination Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate
SLEEP	Normal sleep patterns Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping Intrusive thoughts Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep Recurrent images Recurrent nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep Sleeping too much or too little
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physically well Good energy level	Muscle tension Headaches Low energy	Increased aches and pains Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses Constant fatigue
SOCIAL WELL-BEING	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity Reduced socializing	Avoidance Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone
SUBSTANCE USE & GAMING	No or low risk use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming	Alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming increasingly used to relieve tension/cope with stress	Difficulties limiting use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming	Unable to control use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming

Questions for Reflection

- 1/ Considering the above, where do you place your mental health on the continuum?
- 2/ Along the left-hand side of the chart pictured on the previous page, there are six domains of mental health: mood; attitude and performance; sleep; physical health; social well-being; and substance use and gambling. Reflect on your health in each domain. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being optimal health, and 1 being mental illness, where might you rate yourself in each domain?



» Additional Resources available at catholicteachers.ca

Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series

- [Distinguishing Mental Health from Mental Illness](#)
- [Strategies to Promote Mental Health](#)
- [Resource List - Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety and Depression](#)
- [Understanding Mental Illness](#)
- [Understanding Stress](#)

Catholic Teachers' Safer Spaces Series

- [Safer Spaces? Braver Spaces? - Our Collective Responsibility](#)
- [Understanding Trauma](#)
- [Being a Trauma-informed Release Officer](#)

If you need help understanding or accessing resources responsive to your mental health and well-being, reach out to **local OECTA unit office**.