

Mental Health or Mental Illness?



Your mental health plays a large role in your overall well-being. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, many Americans have reported a decline in their mental health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 45% of U.S. adults have reported distress during these times.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Your mental well-being includes how you think, act and feel. It also helps you cope with stress, relate to others and make decisions. According to the WHO, there's not a specific definition of mental well-being. However, various studies agree that achieving a state of mental well-being includes being able to:

- Realize your full potential
- Work productively
- Cope with normal stresses of life
- Contribute meaningfully to your community

Mental well-being includes mental health, but goes far beyond treating mental illness. For example, you could go through a period of poor mental health but not necessarily have a diagnosable mental illness. And your mental health can change over time, depending on factors such as your workload, stress and work-life balance.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

Mental illness refers to a variety of conditions that affect your mood or behavior, feelings or thinking. Mental illnesses can occur occasionally, while others are chronic and long-lasting. Common mental illnesses include anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental illness is more prevalent than you might think. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 5 U.S. adults will experience a mental illness in any given year, and more than 50% will experience mental illness at some point in their life.

WHY IS MENTAL WELL-BEING IMPORTANT?

Your mental well-being is tied directly to your physical health. Individuals with poor mental health or untreated mental illness are at risk of developing many chronic conditions like Type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease and obesity.

Poor mental health can also cause negative effects in your work life as well as in your social life. If you have poor mental health, you may experience productivity issues at work and may experience withdrawal or feelings of loneliness.

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

Because it's such a crucial component of your health, it's important to focus on maintaining or improving your mental health. Here are three simple ways to do so every day:

1. Express gratitude. Taking five minutes a day to write down the things that you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and can help you change your mindset from negative to positive.
2. Get exercise. You probably hear all the time how beneficial exercise is to your overall health, but it's true. Exercising can improve brain function, reduce anxiety and improve your self-image.
3. Get a good night's sleep. Strive for seven to eight hours of sleep a night to improve your mental health.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

For more information about mental well-being, please contact your doctor.

