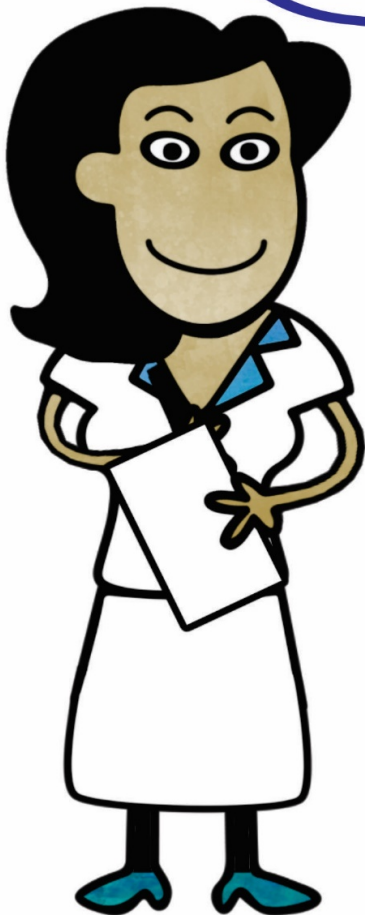


Mental Health = Health

(Diverse Populations)

Mental health is being able to feel, think, and act in ways that help us enjoy life and cope with the challenges we face.



Mental Health=Health (Diverse Populations)

Ethno-cultural refers to groups of people who share common ancestry and cultural characteristics. There are over 200 ethnic groups represented in Canada's population and Ottawa is no different¹. Ottawa has the fifth highest number of immigrants in Canadian cities and ¼ of residents are immigrants.²

There are specific cultural influences and beliefs about mental health and mental illness. People's interpretation and understanding of these concepts ultimately affect how people view mental health and mental illness. This is often the basis for many of the misconceptions and stigma surrounding this health issue. This Mental Health=Health video discusses various cultural understandings and myths about stigma, mental health and illness, and identifies factors that promote and protect mental health and build resiliency.

Key Messages

- Mental health is the capacity of each us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.
- Mental illness is a diagnosable illness and affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures.
- People living with mental illness can experience positive mental health and people without mental illness can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health.
- Just as people's life experiences and circumstances change, so do their moods, thoughts, and sense of well-being.
- Many stressful situations can negatively affect our mental health, such as divorce, new relationship, new school, living in a new country, adapting to a new culture, experiencing war or injustice, experiencing loss, not speaking the language, and experiencing discrimination and racism.
- Everyone has the ability to experience good mental health. Think of your mental health in the same way you think of your physical health.
- Get help early and talk to someone you trust about your mental health challenges, like a family member, friend or professional.
- Try one thing to help you overcome your present life challenge or challenges.
- Look for ways to connect with your family, friends and neighbors, like volunteering at a cultural event in the community; bringing food for someone in need; or perhaps signing up for special interest class through the City of Ottawa.

¹Case for Diversity (2016). MHCC. *Improving Services for Immigrant, Refugee, Ethno-cultural and Racialized Populations*.

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-10/case_for_diversity_oct_2016_eng.pdf

²City of Ottawa (2016). *Equity & Inclusion Lens: Immigrants*

http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/immigrants_snapshot_en_2016_final_acc.pdf

Stigma

Stigma is a set of negative beliefs and prejudices about a group of people, as well as negative behaviors towards groups of people. Many people face stigma because of their race, religion, gender, sexuality, economic situation and a variety of other things. Stigma prevents people from asking for help and receiving the support they need.

Examples of negative beliefs and practices towards people living with a mental health challenge include:

- Describing them as not being normal or using words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Blaming them for their mental health challenges and making them feel ashamed.
- Telling them “they just need to get over it. You could if you wanted to”.
- Being afraid of someone with a mental illness.
- Avoiding or excluding a person with a mental health challenge.

What can you do to reduce stigma?

- Try not to use hurtful and labeling words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Reach out to someone who you think might be struggling and encourage them to get help.
- Learn more about mental illness by checking out trusted websites like the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#), [the Mental Health Commission of Canada](#), and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#).
- Develop healthy relationships with people in your life who have mental health challenges and illnesses.
- Reach out for help from family, friends, religious/cultural leaders or professionals.
- Accept that life is not always perfect, but that you can find solutions to overcome life’s challenges.
- Find time to breathe, reflect on what you are thankful for, and pray if that is something that you practice.
- Take care of your health by eating well, being active in nature and getting plenty of sleep.

How can you help someone who wants to talk about his or her mental health?

If someone shares their mental health concerns with you, it is important for you to listen, be supportive and encourage them to get help. You do not have to know all the answers and it is not your role to fix everything. Your role is to help the person get the help they need.

Additional Resources

- [Bell Let's Talk](#)
- [Talking About Mental Illness](#)
- [The Facts](#)
- [have THAT talk](#)
- Videos:
 - [Are you New to Canada?](#)
 - [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)

Activity 1: My mental health, it's good to talk about it.

Goal

- To understand what mental health is
- To understand the importance of talking about our mental health

Messages

- Mental health is the capacity of each us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.
- Mental illness is a diagnosable illness and affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures.
- Everyone has the ability to experience good mental health, including people living with a mental illness. Think of your mental health the way you think of your physical health.
- We all face challenges throughout our lives, such as learning to live in a new country. It is normal to feel alone, sad and overwhelmed at these times, but it is important to get help early and talk to someone you trust about your mental health challenge. You could talk to a family member, friend or professional.

Time

20-30 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)”
2. Write the theme “My mental health, it’s good to talk about it” on flip chart paper.
3. Ask participants to answer the question “What does good mental health mean to you?” Write their answers on the board.
4. Ask participants to break into smaller groups of two or three to write their own definition of mental health on flip chart paper.
5. Ask each small group to share their definition with the larger group. Highlight the key elements of each one and listen to the participants’ comments.
6. Divide the participants into two groups. Ask one group to write, “Ideas to help someone talk about their mental health”.
7. Ask the second group to write, “Things we do that stop people talking about their mental health”.

8. Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group. Highlight the key elements of each one and listen to the participants' comments.
9. Provide participants with resources where they can find support in the community or a professional to talk about their mental health.

Remember

Sometimes we may have misconceptions of people who live with a mental illness, such as “they are crazy”. This is incorrect and it can lead to prejudices and false beliefs. It causes people to be ashamed or even afraid to talk about their mental health. It stops them reaching out for the help they need.

Possible answers

What does good mental health mean to you?

- Feeling good about yourself
- Balance in all aspects of your life
- Being happy, not having worries
- Having good relationships with other people
- Having a sense of belonging to a community.

Ideas to help someone talk about their mental health and things we do that stop people talking about their mental health

IDEAS TO HELP SOMEONE TALK ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH	THINGS WE DO THAT STOP PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making them feel safe and able to trust you. • Actively listening to what they say. • Not judging them. • Accepting their feelings are normal. • Having a positive relationship. • Helping them find resources or support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not listening to what they say. • Gossiping to other people. • Dismissing what they say and feel as unimportant. • Talking about people who live with mental illness as being “crazy” or “weird”. • Not wanting to spend time with them.

Adapted with permission from, *My Life, It's Cool To Talk About It: Educational Activities Guide*, Canadian Mental Health Association: Montreal Branch, 2013.

Activity 2: Reducing Stigma

Goal

- To explore how specific cultural influences and beliefs about mental health and mental illness affect people's interpretation and understanding
- To learn how to reduce stigma for people living with mental health challenges

Messages

- Stigma is a set of negative beliefs and prejudices about a group of people, as well as negative behaviors towards groups of people. Many people face stigma because of their race, religion, gender, sexuality, economic situation and a variety of other things.
- Stigma prevents a person living with a mental health challenge from asking for help and prevents them receiving the support they need.
- Culture can influence our understanding, beliefs and practices about mental health in positive and negative ways.
- It is important to talk about mental health to stop stigma.

Time

- 30 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video "Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)"
2. Read each of these statements to the group:
 - a. Mental health and mental illness are the same thing.
 - b. People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.
 - c. Mental illness is a curse from God.
 - d. People with mental illnesses are poor and/or less intelligent.
 - e. Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.
 - f. Mental illnesses are rare.
 - g. People with mental illnesses are usually homeless.
3. Ask them to think about each statement and then share their responses with the group. This will help start a conversation about stigma. Share the "Facts about mental health and mental illness", found on page 30, as you discuss each statement.
4. Write on a flip chart paper the definition of stigma.

5. Ask the participants:
 - Did you learn or notice anything about these statements today?
 - Were you surprised by any of the information? If so, why?
6. Ask the participants:
 - “How does stigma affect people living with mental illness?” Write their responses on flip chart paper.
7. Everyone can help to reduce stigma. Ask participants:
 - “What could you do to reduce stigma where you live, work and play?” Write their responses on flip chart paper.

Possible Answers

How does stigma affect people living with mental illness?

- They may feel afraid, ashamed, angry, misunderstood, alone and excluded.
- Stigma makes it hard for them to reach out for help or accept help.
- Stigma can delay them getting the help and support they need

What could you do to reduce stigma where you live, work and play?

- Try not to use hurtful and labeling words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Reach out to someone who you think might be struggling and encourage them to get help.
- Learn more about mental illnesses by checking out trusted websites like the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#), the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#).
- Develop healthy relationships with people in your life who have mental health challenges and illnesses.
- Share the impacts of stigma on people living with mental illness with family, friends and community.

Facts about mental health and mental illness

Mental health and mental illness ARE NOT the same thing.

Mental health is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness. It is a positive sense of well-being. Mental health is 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.

Mental illness is an illness that is diagnosed by a medical doctor. People living with mental illness can experience positive mental health and people without mental illness can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT violent and dangerous.

As a group, people with mental illnesses are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves. Stigma can limit acceptance by family, friends and the community; limit ability to make friends and maintain relationships; and take part in social activities. People begin to internalize and believe these negative attitudes, which leads to lower self-esteem, shame and guilt.

Mental illness IS NOT a curse from God.

A doctor, diagnoses mental illness like they would diagnose physical illness. Mental illnesses affect people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures. Culture beliefs shape our understanding of mental health and illness, and our behaviours. Some are positive, such as the importance of supporting community members who are facing life challenges. However, some cultural beliefs and practices can lead to misunderstanding and stigma. For example, some believe that mental illness is a curse and a punishment by God, or that the devil or evil spirits cause it. These beliefs can negatively affect the individual, family or community. For example, mental health stigma can affect marriages, relationships and the economic prospects for other family members.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT poor and/or less intelligent.

Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.

Many people, and their families, do not get help because of the prejudice and negative attitudes around mental illness. It means they do not get help and support early.

Mental illness is NOT caused by a personal weakness.

A mental illness is not a character flaw, weakness or lack of will power. It is a diagnosable illness. People living with mental illnesses need to talk with someone they trust and have support to make healthy choices for their lives.

People living with mental illnesses can experience positive mental health and people without mental illnesses can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health. As everyone faces life challenges, we can all have changes in our mood, thoughts, and sense of well-being.

Mental illnesses ARE NOT rare.

Mental illness is not a single disease but includes many classifications such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and personality disorders.

Many things affect our mental health. For example, stressful life situations like coming to a new country, adapting to a new culture and a new way of life, experiencing trauma, war or injustice, being separated from family, not speaking the language and experiencing loss, discrimination and racism can affect our mental health.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT usually homeless.

While many homeless people have mental health or substance use issues, not all people with mental illnesses are homeless, in fact that is not at all true. The majority of people living with mental illness have jobs, go to school, and are contributing to society in a meaningful way.

Activity 3: How resilient am I? Making a Resilience Action Plan

Goal

- To learn how resilient you are
- To plan ways for you to increase your resilience

Messages

- Resilience is our ability to work through life's challenges in a positive way. It helps us to thrive and reach our full potential even when times are tough.
- It can make the difference between feeling overwhelmed by a challenge and using the experience as a learning opportunity.
- You can learn to be resilient at any age.
- Resilience is a set of skills you can learn and build on over time.
- You can increase your resilience. This will help you cope with challenges and recover better afterwards.

Time

25 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Print one “How Resilient Am I?” quiz, found on page 34, and one “Resilience Action Plan”, found on page 35, for each participant
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens

Activity A: How Resilient am I?

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)”
2. Give each participant a copy of the “How Resilient Am I” quiz.
3. Ask participants to complete the quiz and add up their score.
4. Read the scoring section under the quiz. Ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts about the quiz, such as “did anything surprise you?”

Possible Participants Answers

- Surprised by how resilient they are.
- Surprised that they are not as resilient as they thought.

Reassure participants that this is only one quiz. It gives an indication of their resilience and helps them to start thinking about learning more resilience skills or continuing to practice existing skills. If they are concerned, it is a good idea to promote in a respectful way that they talk to a health professional.

How Resilient Am I? Quiz

Check either “agree” or “disagree” to each statement and add up the number of checks you have for “agree” and “disagree”. Do not feel frustrated if you have many “disagree” boxes. Build on your strengths and come back to the checklist in a few weeks.

RESILIENCE	AGREE	DISAGREE
When life gets tough, I will meet with people from my community or my country of origin.		
I believe I can learn from difficult times.		
When I am under stress, I will talk to someone I trust like a family member, a friend, a religious/community leader or a professional.		
When life gets busy or stressful, I will try to make time for myself, praying or reflecting on what I am thankful for.		
I cope well with change.		
I can call 211 to find programs and services available to newcomers in my city and community.		
After a stressful event, I can let go and move forward.		
I focus on the positives and the things I can control.		

Scoring

Agree: If you answered “agree” to five or more of the statements, your resilience is good. The higher the number of “agrees”, the more resilience you have and feel that even though life can have tough times, it is important to keep perspective.

Disagree: If you answered “disagree” to five or more of the statements, your resilience may be low and there are opportunities to strengthen your resilience. The higher the number of “disagrees”, the less resilience you have at this time. Start working on a plan to improve your resilience. For the items you identified as “disagree”, think about ways that you can work to change this. Building your resilience is a process, and it is important to look at ways you can change the “disagrees” to “agrees” over time. It can take work and time, but keep at it!

Activity B: Making a Resilient Action Plan

1. Show participants the “Mental Health= Health” video.
2. Say to the participants “In the video there are ideas about building resilience. Do you remember any of them?” Write their answers on flip chart paper.
3. Give each participant a copy of the “Resilience Action Plan”. Ask them to think of one challenge they are facing and answer each of the questions.

Possible Answers

- Eating healthy, getting enough sleep and doing something that I enjoy
- Being okay with not doing everything perfectly
- Knowing my strengths and what helped me in the past

What tools and support do I have in my life to help build my resilience?

- Call 211 to find programs and services available to newcomers in your city and community
- Meet with people from your community or your country of origin
- Talk to someone you trust. It can be a family member, a friend, a religious/community leader or a professional

What new things can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?

- Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness
- Being active and listening to music
- Being thankful for the good things in my life
- Connect with the community (cooking, share a meal)

Take Time to Breathe Deeply

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
3. Inhale through your nose. The hand below your rib cage should move out. The hand on your chest should stay as still as possible.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through your mouth. The hand on your upper chest should stay as still as possible.
5. Practice deep breathing for about 15-30 seconds. Explain that deep breathing can be used any time they need a short break. This is a good way to take a “time out” from a situation and relax.

Resilience Action Plan

Answer the questions below and think of ideas to help build your resilience. Set a date when you will put your plan into action.

QUESTION	IDEAS
What is one challenge I am facing today?	
How do I feel? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Frustrated • Sad • Anxious • Confused • Other feelings 	
What can I do to cope with my feelings? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get together with friends and family • Talk to health professional • Get out and be active • Breathe deeply • Meditate • Listen to music • Other ideas 	
What helped me cope or get through a challenging time in the past?	
What tools do I have in my life to help build my resilience?	
What new thing can I try to overcome my challenge and recover?	