

Introduction to Mental Health

Introduction to Mental Health

Key concepts, importance, and foundational ideas for anyone new to the subject.

1. What Is Mental Health?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which an individual can cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to the community.
Components	- Emotional – ability to experience, express, and manage feelings. - Psychological – thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. - Social – relationships, support networks, and community involvement.
Continuum	Mental health is not simply “healthy” vs. “ill”; it exists on a spectrum that can shift over time.

2. Why Mental Health Matters

Reason	Impact
Overall health	Strong link between mental and physical health (e.g., stress ? cardiovascular risk).
Productivity	Good mental health improves concentration, decision-making, and work performance.
Relationships	Enhances communication, empathy, and conflict resolution.
Societal cost	Untreated mental illness contributes to absenteeism, disability claims, and health ?care expenditures.

3. Common Mental Health Conditions (Brief Overview)

Category	Typical Features	Examples
Anxiety Disorders	Excessive worry, physical tension, avoidance behavior.	Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Social Phobia

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Category	Typical Features	Examples
Mood Disorders	Persistent changes in mood, energy, and activity levels.	Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder
Psychotic Disorders	Distortions in perception of reality, hallucinations, delusions.	Schizophrenia
Trauma-Related Disorders	Re-experiencing a traumatic event, hyper-arousal.	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Early-onset deficits in cognition, communication, or behavior.	Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD
Substance-Use Disorders	Compulsive use of alcohol or drugs despite negative consequences.	Alcohol Use Disorder, Opioid Use Disorder

(Each condition has its own diagnostic criteria and treatment pathways.)

4. Factors Influencing Mental Health

1. **Biological** – genetics, neurochemical imbalances, brain injuries.
2. **Psychological** – coping skills, self-esteem, trauma history.
3. **Social** – family dynamics, socioeconomic status, cultural norms, community support.
4. **Environmental** – exposure to violence, chronic stressors, living conditions.

The **bio-psycho-social model** integrates these domains to explain why mental health varies among individuals.

5. Promoting Good Mental Health (Prevention & Self-Care)

Strategy	Practical Tips
Stress Management	• Practice deep-breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. • Schedule regular breaks and leisure activities.
Physical Activity	• Aim for 150-min of moderate aerobic exercise per week. • Include strength training twice weekly.
Healthy Sleep	• Keep a consistent bedtime routine. • Limit screens 1-hour before sleep.

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Strategy

Practical Tips

Social Connection

- Maintain contact with friends/family.
- Join clubs, volunteer, or support groups.

Nutrition

- Eat balanced meals rich in omega-3 fatty acids, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- Stay hydrated