

Mental Health and Newcomers

Toronto Public Health
Mental Health Promotion
Team

What is Mental Health?



- What does the term "mental health" mean to you?



Mental Health

" A state of psychological well-being and satisfactory adjustment to society and the ordinary demands of life"
(Kime, 1992)

*** Mental health is an individual and personal concept that must consider both attributes and actions of individuals in specific contexts with varying standards of acceptance
(Jahoda, 1958)*

A Key Element in Overall Health



- The relationship between physical and mental health (along with the determinants of health) are complex
- Physical ill health and mental ill health often occur together
- Mental health is the foundation for overall wellbeing and effective functioning
- Good mental health is the most important thing that we have

The Building Blocks of Mental Health



- Access to the basic necessities of life (income, food, shelter)
- Strong social connections, supportive relationships
- Sense of safety and security (freedom from abuse & violence)
- Personal resilience including self esteem
- Opportunities for meaningful and productive life activities

A Holistic Approach



A holistic approach to mental health incorporates all those factors which may contribute to the better adjustment and greater sense of well being of an individual or group.

Factors for Newcomers That May Impact Their Experience of Mental Health



- Pre-migration
- In Transit
- After Arrival
- Cultural & Religious Factors

Pre Migration



- Preparing to leave
- Potentially fleeing
- War & political instability
- Torture and abuse

In Transit



- Living in a refugee camp
- Seeking Asylum

Pre-Migration and Health



After Arrival



- Change in lifestyle & socioeconomic status
- Change in social status
- Unemployment
- Discrimination
- Still supporting family back home
- Being separated from family & isolation
- New system of education and attitudes about parenting
- Language barriers



Mental Health Promotion

The process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to take control over their lives and improve or maintain their mental health

Mental health promotion applies to all people.



Good mental health is a resource for living. It contributes to our enjoyment in life, and is associated with better physical health, greater success in school and life, better relationships and less crime. Good mental health is also good for our workplaces, communities and our economy.

(Respect, Recovery, Resilience, 2010)



Mental health promotion uses strategies that foster supportive environments and individual resilience while showing respect for culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.



Resilience is the capacity to cope with, and bounce back after the ongoing demands and challenges of life, and to learn from them in a positive way.

Mental Health Promoting Strategies



- Build on capacities and competencies
- Strengthen a sense of control
- Build resiliency and coping strategies for life's challenges
- Strengthen protective factors
- Lessen risk factors
- Build on the social determinants of health
- Build connectedness

Helping Your Clients



How do you support
Newcomers in dealing with
loss and stress?

Putting This Into Practice



- The newcomer is the expert
- Realities are socially constructed
- The problem is the problem
- People make sense of their lives through stories
- There are many truths

Helping Clients Cope



- Start where they are at rather than where we think they should be
- Ask what would be most helpful for them at this time.
- Listen for strengths and ways of coping while hearing their stories.
- Acknowledge their experiences building on their resiliency
- Connect them to community resources



Good mental health promotion is based on a positive, non-pathologized approach to health that focuses on strengths and resilience building.



Mental Health service Information Ontario

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www.mhsio.ca



Questions?

Toronto Health
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