

Class: FY BSc

Subject : IKS

Chapter Name: Mental health

Definition of mental health

Mental health does not exist on its own. It is an integral and essential part of overall health, which can be defined in at least three ways – as the absence of disease, as a state of the organism that allows the full performance of all its functions or as a state of balance within oneself and between oneself and one's physical and social environment (Sartorius, 2002). Which of these three definitions is used depends on the level to which the basic health needs are satisfied. These needs include food, shelter, survival, protection, society, social support, and freedom from pain, environmental hazards, unnecessary stress and from any part of exploitation

What is mental health?

Good mental health is important for everyone as it helps us cope with life's stresses and reach our goals. Mental health is about how we think, feel and act. When our mental health is good it helps us to get the most out of life. We all have highs and lows in our mental health. A low period does not mean you have a mental illness. It's normal to have feelings like anger, sadness or anxiety when facing challenges.

What is mental illness?

There is a difference between mental health and mental illness. A mental illness is when a person is diagnosed with a problem that alters their thinking, mood and/or behaviour. Illnesses are linked to times when a person is distressed and their ability to function well has changed.

Examples of mental illness include depression and anxiety disorder. Whether or not you have an illness, knowing about mental health and how to keep mentally healthy is important for everyone. We can all improve our mental health.

What is mental illness?

There are certain times in our lives when our mental health may be more vulnerable. Some of these times are known as “transitions” and the others are “life events”.

- Graduating school and going to post-secondary education or work
- Moving out on your own
- Pregnancy and becoming a parent
- Later in life with changes to family structure and retiring from work

- Being unemployed, underemployed or experiencing work stress
- Experiencing loss, death of a loved one or getting divorced
- Having to care for someone who is dependent on you
- Immigrating to a new country
- Developing a chronic illness
- Experiencing and/or witnessing abuse, bullying, discrimination or violence

Example

When Mark started college he was eager to leave home and become independent.

By mid-semester Mark was struggling to keep up with his course work and he stopped going out with his friends. His parents noticed his mood had changed when he came home for the weekend. They talked with him about it and together they made a plan to visit their family doctor.

Mark was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and got treatment. He is now able to manage his school work and spend time with his friends.

Protective and risk factors

There are things that can protect our mental health and things that put it at risk. Protective factors buffer a person and help reduce the chance of developing a problem. Risk factors make it more likely that a person will develop a problem.

Protective factors

- Spending time with family & friends
- Feeling like you belong
- Having good physical health
- Being able to solve problems

Risk factors

- Traumatic life experiences
- Childhood trauma
- Having a parent with a mental health disorder
- Having alcohol, drug, gambling problems
- Being isolated & or feeling alone

Some risk factors may be outside of your control, but, there are always steps you can take to reduce their effect. The key to improving mental health is to increase protective factors.

What supports mental health?

1. Resiliency

Everyone can improve their mental health by building their resilience. Resiliency is the ability to handle life's ups and downs in positive ways and to bounce back from hard times. Making it through life's challenges strengthens our ability to handle future stressors.

2. Physical health

Mental health and physical health are closely linked. Long-term stress can cause health problems. Also, having a chronic illness can impact mental health. Maintaining or improving our physical health benefits overall health.

3. Emotional well being

We all have many emotions. Positive emotions support our mental health. When we are able to manage, express and use our emotions well, it can improve our health.

What supports mental health?

4. Healthy coping

Our bodies are able to respond better to stress when we practice healthy coping. Choosing unhealthy coping methods can be harmful to your health and hinder your ability to deal with stress.

5. Positive outlook

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Types of mental health disorders

Specific mental disorders are grouped together due to features they have in common. Some types of mental illness are as follows:

- Anxiety disorders
- mood disorders
- schizophrenia disorders

Anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness. People with these conditions have severe fear or anxiety related to certain objects or situations. Most people with an anxiety disorder try to avoid exposure to whatever triggers their anxiety. Below are some examples of anxiety disorders.

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) involves excessive worry or fear that disrupts everyday living. People may also experience physical symptoms, including:

- restlessness
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- tense muscles
- interrupted sleep

A bout of anxiety symptoms does not necessarily need a specific trigger in people with GAD. They may experience excessive anxiety when encountering everyday situations that do not pose a direct danger, such as chores or appointments. A person with GAD may sometimes feel anxiety with no trigger at all.

Anxiety disorders

Panic disorder—People with a panic disorder experience regular panic attacks involving sudden, overwhelming terror or a sense of imminent disaster and death.

Phobias There are different types of phobia:

Simple phobias: These may involve a disproportionate fear of specific objects, scenarios, or animals. A fear of spiders is a typical example.

Social phobia: Sometimes known as social anxiety, this is a fear of being subject to the judgment of others. People with social phobia often restrict their exposure to social environments.

Agoraphobia: This term refers to a fear of situations where getting away may be difficult, such as being in an elevator or a moving train. Many people misunderstand this phobia as the fear of being outside.

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OCD

People with **obsessive-compulsive disorder** (OCD) have obsessions and compulsions. In other words, they experience constant, stressful thoughts and a powerful urge to perform repetitive acts, such as handwashing.

Anxiety disorders

PTSD

PTSD can occur after a person experiences or witnesses an intensely stressful or traumatic event. During this type of event, the person thinks that their life or other people's lives are in danger. They may feel afraid or that they have no control over what is happening.

These sensations of trauma and fear may then contribute to PTSD.

Mood disorders

People may also refer to mood disorders as affective disorders or depressive disorders. People with these conditions have significant mood changes, generally involving either mania, a period of high energy and joy, or depression. Examples of mood disorders include:

Major depression: An individual with major depression experiences a constant low mood and loses interest in activities and events that they previously enjoyed (anhedonia). They can feel prolonged periods of sadness or extreme sadness.

Bipolar disorder: A person with bipolar disorder experiences unusual changes in their mood, energy levels, levels of activity, and ability to continue with daily life. Periods of high mood are known as manic phases, while depressive phases bring on low mood.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD): Reduced daylight during the fall, winter, and early spring months triggers this type of major depression. It is most common in countries far from the equator.

Schizophrenia disorders

The term schizophrenia often refers to a spectrum of disorders characterized by psychotic features and other severe symptoms. These are highly complex conditions.

According to the NIMH, signs of schizophrenia typically develop between the ages of 16 and 30. The individual will have thoughts that appear fragmented and may also find it hard to process information.

Schizophrenia has negative and positive symptoms. Positive symptoms include delusions, thought disorders, and hallucinations, while withdrawal, lack of motivation, and a flat or inappropriate mood are examples of negative symptoms.

Agree or disagree statements

- Diet, exercise and regular sleep patterns are all effective ways to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Anyone can experience a mental health problem.
- Distress can occur in someone who has a mental health condition.
- Many clinical depressions that develop in teenagers come out of the blue.
- Schizophrenia is a split personality.
- People with mental health problems don't get better.
- Young people self-harming are attention seeking.
- Everyone has the power to support a friend having difficulty with their mental health.
- Mental health conditions may affect 1 in 4 adults.
- Most people with panic disorder do not get well with treatment.
- A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in treating people who have a mental health conditions.
- Serotonin is a liver chemical that controls appetite.
- A delusion is defined as seeing something that is not real.
- Lack of pleasure, hopelessness and chronic tiredness can all be symptoms of a clinical depression.

Activity

Activity - Health and wellbeing

Objective of the activity- Students become aware that being supportive towards someone with a mental health concern is no different from being supportive towards someone with a physical health issue.

Case scenarios

Case scenarios and associated questions. Please read each scenario and then consider the following questions in relation to it:

- What do you think might be happening with the young person?
- Do you think the young person has a mental health problem or illness? If so, on what grounds would you justify that decision?
- Do they need help?
- If so, who and/or what might be helpful?
- How might this be helpful?

Case scenarios

Case scenario 1 Karan, aged 9, lives with his mother and younger brother. His father unexpectedly left the family a year ago. Jack started a new school six months ago and is having difficulty settling in. He complains of tummy ache each school morning and is increasingly reluctant to attend.

Case scenario 2 Roshni, aged 14, lives with her parents, who are both busy professionals. She works hard, achieves A-grades and plans to be a lawyer. Recently she has been teased by her friends about her weight and has decided to go on a strict diet. She is pleased with the results so far and plans to continue eating little, making herself sick after meals and exercising a lot.

Case scenario 3 Rohan, aged 15, lives with his dad and stepmother. He has little contact with his mum or younger brother and sister. Recently he has been cautioned by the police for joy-riding in stolen cars with his mates. He prefers to spend time smoking dope with older boys rather than going to school.

Stress release exercises

- Hands and arms – Clench your fists and tense your arms; feel tightness in your hands and arms, hold for 5 seconds then slowly relax them. Release and relax each muscle group for 10 to 15 seconds. See how far they will go, but do not push. Do not hold on at all; let everything go.
- Breath – Slow and steady, let yourself relax each time you breathe out.
- Shoulders – Hunch your shoulders, and then gradually let them settle down
- Forehead – Pull your eyebrows together, then gradually let your forehead smooth out.
- Jaw – Bite your back teeth together, then gradually ease off, and let your jaw get heavy.
- Neck – Pull your chin forward on to your chest, feel tightness, then relax.
- Tummy – Pull in your tummy tight, then gradually let it go, feeling it relax.
- Thighs – Push your heels down hard against the floor, feeling the tightness in your thighs, and then gradually let that go.
- Calves – Point your toes, then gradually let that tightness go.

Mental health Stigma

Mental illness is still widely stigmatized in India, and many people with mental health issues are reluctant to seek help due to the fear of being judged or discriminated against. This makes it difficult to raise awareness about mental health and to encourage people to seek treatment.

Stigma exists when elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows these processes to happen

People with mental illness are perceived as dangerous and unpredictable; there is an implied belief that the mentally ill choose to behave as they do and have only themselves to blame for their situation; people with mental illness are believed to respond poorly to treatment, and outcomes are poor, therefore they are an embarrassment and should be avoided; the mentally ill are seen as difficult to communicate with and this makes for unpredictable social intercourse.

Reasons for increase in MH stigma

Lack of resources: There is a shortage of mental health professionals and facilities in India, which makes it difficult for people to access mental health services. Additionally, many of the existing services are not affordable for the majority of the population.

Limited knowledge: There is a lack of knowledge and understanding about mental health among the general population in India. Many people are not aware of the symptoms of mental illness or how to seek help.

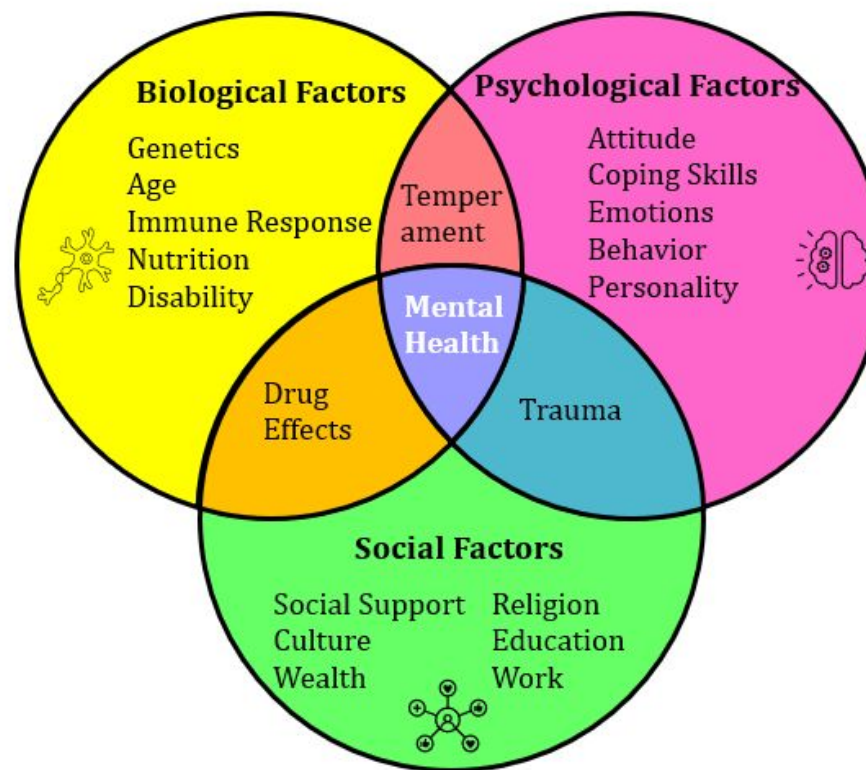
Cultural beliefs: Traditional beliefs surrounding mental illness can also be a barrier to seeking help. Many people in India believe that mental illness is caused by supernatural or spiritual factors and seek help from traditional healers rather than mental health professionals.

Lack of government support: The Indian government has not allocated sufficient resources towards addressing the issue of mental health, and many of the existing mental health programs are underfunded.

To overcome these challenges, there is a need for more resources and efforts to be directed towards addressing mental health in India. This includes increasing access to mental health services, educating the public about mental health, and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. Additionally, involving religious and community leaders in the effort to raise awareness about mental health can be beneficial.

Factors affecting mental health

The Biopsychosocial Model



Biological factors

Genetics and Family History Shape Our Mental Health Early

Biology and family history do play an important role in our mental health over the course of our lives. People can be genetically predisposed to mental health conditions like depression or anxiety disorders. If someone in our family has struggled with one or more mental health challenges, like depression or anxiety, it may increase the likelihood that we will struggle too.

Family history isn't just about genetics. Our family typically models for us how to handle stress. Watching how people close to us manage (or avoid) emotions and emotionally charged situations can shape our own responses, sometimes well before we are aware of it! For example, we might grow up in a family where people aren't open about the mental health challenges they've experienced — or we're taught not to complain when we are struggling with our mental health.

These outlooks and behaviors that we learn from our families can shape how we cope with stress and how proactive we are about addressing mental health struggles. Research has shown that learning self-care techniques and healthy coping mechanisms early on may lessen the impact of mental health challenges later in life.

Social/environmental factors

How Our Environment Shapes Our Mental Health

Nurture goes beyond the way our families care for us when we're young. It includes every aspect of our environment, from where we live to the cultural message we receive; from the friends we make to how we stay connected to them; from stressors in our everyday lives to major societal issues. All of these can impact our mental health.

Our Early Conditions are Critical

Our family plays a powerful role in shaping our environment during our childhoods. When traumatic things happen to us, our families, or our communities – especially in our early or teenage years – they can shape how we see the world, how we respond to stress, and whether we have the chance to thrive. For example, growing up in a chaotic household, in an unsafe neighborhood or being exposed to chronic discrimination can lead to stress that impacts us physically, mentally, and emotionally later in life.

Psychological factors (emotional health)

Our Support Network: Quality Over Quantity

Our ability to respond to the challenges of daily life is also influenced by having people around us who we can rely on as a support network. Research shows that a strong support network — or even having at least one person with whom we can share our feelings openly, without fear of judgment — protects our mental (and physical!) health.

In today's social media-driven world, many people equate having a “network” with having a large number of followers. But most of these relationships are not strong enough to support us through difficult times. It's important to focus on growing meaningful relationships with people with whom we feel like we can be our true selves.

Psychological factors (emotional health)

Our Society: Global Issues, Personal Impact

Big societal and global issues can have a real impact on our mental health and well-being. The more chaos, instability, violence, discrimination or division we experience, the harder it is to maintain positive mental health.

For example, research shows that exposure to climate-related natural disasters, like floods and wildfires, can lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

If environmental risk factors for [mental illness] can be validated and confirmed, there is every reason to expect they will point to preventive measures that lower their risks and morbidity

Some of the greatest advancements in twentieth-century medicine were achieved by identifying and preventing infectious diseases through vaccination, improved sanitary measures, improved nutrition, and diminished hazards of environmental contaminants

Loneliness

Loneliness is feeling sad about being by yourself, particularly over a long period of time. Isolation is being separated from other people and your environment. Loneliness can sometimes be felt even in relationships or when surrounded by people.“

Feelings of loneliness and/or isolation are something that most people experience at some time in their lives. These feelings are normal and usually pass but if they don't go away and last for a long time, it can have a negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

Loneliness

There are many reasons why people feel lonely or isolated. Some reasons may include:

- relocation or death of your spouse, family member, partner or friend
- living on your own
- poor family connection
- difficulties socializing and feeling like you don't belong
- feelings of loss or grief
- poor physical health or frailty
- mental health issues or conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety)
- unable to participate in activities due to illness, mobility or transport issues
- retirement from work
- a lack of purpose or meaning in life
- language barriers or reduced connections with your culture.