

25

## Mental Health

Mental health impacts on all areas of life, so it is very important to maintain positive mental health.

There are a number of influences that have an impact on an individual's mental health. These include both major external events such as war and poverty, as well as impacting the individual internally through loneliness, emotional immaturity or organic handicaps.

Through understanding and focussing on the protective factors in your life, you can minimise the risk factors that can lead to a mental disorder.

Protective factors include, your ability to cope with stress; exercise; and, social and conflict management skills.

## Physical Health

Looking after yourself physically can have many benefits that affect you emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally.

It is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle as it may prevent mental health problems from occurring. This includes having a well balanced and nutritious diet, and plenty of exercise.

Having a well balanced diet means making sure that all the nutrients and food groups are available, and reducing junk food, takeaway, soft drink and juice.

Ideally, you should be aim to exercise around thirty minutes a day.

Eating well and exercising will reduce stress and can prevent depression.

If you are persistently feeling unwell, it is important that you seek professional medical advice. Self-pathologising may be harmful to your health.

## Emotional Wellbeing

Being emotionally healthy gives you control over your thoughts, feelings and behaviours, leading to feeling better about yourself and having satisfying relationships.

Relationships are important to everyone, regardless of age, gender or race.

Relationships Australia (2011) says that,

“People in supportive, loving relationships are more likely to feel healthier, happier and satisfied with their lives and less likely to have mental or physical health problems or to do things that are bad for their health.”

Healthy relationships positively affect all aspects of health.

Good relationships are not limited to significant interpersonal relationships, but refer to your friends as well.

Communication is an obvious part of relationships. It's important to be clear in communicating, as this can limit



misunderstanding. Most of the way that we communicate is without words, so it is important to be aware of body language and tone.

**“We give a great deal of information without using words, by our body posture, by our tone of voice, and by the expression on our face.”**

(Relationships Australia, 2011)

An important part of being mentally healthy is the ability to self soothe. This is a sign of emotional maturity, and leads to a greater satisfaction and pleasure in relationships.

Corey Allan from “Simple Marriage” provides some tips for self soothing include:

1. Don't take people's behaviour around you too personally.
2. Keep the current conflict in perspective.
3. Control your behaviour, even if you can't regulate your emotions.
4. Stop the negative thinking. Increase positive thinking.
5. You may have to break contact temporarily with someone until things cool down.
6. It is important to confront your difficult emotions and not deal with them through food and substance abuse, as well as emotional regression.

Through having a better relationship with yourself, it then leads you to have better relationships with those around you.

## Spiritual

Spirituality is a part of being human and involves experiences of:

- A deep-seated sense of meaning and purpose in life.
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of connection of 'the deeply personal with the universal'
- Acceptance, integration and a sense of wholeness

Being spiritually healthy may aid in the prevention of a mental health issues, as it involves having a deep connection with the world and others around you.

Spiritually may also strengthen your social supports by joining you to a group or community organisation.

Values are an important part of spirituality. Values define who we are. They are shaped by what we think and feel, and are largely influenced by family and community. Often, our values can conflict with others.

Understanding and recognising your own values and beliefs about the world may enable you to live a more fulfilled and satisfied life.

Some important values are:

**Communication:** you enjoy talking with all sorts of people.

**Freedom:** You like to do things in your own way.

**Friendship:** You like to be with people who are friendly and understanding.

**Independence:** You like to do things without interference from others.

**Leadership:** You like to be in charge when you do things.

**Peace and quiet:** You like working without pressure, setting your own deadlines.

**Respect:** You respect the rights and property of others.

**Responsibility:** you accept responsibility for your own actions and don't blame others.

**Risk taking:** you enjoy taking risks.

**Teamwork:** You like to work cooperatively and part of a team.

[www.mmha.org.au](http://www.mmha.org.au)

[www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au)

[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org).

## Useful Resources

<http://www.auseinet.com/index.php>

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

[www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)

[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

[www.bluepages.anu.edu.au](http://www.bluepages.anu.edu.au)

[www.crufad.org](http://www.crufad.org)

[www.depressioNet.com.au](http://www.depressioNet.com.au)

[www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)

[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)