



Mental Health and Wellness Overview

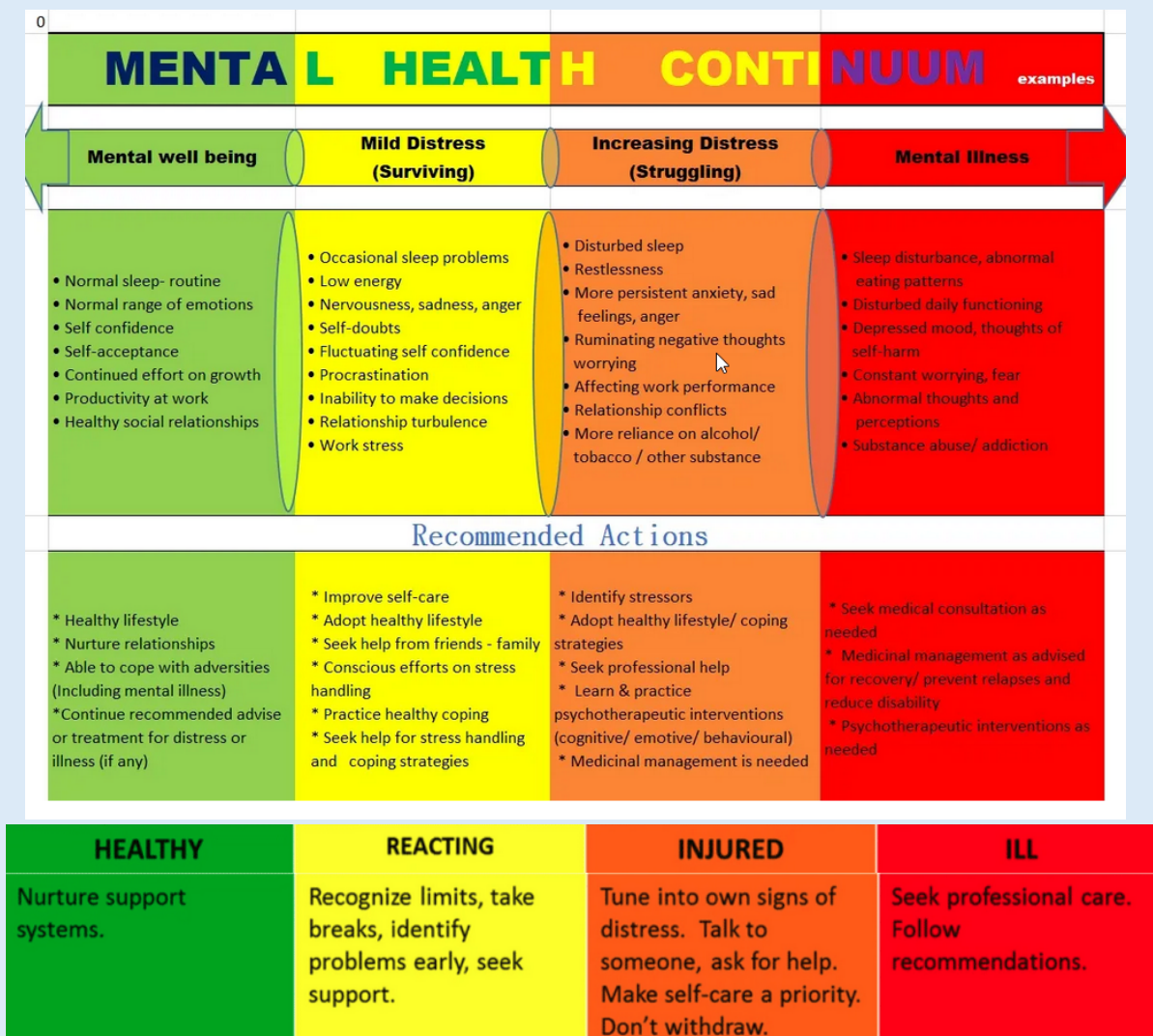
We are all somewhere on the Mental Health Spectrum/Continuum.

The spectrum of mental health is a way of conceptualizing mental and emotional well-being as a continuum that can change over time. It's similar to the idea of physical health, where there are many ways to be healthy or unwell.

One in five youth or adults live with a Mental Health condition.

Just like, though we are usually physically well, we occasionally get sick physically, the same can be said of our mental health. Though we may be well most of the time, occasionally we may stray into mild anxiety and depression. And if we are honest, we have all experience stress from time to time, often one of the root causes of physical, emotional and mental ailment. Emotional and Mental ailments may be considered mental challenges. The difference between mental health challenges and mental health illness is that the latter impact our ability to function in our daily life and routines.

The following is taken from the NAMI.org website:





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Mental Illness does not discriminate; it can affect anyone regardless of one's age, gender, income, social status, race/ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, background, or other aspect of cultural identity. It is not a weakness or character defect.

While Mental Illness can occur at any age 70% of all mental illness begins by age 24.

Mental illness is treatable. The vast majority of individuals with mental illness (70%-90%) continue to function in their daily lives.

A person can be experiencing poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness. And, likewise, a person can be diagnosed with a mental illness and live a relatively normal life.

Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be a sign of a mental illness isn't always easy. There's no easy test that can let someone know if there is mental illness or if actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors of a person or the result of a physical illness.

Ten common warning signs of a Mental Health condition or challenge:

1. Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
2. Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
3. Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
4. Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason
5. Seriously trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so
6. Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to lose weight
7. Significant weight loss or weight gain
8. Severe out-of-control risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others
9. Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
10. Drastic changes in behavior, personality, or sleeping habits, or extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still



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Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don’t exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one’s own feelings, behavior or personality (“lack of insight” or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing “aches and pains”)
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they’re still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral.

Symptoms in children may include the following:

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums



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Resistance to Treatment

When a person is taking their prescribed medication, they can usually live a fairly normal life. When they go off their medication, this is not always the case. This can be true whether the illness is physical, emotional, or mental. So why do some refuse medication.

- They feel good so they must be cured and no longer need medication.
- They may not recognize symptoms of a problem
- They fear being labeled mentally ill
- They can't handle the unpleasant side effects
- They want to depend on God alone for healing

An excellent source for help is the book “I am not sick. I don't need help!” by Xavier Amador. I proposes the LEAP tool – Listen, Empathize, Agree, Partner. We don't argue with a person. We listen and validate their feelings and concern. And then we partner with them to find a motivation to continue taking their medication. It may be as simple as saying “Taking your meds, will keep you from going back to the hospital all the time and I know that is something you hate.”

Stigma

Unfortunately, we shy away and ignore people who have or are suspected to suffer with mental illness because we don't understand it and we are afraid. This **stigma** prevents many suffering with a mental health condition from getting help or knowing how to get help. Many despair and find a way to end their life. But as Christians and especially Catholics **we are called to love everyone unconditionally**. One of the most common expressions of Jesus is “Don't be afraid.” Our accompaniment, with our Lord at our side, can make all the difference in the world and maybe even save a life. So fear not. When we risk our presence, God will be there too. **If not us, who?**

For information on specific Mental Health conditions, click on the specific condition links on the Mental Health page.

Mental Health Sources for more detailed information:

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)

<https://www.nami.org/who-we-are/>



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National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health>

Mental Health America

<https://mhanational.org/finding-help/>

Mayo Clinic

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/search/search-results?q=mental%20health>

Pathways to Promise

<https://www.pathways2promise.org/resources-catalog>

Take Action for Mental Health

<https://takeaction4mh.com/>

Jed

<https://jedfoundation.org/?s=Mental+Health>

Catholic Mental Health Ministers

<https://catholicmhm.org/resources-topic>

Heads up Guys

<https://headsupguys.org/>

Office on Women's Health

<https://womenshealth.gov/mental-health>

Help Guide

<https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health>

Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/search-results/?q=mental+health#stp=mental%20health&stp=1>

Mental Health First Aid

<https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>



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CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/>

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety>

National Eating Disorders Association

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>

Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance

<https://sczaction.org/caregiver-resources/>

S.A.F.E Alternatives (Self-harm)

<https://selfinjury.com/home/resources/>

Courage to Caregivers

<https://www.couragetocaregivers.org/search?q=mental%20health>

See also the tab for Caretaker Support on the main Mental Health page.

For questions, resources, Catholic therapists, contact Rich at hello@thechurchofstluke.org