

Mental Health Awareness Factsheet

Mental Health explained

Mental health is no different to physical health. Both go up and down all the time and this just means we are normal.

Sometimes we feel okay and other times we can feel really low, sometimes we feel as fit as a fiddle and other times we suffer from a cold or something worse.

Sometimes though, mental health is something that you may need help with from a doctor or another professional – in the same way as you would need help if you had a problem with your heart.

‘Mental’ health just means that it is your brain that needs some help – and remember, the brain is just an organ, the same as your heart, your lungs, your liver and so on.

The problem though, is that our brain is the central processor of our body (just like the CPU in a computer). When something is affecting your CPU – everything else is affected too. This doesn’t mean that you are weak, it means you’ve caught a metaphorical virus, like a computer. And we all know that when our computer gets a virus it needs to be dealt with.

Mental Health issues can occur in anybody at any time and can be triggered by any number of factors at home or at work. However, unlike a physical illness, mental health issues are not always visible and, because of this, can become serious before they are detected and diagnosed.

23% of teenagers will experience a mental health issue before they reach the age of 20 and 1 in four workers suffer from at least one psychiatric disorder.

Many different things can increase the risk of developing a mental health issue including pressure at work, financial pressure, physical disability, sexuality, friendship/relationship issues, family issues, distressing events, ethnicity, poverty, mental disabilities such as OCD or ADHD, poor self-image, negative self-talk and so the list goes on.

Every time we feel powerful negative emotions, we trigger our fight or flight response. In turn, this releases chemicals in our body that can build up and attack our organs. If that organ happens to be your brain, then this may lead to a mental health issue.

There are a number of different mental health categories including Depression, Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Psychosis and Suicide. Even though each category is different, there are some common behaviours that might be a sign, or a symptom, of a developing mental health issue.

These include:

- Feeling sad or withdrawn for a long time
- Taking extreme risks – either physical or verbal
- Experiencing intense worries or fears
- Not eating or becoming obsessed with exercise
- Hurting yourself deliberately or thinking about suicide
- Severe mood swings that are bad enough to affect friendships and relationships
- Using drugs or drinking alcohol
- Sudden, overwhelming fear

Changes in your behaviour, in your personality or in your sleeping patterns.

We will ALL experience some of these things some of the time. This does NOT mean that everyone has a mental health problem. Most of the time it just means we are normal. However, if some, or all of these things are happening frequently or lasting for a long time then they may be warning signs that you need to discuss with a professional.



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STRENGTH THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

For more information about our workshops to combat mental health issues at work, at school or at home, please visit our website.

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