**PDCP**

**Understanding Mental Health**

*Essential Question: What is mental health and in turn, what is mental illness?*

**Student Outcomes: At the end of the unit, students will be able to:**

1. Differentiate between mental health, mental distress, mental problems and mental illnesses.
2. Understand the role of the brain in mental illness.
3. Identify and have a brief understanding of some typical mental illnesses (disorders).
4. List some of the risk factors of mental illness.

**What is mental health?**

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also determines how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. A healthy brain is what gives us mental health. Our brains need to learn how to apply our emotions, thinking and behaviors to help us adapt to the challenges that life creates for us. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Mental health was once defined as showing no signs or symptoms of mental illness. This has changed**. The following characteristics are now considered when assessing mental health:**

1. Ability to enjoy life
2. Resilience (the ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenge and to bounce back from adversity)
3. Balance in your life
4. Self-actualization (the motivation to realize our full and unique potential)
5. Flexibility (ready and able to change so as to adapt to different circumstances)

**It is important to understand that everyone has mental health just like everyone has physical health.**

**What is mental distress?**

Mental distress is the inner signal of anxiety or “stress” that a person has when something in their environment is demanding that they adapt to a challenge. For example, writing a test, giving a presentation in front of the class, asking a person out on a date or failing to make a sports team etc.

Everybody experiences mental distress (stress) every day. It is a part of good mental health. It signals us to try and solve the challenge we are facing. That is how we learn to solve problems and adapt to challenges in our lives. Mental distress does not require counselling. You are not “sick” and you do not need treatment. You can learn to manage the stress. Learning how to manage mental distress helps us to have successful adult lives.

**What are mental health problems?**

Mental health problems arise when a person is faced with a much larger stressor than normal. For example, death of a loved one, moving to a new country, having a serious illness etc. Mental health problems often create trouble for us in everyday functioning and as a result we may need extra support to help us through the difficult situation. Support may come from a counsellor, a religious leader or another person that has the skills needed to help effectively. Medical treatment is usually not necessary.

**What is mental illness (mental disorder)?**

A mental illness is very different from mental distress and from a mental health problem. Mental illnesses (disorders) have many causes and result from complex interactions between a person’s genes and environment in which they live.Mental illnesses are disorders of brain functions – a person’s brain is not working as it should be.

***Understanding Mental Illness (Continued on next page)……***

The brain is responsible for many different functions in the body – thinking, sensing, feeling, signaling, physical functions, behavioral functions etc. All of these systems and functions are connected to one another in the brain. That’s why it’s a problem if our brain is not working as it should be.  **Some reasons why the brain is not** **working as it should, include:**

* Damage that occurs through the use of drugs, poison, head injury or environmental stress
* Infection
* Genetic history or heredity
* Not caring for your mental health
* Continued and prolonged stress

A mental illness (disorder) is a medical condition diagnosed by trained health professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists or doctors.

A person with a mental illness will experience challenges with emotions and feelings (depression, overwhelming anxiety), thinking (delusions, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts), physical (fatigue, lethargy), and behavioral (school refusal, withdrawal from family and friends, suicide attempt). Mental disorders always require treatment (often therapy and/or medication) by trained health professionals.

Mental health illness is not a choice or a moral failing. Mental illnesses occur at similar rates around the world, in every culture and in all socio-economic groups. **1 in 5 young people suffer from a mental illness - that is 20% of our population.** Sadly, only about 4% of the total health care budget is spent on mental health.

Mental illness can vary in duration and intensity and can come and go from a person’s life over time.

**Some examples of specific mental illnesses (disorders) include:**

* Mood disorders such as major depression and bipolar disorder
* Anxiety disorders such as generalized anxiety, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and panic disorder.
* Personality disorders
* Eating disorders
* Problem gambling
* Substance dependency

**Mental illness and risk factors**

Mental illness arises from a complex interaction of genetic, biological, personality and environmental factors. Mental illness affects people of all ages, education levels, income levels and cultures.

A **risk factor** is anything that increase’s a person’s chances of getting a disorder. Risk factors do not cause the disorder. Risk factors can be weak or strong. So having a specific risk factor may or may not be important for the person.

**Specific risk factors include:**

**-** Family history of mental illness

- Age

- Gender

- Substance abuse

- Chronic diseases

- Family, workplace, and life event stressors

***See The Stigma Of Mental Illness on next page……***

**PDCP**

**The Stigma of Mental Illness**

*Essential Question: What is the stigma of mental illness and what can I do to help reduce it?*

**Student Outcomes: At the end of the unit, students will be able to:**

1. Define stigma in relation to mental illness.

2. Understand the attitudes and behaviors that create stigma.

3. Identify ways they can help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.

**~~\*\*Introduction - Group activity~~**

**Consider……..What are your thoughts on stigma and mental illness?**

**THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

**Stigma** refers to a cluster of negative attitudes and beliefs that motivate the general public to fear, reject, avoid and discriminate against people with mental illnesses. Stigma is not just a matter of using the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect. It is the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness. Stigma is a barrier. Fear of stigma and the resulting discrimination discourage individuals and their families from getting the help they need.

**Terms related to stigma:**

1. **Stereotype –** Attitudes about a group of people, for example – “All people with mental illness are dangerous.”
2. **Prejudice –** Prejudice is agreeing with the stereotypes without knowing or understanding, for example - “I think people with mental illnesses are dangerous”.
3. **Discrimination –** The behavior that results from prejudice, for example – “I don’t want people with mental illness around me, therefore I discriminate against them by not hiring them, not being friend with them etc.

**Questions to “just think about”……..**

*Can you think of any other health conditions or social issues that have been stigmatized throughout history?*

*What do you think influences perceptions about mental illness?*

*How do you think stigma affects the lives of people with mental illness?*

 Everyone has some stigmatizing or discriminatory thoughts or attitudes at times. The important thing is to **recognize** those stigmatizing/discriminatory thoughts or attitudes, examine where they came from and work toward changing the hurtful behaviors they cause.

***The Stigma Of Mental Illness (Continued on next page)……***

**Reducing Stigma – What Works?**

1. **Learn more about mental illness –** you are better able to evaluate and resist the inaccurate negative stereotypes that you come across.
2. **Listen to people who have experienced mental illness –** they can tell you how stigma affects their lives and how they would like to be seen and treated by others.
3. **Watch your language –** don’t use terms that will keep the stigma of mental illness alive. For example, “crazy”, “psycho”, “wacko” and “nuts”.
4. **Respond to stigmatizing material in the media –** watch for media that stigmatizes mental illnesses and report it to any number of organizations (authors, editors, movie producers, advertisers etc. )
5. **Speak up about stigma –** When someone says something negative about a person with mental illness, tells a joke that ridicules mental illnesses, or makes disrespectful comments about mental illness, let them know it is hurtful and that you find such comments offensive and unacceptable.
6. **Talk openly about mental illness –** Don’t be afraid to let others know about your mental illness or the mental illness of a loved one. The more mental illness remains hidden, the more people continue to believe that it is a shameful thing that needs to be kept hidden.
7. **Demand changes from your elected representative –** Policies that keep stigma alive can be changed if enough people let their city councilors and members of Provincial and Federal Parliament know.
8. **Provide support for organizations that fight stigma –** Make a contribution by joining an organization, volunteering or donating money.

**Reflection – Reflect on, label, and respond to the following questions.**

**(A) TO DO:** Think of a time where you felt misunderstood or judged. How did this make you feel? Were you angry? Disappointed? Something else?

**(B) TO DO**: How do you think people with mental illness feel when they have to live with the stigmas other people have about mental illness?

***The Stigma Of Mental Illness (Continued on next page)……***

***ACTIVITY – Explore and Report on a Mental Disorder***

Explore a mental disorder by reading the **FACTS** about a specific mental illness that can be found at the following website: [**https://teenmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FINAL-Guide-Dec-2017-Online-Cover-and-Interior.pdf**](https://teenmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FINAL-Guide-Dec-2017-Online-Cover-and-Interior.pdf)

The **FACTS SHEETS** for the following 8 disorders can be found on the pages listed below. After each fact sheet is a “**REPORTING PAGE**” which asks questions about the previous disorder.

**(C) TO DO**: Prepare a “REPORTING PAGE” (in Microsoft Word), highlight the questions that appear on your reporting page, answer them (using your own words from what you read), skip a line between each response, and send to me as an attachment to an e-mail. Be sure to place your name, period, and the disorder you have chosen to report on at the top of the page.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| DISORDER | FACTS SHEETS Page(s) | REPORTINGPage |
| **Anxiety Disorders** | **83-85** | **86** |
| **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**  | **87-88** | **89** |
| **Bipolar Mood Disorder** | **90-92** | **93** |
| **Depression** | **94-96** | **97** |
| **Eating Disorder** | **98-100** | **101** |
|  **Schizophrenia** | **102-104** | **105** |
| **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** | **106** | **107** |
| **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** | **108** | **109** |

***ACTIVITY - Watch & Write About Clara’s Big Ride*** (44:09 minutes)

As we discussed at the beginning of semester 2, Bell Canada hosts **Bell Let's Talk Day**.  The descriptor for this documentary states: “*Part catalyst for change and part epic road movie, Clara’s Big Ride is an inspiring new film that tackles the profound conversation about mental health and the stigma that surrounds it.”* ***Clara’s Big Ride,*** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQrNvPj5jHs**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQrNvPj5jHs) is **powerful, thought-provoking, and inspirational.**  After watching the video, complete “**(D) TO DO”** considering as many things as possible that **you** can do to help end the stigma around mental illness – “to be part of the solution vs part of the problem”. **I am confident that we can and will accept Clara’s challenge to “keep the conversation going”.**

**(D) TO DO:** Write a Personal Response/Reflection detailing what you thought of the documentary Clara’s Big Ride. Include in your response what connections you had with any part of the documentay….what resonated with you…what ‘spoke’ to you….what struck you as interesting/thought-provoking/affirming……what questions you had/still have….and any additional thoughts or comments.

***See Support Strategies and Positive Mental Health on next page……***

**PDCP**

**Support Strategies and Positive Mental Health**

*Essential Question: Where do I get help for me or my friend?*

**Student Outcomes: At the end of the unit, students will be able to:**

1. List some resources in the community students could access if they were worried about their own mental health or that of a friend or relative.
2. Identify some strategies that are helpful for supporting someone with a mental illness.
3. Understand what constitutes an emotionally healthy person.
4. Identify some strategies they can use for positive mental health.

**Seeking help and finding support**

Seeking help and finding outside support for mental health problems or mental illness can be a tricky business. From the outside it is not clear when intervention is necessary, and people who are experiencing a mental illness may themselves not always be aware of what’s going on, and can be reluctant to come forward for fear of being stigmatized. When people know that they will not be stigmatized, they are more likely to seek help. Early intervention is important and increases the chance of recovery.

~~Group Activity – Brainstorm~~

**Following are some resources/supports for you to access/explore if/when you or someone you care about is struggling with a mental health problem:**

**School Resources:**

  Teachers, Guidance Counsellor, ISD Team (Integrated Service Delivery Team), VP,

**Local Community and Provincial Resources:**

**(E) TO DO:**  Visit the Government of NB website for information about “**Mental Health and Coping During Covid 19**” [**https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory\_diseases/coronavirus/mental-health-and-coping-during-covid-19.html**](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/mental-health-and-coping-during-covid-19.html)

**(F) TO DO:** Read the .pdf document titled **Mental Health Supports for Students, Families and Staff**

**National Resources:**

**(G) TO DO:** Visit and explore the following websites

 **Mental Health Information (National):**

* + - Canadian Mental Health Association ([**www.cmha.ca**](http://www.cmha.ca))
		- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health ([**www.camh.net**](http://www.camh.net))
		- Mood Disorders Society of Canada ([**www.mooddisorderscanada.ca**](http://www.mooddisorderscanada.ca))
		- Schizophrenia society of Canada ([**www.schizophrenia.ca**](http://www.schizophrenia.ca))
		- Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada ([**www.anxietycanada.ca**](http://www.anxietycanada.ca))
		- Teen Mental Health ([**www.teenmentalhealth.org**](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org))

and last but by no means least…….

* + - **Kids Help Phone (**[**www.kidshelpphone.ca**](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)**) – 1-800-668-6868 –** is Canada’s only 24 hour, national bilingual telephone counselling service for children and youth. It provides counseling to children and youth directly between the ages of 4 and 19 and helps adults aged 20 and over to find the counselling they need.

***Support Strategies and Positive Mental Health (Continued on next page)……***

**Strategies for supporting someone with a mental health problem/illness:**

1. Be supportive and understanding
2. Spend time with the person. Listen to him or to her.
3. Never underestimate the person’s capacity to recover.
4. Encourage the person to follow his or her treatment plan and to seek out support services.
5. Become informed about mental illness.
6. Remember that even though your friend may be going through a hard time they will recover. Stand by them.
7. Include your friend in activities. Keeping busy and staying in touch with friends will help your friend feel better, when they are ready.
8. If you are a close friend or family member of someone who has a mental illness, make sure you get support as well. Crisis training, self-help and or individual counselling will help you become a better support person.
9. **Put the person’s life before your friendship. If you think the person needs help, especially if he or she mentions thoughts of suicide, don’t keep it a secret – even if the person asked you to.**

 **What helps people with mental illness get and stay better?**

Recovery is an ongoing and slow process, and is different for each person. Research on recovery shows that there are a number of factors which people often mention are important:

1. Mutual support (self-help groups)
2. Social opportunities (going out with friends, church groups, drop-in centers, volunteer work etc.)
3. Positive relationships (accepting and being accepted, family and friends communicating with them in a positive way)
4. Meaningful activity (being able to work, go to school0
5. Medication (sticking with a treatment plan, working with doctors to find the best treatment plan with the fewest side effects)
6. Spirituality (involvement in a faith community or individual spiritual practice)
7. Inner healing capacity and inner peace (finding a sense of meaning and purpose, even in suffering)
8. Personal growth and development (hobbies, self-education, taking control of one’s life, exercise, personal goal setting etc.)
9. Self-awareness (recognizing when to seek help, recognizing one’s accomplishments and accepting and/or learning from ones’ failures)

**The Importance of positive mental health**

 ~~Group Activity – Brainstorm ideas~~ **Think of the things that keep ~~people~~ YOU mentally healthy:**

Achieving mental health is about striking a **balance** in the social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental aspects of our lives. Reaching a balance is a learning process and it is ongoing. At times we may tip the balance too much in one direction and have to find our footing again. Our personal balance is highly individual and our challenge is to stay mentally healthy by finding and keeping that balance.

You can gauge your mental health by thinking how you have coped with a recent difficulty. Did you feel there was no way out of the problem and that life would never be normal again? Were you unable to carry on with work or school? With time, were you able to enjoy your life, family and friendships? Were you able to regain your balance and look forward to the future?

**Remember the ability to enjoy life, resilience, balance, self-actualization and flexibility from the first section you read?** By reflecting on these characteristics, you can recognize your strengths and identify areas where your level of mental fitness could be improved.

~~Speaking~~…writing about balance……..what role might social media play in helping or harming an individual’s mental health?Especially now that people are practicing Physical Distancing and staying at home, people of all ages are taking to social media more than ever. We’ll explore this further so keep reading!

***Support Strategies and Positive Mental Health (Continued on next page)……***

**(H) TO DO:** Make a list that includes 4 **positive** aspects of social media and 4 **negative** aspects of social media.

**(I) TO DO:** Watch the **TED Talk “Is Social Media Hurting Your Mental Health**” (14:44 minutes) by Bailey Parnell [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Czg\_9C7gw0o**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Czg_9C7gw0o)After watching this TED Talk, write a paragraph response (4-5 sentences) to the video. Include in your response what you thought of the talk, and if/how your own social media habits might be affecting your own mental health. Include any observations and/or connections you had while watching this.

**(J) TO DO:** Read the following and pick at least 1 think that you ae not already doing that you will start doing.Include this as your response to (J).

**10 Things You Can Do For Your Mental Health *(National Mental Health Assoc.)***

When people talk about mental health, they are often referring to a disorder – such as anxiety or depression – that may require professional support and treatment. But mental health is much more than a diagnosis. Mental health includes your overall psychological well-being, such as the way you feel about yourself and others as well as your ability to manage your feelings and deal with everyday difficulties.

And although taking care of your mental health can mean [seeking professional support](https://www.seleni.org/advice-support/article/6-things-you-should-know-about-therapy) and treatment, it also means taking steps to improve your emotional health. Making these changes will pay off in all aspects of your life, including boosting your mood, building resilience, and adding to your overall enjoyment of life.

**Tell yourself something positive.** Research shows that how you think about yourself can have a powerful effect on how you feel. When we perceive our self and our life negatively, we can end up viewing experiences in a way that confirms that notion. Instead, practice using words that promote feelings of self-worth and personal power. For instance, instead of saying: "I'm such a loser. I won't get the job because I tanked in the interview," try saying something like: "I didn't do as well in the interview as I would have liked, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to get the job."

**Write down something you are grateful for.** Gratitude has been clearly linked with improved well-being and mental health as well as happiness. The best-researched method to increase feelings of gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal or write a daily gratitude list. Generally contemplating gratitude is also effective, but you need to get regular practice to see a long-term benefit. Find something to be grateful for, let it fill your heart, and bask in that feeling.

**Focus on one thing.** Being mindful of the present moment allows us to let go of negative or difficult emotions from past moments or experiences that are weighing us down. Start by bringing awareness to routine activities, such taking a shower, eating lunch, or walking home. Being aware of the physical sensations, sounds, smells, or tastes of these experiences helps focus your attention. When your mind wanders, just bring it back to what you are doing.

**Move your body.** Your body releases stress-relieving and mood-boosting chemicals called endorphins before and after you work out, which is why exercise is a powerful antidote to stress, anxiety, and depression. Look for small ways to add activity to your day, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator or going on a short walk. To get the most benefit, aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise daily, and try to do it outdoors. Exposure to sunlight helps your body produce vitamin D, which increases the level of serotonin in the brain, and spending time nature is a proven stress reducer.

**Eat a good meal.** What you eat nourishes your whole body, including your brain. Carbohydrates (in moderate amounts) increase serotonin, a brain chemical that has a calming effect on your mood. Protein-rich foods increase norepinephrine, dopamine, and tyrosine, which help keep you alert. And vegetables and fruits are loaded with nutrients that feed every cell of your body, including those that affect mood-regulating brain chemicals. Include foods with omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (found in fish, nuts, and flaxseed) because research shows these can improve mood and restore structural integrity of the brain cells necessary for cognitive functioning.

**Open up to someone else.** Knowing you are valued by others is important for helping you think more positively and overcome the negative aspects of life. There is also evidence that being more trusting can increase your emotional well-being because as you get better at finding the positive aspects in other people, you become better at recognizing your own. Forgiving someone is another way to reduce your stress and anxiety. Yes, it can be hard to do, but holding onto anger can eventually lead to anxiety and depression and keep you stuck in the past.

**Do something for someone else.** Research shows that being helpful to others has a beneficial effect on how you feel about yourself. Being helpful and kind – and valued for what you do – is a great way to build self-esteem. The meaning you find in helping others will enrich and expand your life.

**Take breaks.** In those moments when it all just seems like too much, step away for a moment. Do anything but whatever was stressing you out until you feel a little bit better. Sometimes the best thing to do is a simple breathing exercise: Close your eyes and take ten deep breaths. For each one count to four as you inhale, hold it for a count of four, and then exhale for another four. This works wonders almost immediately.

**Go to bed on time.** Sleep restores both your mind and body. Your immune system repairs itself, and your brain rests and recharges while you sleep. Without enough good sleep, your system doesn't function as well as it should. A large body of research has shown that sleep deprivation also has a significant effect on mood. Try to go to bed at a regular time each day, and practice good habits to get better sleep. These include shutting down screens at least an hour before bed, using your bed only for sleep or relaxing activities, and limiting caffeinated drinks to the morning hours.

**Start today.** You have the power to take positive steps to improve your resilience and emotional health. Don’t wait until you are in crisis to make your mental health a priority. It is easier to form new habits when you are feeling strong, and then you will have them in place when you need them most. **Pick something from this article that resonates with you and try it. Then try something else. Slowly putting in place routines, habits, and regular patterns will help you feel better through gradual change.**