

Chapter 8

Mental Health



In this chapter, you can find information about:

1. What is mental health and how to maintain positive mental health?
2. Concerns about my mental health
3. Some causes of mental health problems
4. What can I do in a mental health emergency
5. What can be done to end mental health stigma
6. What did I learn?

1. What Is Mental Health and How to Maintain Positive Mental Health?

Mental health is an important part of your overall health and well-being. It includes your emotional well-being, which is your ability to safely express all your feelings including being happy, sad, nervous, or mad. It also includes how you think and feel about yourself and the world around you. For example, your mental health can determine how you handle stress, how you relate to others, and if you make healthy choices.

How Can I Encourage Positive Mental Health?

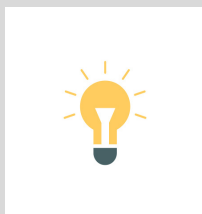
Emotions can impact how you think and what you do. When you feel good, you can manage your life more easily. You can do the things that you usually do. This is positive mental health.

Maintaining positive mental health plays an important role in staying healthy. Being positive lets you live and work more independently, and develop and meet your personal goals. You can maintain positive mental health by:

- Connecting with others
- Being physically active
- Eating healthy meals
- Having a positive outlook
- Getting enough sleep
- Asking for help

Learning stress management tools is also a great way to maintain positive mental health. They can help you cope with stress and accept changes that may be difficult for you.

Some fun and useful activities to help maintain positive mental health are:



- Meditation (guided or non-guided)
- Prayer
- Talking with a friend
- Yoga or other physical activity
- Watching a funny movie
- Activities with loved ones
- Eating healthy foods

2. Concerns about My Mental Health

When you don't feel good, life can feel overwhelming.

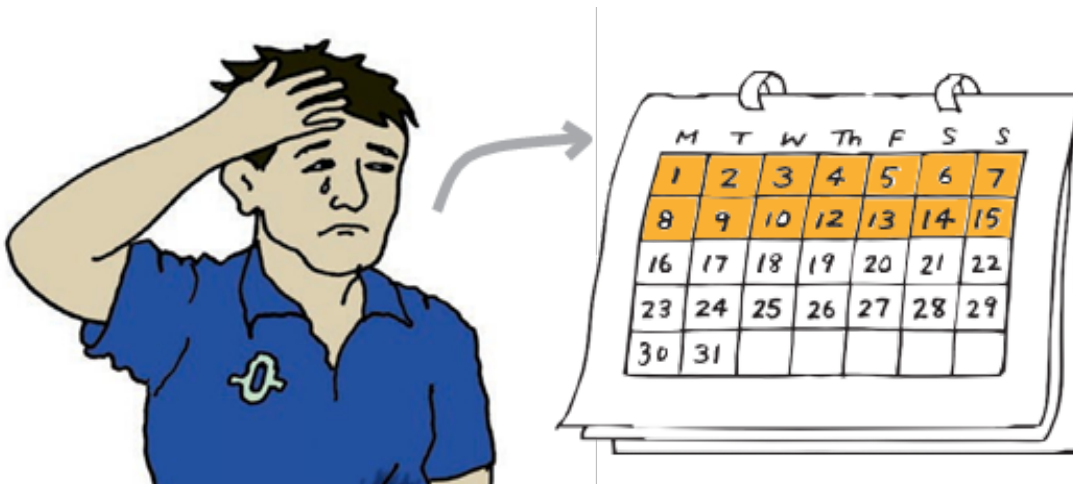
You may not be able to do some of the things that you usually do.

At times, everyone feels:

- Worried
- Scared
- Upset
- Sad
- Confused
- Angry

These feelings usually go away quickly or within days. However, you should contact your doctor if they:

1. Last for 2 weeks or longer
2. Keep coming back
3. They keep you from living the life you want to live



If these feelings are overwhelming, you might start noticing that you:

- Can't sleep
- Don't feel like eating
- Feel pain in your body
- Stop taking showers
- Can't think straight
- Stop seeing friends

If one or more of these things happen to you for several days or longer, you should reach out to your doctor or someone you trust for help.

How Do I Know if I Need Help with My Mental Health?

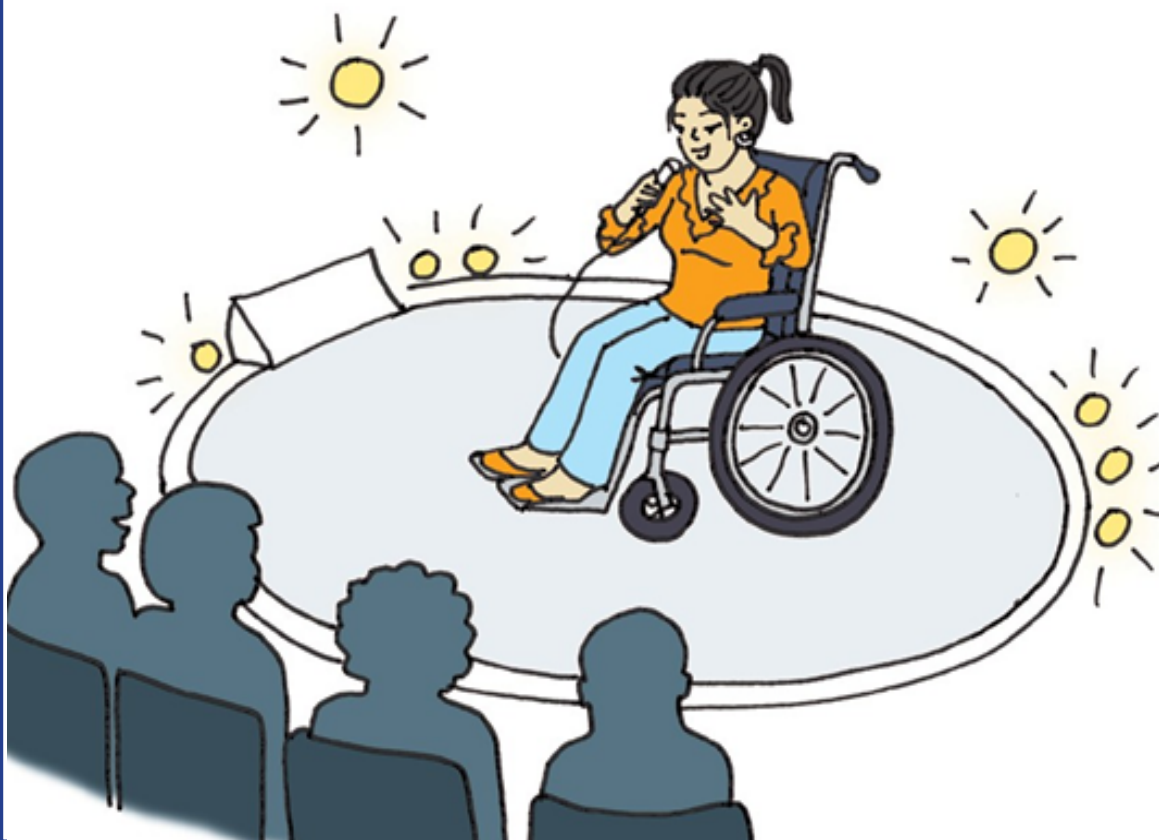
You might need help if you or others notice that you stop doing the things that you enjoy or need to do. This means changes that last for a long time. These changes make it harder for you to manage life.



It's best to get help as soon as you can.
People can feel better if they get the right help when they need it.

Tara's story

Tara loves singing karaoke at the club.
She goes every Saturday.
She hates to miss her chance to sing.



But Tara stops going to karaoke.

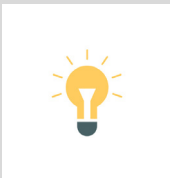
When friends come to pick her up, she says no.

Tara stops going out anywhere.

She stops talking to people.

She stops caring for herself.

Come on, Tara.
Everyone misses
you!

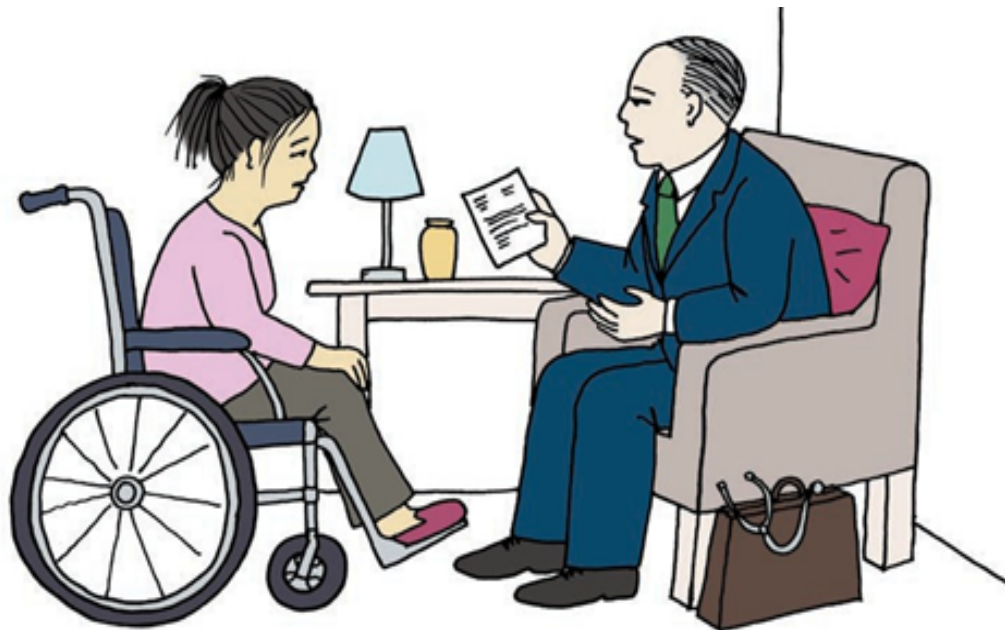


- How you feel can change what you do.
- Sometimes changes come quickly.
- Sometimes changes come more slowly.
- Friends and family often notice the changes, even if you do not notice them.

Is It OK to Ask For and Get Help?

Tara called her doctor and made an appointment. She told him how she was feeling.

He said Tara should go to a mental health provider, such as a psychologist, clinical social worker, or other licensed mental health care professional. These professionals know a lot about mental health.



You can also ask for help by choosing a person in your life who you trust and talk to them about how you feel. This person could be a:

- Friend
- Family member
- Doctor
- Someone who answers a telephone crisis line
- Case worker
- Social worker
- Community health center worker
- Advocate



Primary Care Provider Mental Health Plan

You and your doctor can make a plan to help you get better. Your doctor may say you need to see a mental health specialist. Medicaid or most insurance can help pay.

What Can Help Me to Feel Better?

It's important to find what works for you. There is usually more than just one thing. Here are the main things that can help:

1. Talking treatment

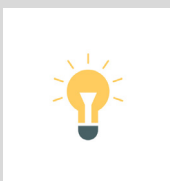
Talking treatment is often called counseling.

It is talking with a psychologist, clinical social worker, or other mental health provider.

This is a safe place to talk. The things you talk about are not shared with anyone else, unless you are in danger or planning to hurt yourself or someone else.



Tara goes to see Maggie every week. She starts to trust Maggie. Tara tells her about some really upsetting things. Maggie listens and together they work on ideas to help Tara cope.



It is important to talk to someone you feel comfortable with. Your doctor may be able to help you find someone that you like.

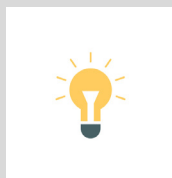
2. Getting active and eating healthy

Many people feel better with regular exercise and good nutrition. They help with feeling:

- More powerful and in control
- Less angry
- Less stressed and more calm
- Less “down” and more “up”
- Better about yourself
- Less lonely and more a part of things



Steps to increase physical activity:



- Start off with a short, gentle exercise.
- Build up slowly to being more active.

To eat healthier:

- Eat more fruits and veggies
- Eat less sugary and fatty foods.

3. Support to make changes in your life

There can be things in your life that make you feel down.
It might be about how people treat you.
You might be bored or lonely.



Tara decides to work out a problem with her house mates.
She calls a house meeting.
Her friend Julie comes to help Tara be strong.



- Solving problems can take time
- Some things are easy to change
- Some things are hard to change

4. Taking medication

Not everyone needs medication to feel better.

Your doctor or psychiatrist might say it's a good idea for you.

They should help you find other things to try as well.

You should ask lots of questions about medications.

- What are they for?
- Why should I try them?
- What will they do?
- What could go wrong?
- How long do I have to take them?
- Are there other ways to feel better?



Tara's doctor said she needs medication for a few months. Some people need to take medication for a much longer time.



- Always tell your doctor if you feel bad after taking medications.
- Always check with your doctor before stopping or starting medications.
- You may need to try another kind of medication.
- It can take time to find the right medication for you.

3. Some Causes of Mental Health Problems

- Too much stress caused by finances, relationships, health issues, transportation, work, etc.
- Difficult life experiences
- Not knowing how to cope with your feelings
- Family history of mental health problems
- When someone you care about dies or leaves
- Medical reasons
- Feeling lonely
- History of trauma

Who Can Have or Develop Problems with Their Mental Health?

Any person can have mental health problem at some time in their lives, and in fact, most people do experience mental health problems at some time during their life.



- Intellectual and developmental disabilities are not the same as mental health problems.
- All people need some support to have good mental health and for each person that support is different.

What Are Some Mental Health Diagnoses?

A doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, clinical social worker, or other mental health professional asks lots of questions about:

- A person's feelings
- What life was like before the mental health problem
- What life is like after the mental health problem

They will try to find out the right information about the person. Then, they might put a name to what the person is going through. This can help you to get the right mental health care.

**Post-traumatic
stress
disorder (PTSD)**

Anxiety

Depression

**Obsessive-compulsive
disorder (OCD)**

Bi-polar disorder

4. What Can I Do in a Mental Health Emergency?

A mental health emergency is when your feelings are so strong that you feel completely hopeless. You may feel like physically hurting yourself or another person. This is called a mental health crisis.

Things you or others can do in a mental health crisis:

- Call the 24/7 crisis helpline at **1-800-273-8255 (Oregon)**.
- Call your local mental health office or helpline.
- For emergencies, call a hospital emergency service. You can also call **9-1-1**.



Emergency care can include a trip to the hospital to see doctors that can help you.

5. What Can be Done to End Mental Health Stigma?

What is a stigma?

A stigma is a set of negative and often unfair beliefs people have about someone or something.

There is a lot of stigma when it comes to mental health conditions. People struggling with a mental health problem are often thought of negatively.

The best way to end the stigma is to talk about mental health. It is completely normal to have difficulty with your mental health and it is always OK to seek help whenever you need it.

*End
the
Stigma*



6. What Did I Learn?

I can take charge of my health care when I:

- Know what mental health is
- Am aware of changes in my feelings and emotions
- Reach out for support to get better
- Try new things to help me get well again
- Ask a lot of questions about medication
- Know that everyone can have problems and concerns with their mental health at any time
- Know what to do in an emergency
- Know how I can help end mental health stigma

Notes:

This module was adapted from NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities (2009), Australia.

The toolkit and its components were supported in part by the Grant or Cooperative Agreement Number DD000014, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and by the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities funded by the Administration on Community Living Grant #90DDUC0039. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Administration on Community Living, or the Department of Health and Human Services.