



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR THE MONTÉRÉGIE CENTRE AREA

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Over the course of any person's life, it is highly likely that they will develop



a mental health problem or have close contact with someone who does. Although the general public's knowledge about mental health problems is slowly increasing, there is still not a widespread understanding of how to recognize mental health problems and illnesses, how to get support if they need it and how to get help for someone else. Through this brochure it is our intention to provide information, dispel myths and offer resources to help those coping with mental health issues and their families.

WHAT ARE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

A variety of terms can be used to describe mental health problems: mental disorder, mental illness, poor mental health, psychiatric illness, nervous breakdown and burn out. These terms do not give much information about what is really happening with the person. A mental disorder causes major changes in a person's thinking, emotional state and behaviour and disrupts the person's ability to function and carry out their usual personal relationships. A mental health problem is a broader term that includes both mental health disorders and symptoms of mental disorders which may not be severe enough to warrant the diagnosis of mental disorder. There is a diverse spectrum of mental health issues.

For the purpose of this resource we have focused on:

- Mood-Related Disorders
- Anxiety and Trauma Related Disorders
- Psychotic Disorders
- Suicide

Mental health problems can occur at any age. In fact half of all mental health disorders begin by the age of 14 and 75% begin by the ages of 24. Disorders are not unique to a specific portion of the population. A range of factors can contribute: genetic, biological, personality and environmental aspects (family and social).

Other contributing factors are extra pressures such as physical ability, culture and sexuality. These areas may contribute to how one responds to seeking help and support. Included with this brochure is a quick reference guide for professional support and local organizations.

We have also included organizations that offer support from cultural perspectives as well as gender and sexuality.

WHAT IS MENTAL WELLNESS?

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is defined as

“A state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

Mental health is key to our well-being. Mental health means striking a balance in all aspects of your life: social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental. Good mental health isn't about avoiding problems or trying to achieve a 'perfect' life. Reaching a balance is a learning process. At times, you may tip the balance too much in one direction and have to find your footing again. Your personal balance will be unique, and your challenge will be to stay mentally healthy by keeping that balance.

STIGMAS AND MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS



Stigmas refer to the negative attitudes (prejudice) and negative behaviour (discrimination) towards people with mental health problems. The stigma attached to mental health problems presents a serious barrier to assessment, diagnosis, treatment and support needed for recovery as well as acceptance from the community. Below are 10 myths and the truth about mental health problems.

MYTH #1 MENTAL ILLNESSES AREN'T REAL ILLNESSES.

Fact Mental illnesses create distress that do not go away on their own. These are real health problems with effective treatments. When someone breaks their arm, we wouldn't expect them to "get over it." Nor would we blame them if they required help in their daily life while they recovered.

MYTH #2 MENTAL ILLNESSES WILL NEVER AFFECT ME.

Fact Researchers estimate that as many as one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem or illness in any given year.

MYTH #3 MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE JUST AN EXCUSE FOR POOR BEHAVIOUR.

Fact Some people who experience mental illnesses may act in ways that are unexpected or seem strange. Please remember that the illness, not the person, is behind these behaviours.

MYTH #4 BAD PARENTING CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESSES.

Fact. Mental illnesses are complicated conditions that arise from a combination of genetics, biology, environment, and life experiences.

MYTH #5 PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE VIOLENT AND DANGEROUS.

Fact People who experience a mental illness are no more violent than people without a mental illness. It is important to note that people who experience mental illnesses are much more likely to be victims of violence than to be violent.

MYTH #6 PEOPLE DON'T RECOVER FROM MENTAL ILLNESSES.

Fact Today, there are many different kinds of treatments, services, and supports that can help.

MYTH #7 PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE WEAK AND CAN'T HANDLE STRESS.

Fact People who experience mental illnesses may actually be better at managing stress than people who haven't experienced mental illness. Many have learned skills like stress management and problem-solving so they can address their issues and continue to balance life needs

MYTH #8 PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE MENTAL ILLNESSES CAN'T WORK.

Fact Most people who experience serious mental illnesses want to work but face systemic barriers to finding and keeping meaningful employment.

MYTH #9 KIDS CAN'T HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS LIKE DEPRESSION. THOSE ARE ADULT PROBLEMS.

Fact Many mental illnesses first appear when a person is young. Although mental illnesses may look different in children they can impact the way young people learn and build skills, which can lead to challenges in the future.

MYTH #10 EVERYONE GETS DEPRESSED AS THEY GROW OLDER. IT'S JUST PART OF THE AGING PROCESS.

Fact. Older adults may have a greater risk of depression because they experience so many changes in roles and social networks, but depression is never an inevitable part of aging

COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES

Health professionals divide mental illnesses into several different groups based on signs or symptoms. Some forms are listed below:

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders may include:

- excessive and uncontrollable worry
- strong fears around everyday things or situations
- unwanted thoughts,
- panic attacks, or fears around a past scary situation.

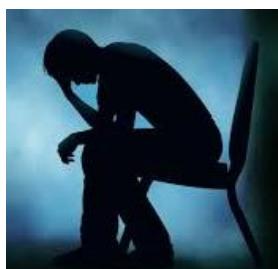
The different types of anxiety disorders include:

PHOBIAS	An intense fear around a specific thing: like an object, animal, or situation.
PANIC DISORDER	Involves repeated and unexpected panic attacks. A panic attack is a feeling of sudden and intense fear that lasts for a short period of time.
AGORAPHOBIA	A fear of being in a situation where a person can't escape or find help if they experience a panic attack or other feelings of anxiety.
SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER	Involves intense fear of being embarrassed or evaluated negatively by others. As a result, people avoid social situations. This is more than shyness
GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER	An excessive worry around "everyday problems", for more than six months.
OBSSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)	Is made up of unwanted thoughts, images, or urges that cause anxiety (obsessions) or repeated actions meant to reduce that anxiety (compulsions).
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)	Post-traumatic stress disorder can occur after a very scary or traumatic event, such as abuse, an accident, or a natural disaster

MOOD DISORDERS

Mood disorders affect the way a person feels. When someone experiences a mood disorder, they may feel sad, hopeless, tired, or numb for long periods of time. At times, some people experience an unusually 'high' mood and feel powerful and energetic, but this can also create problems. Depression and bipolar disorder are examples of mood disorders.

DEPRESSION	Signs of depression include feeling sad, worthless, hopeless, guilty, or anxious a lot of the time. Some feel irritable or angry. People lose interest in things they used to enjoy and may withdraw from others. It can be hard to concentrate, learn new things, or make decisions
BIPOLAR DISORDER	People experience episodes of depression (previously explained) and episodes of mania (an unusually high mood for the person). People may feel like their thoughts are racing or hyperactive. They may feel unrealistically confident, happy, or very powerful. They may act without thinking and do risky things they wouldn't normally do.



SUICIDE

It's a difficult topic to bring up. However, when someone talks about suicide or brings up concerns for a loved one, it's important to take action and seek help quickly. Experts in the field suggest that a suicidal person is feeling so much pain that they can see no other option. They feel that they are a burden to others, and in desperation see death as a way to escape their overwhelming pain and anguish. The suicidal state of mind has been described as constricted, filled with a sense of self-hatred, rejection, and hopelessness.

OTHER DISORDERS

EATING & FEEDING DISORDERS	Involves serious disturbances in eating habits (either eating too much or too little. They occur in people who over-evaluate their body shape and weight. These types of disorders are also reported to occur in combination with mental disorders such as depression or anxiety)
PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS	Are mental health problems that cause a person to lose touch with reality. They cause severe disturbances in behaviour, thinking and emotions. People living with a psychotic disorder experience psychosis or psychotic episodes.
PERSONALITY DISORDERS	Are patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that may last for a long time and create challenges in a person's life. Personality disorders can affect the way people understand and view themselves, others and cope with problems. Borderline personality disorder is one example of a personality disorder.
CHILDHOOD DISORDERS	There are a number of mental illnesses that start to affect people when they are young, although many are not diagnosed until they're older. One example of a disorder in this group is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (or ADHD), which affects a person's ability to focus, complete tasks, plan or organize, sit still, or think through actions.
DEMENTIA	Can be caused by a disease that mainly affects nerve cells in the brain or can be associated with many other medical conditions. Dementia impacts a person's memory, language abilities, concentration, organization skills, mood, and behaviours. Alzheimer's disease is one type of dementia.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MYSELF OR OTHERS?

It is not a bad thing to ask for help and there are many resources available. The first step is to receiving support is to call your doctor. If you do not have one you can call Info-santé 811 or go to your local CISSS OR CLSC.

After you speak with a professional it is important to stay connected. There are various community groups that can help you or your family member cope and live with their diagnosis. Many groups have members who have been where you are and can understand what you are going through.

From getting involved to crisis management, if you still feel you need additional support you can always contact us at



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