

Mental Health

According to the World Health Organisation, “mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in”. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.

Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.

Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

The connection between mind and body

Biochemistry of mind and body: The brain experiences the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions we collectively call the mind. Chemical and physical messengers like hormones and neurotransmitters help in communication. The neural networks connect the cerebral cortex (outermost layer of the brain) to the adrenal medulla (inner part of the adrenal gland in the kidney), activating the body’s response in stressful situations. These findings exhibit how mental states, such as stress and depression, can influence organ function.

The mind-body connection is the link between a person’s thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors and their physical health. While scientists have long understood that our emotions can affect our bodies, we’re just now beginning to understand how emotions influence health and longevity. The mind-body connection is an important component of holistic medicine, which is a healthcare philosophy that seeks to treat the whole person, not just their symptoms. Now more than ever, doctors understand the importance of a comprehensive approach to care that includes mind, body, and spirit.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It’s a complex combination of a person’s physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, wellbeing could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life. Wellbeing is important, but seems a little hard to come by. One American study into mental health found that, while one in four respondents was depressed, only one in five was happy – the rest fell somewhere between, neither happy nor depressed.

- Well-being integrates mental health (mind) and physical health (body) resulting in more holistic approaches to disease prevention and health promotion.
- Well-being is a valid population outcome measure beyond morbidity, mortality, and economic status that tells how people perceive their lives are going from their own perspective.
- Well-being is an outcome that is meaningful to the public.
- Results from cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental studies find that well-being is associated with:
 - Self-perceived health
 - Longevity
 - Healthy behaviors
 - Mental and physical illness
 - Social connectedness
 - Productivity
 - Factors in the physical and social environment

Types of Wellbeing

- **Emotional Wellbeing:** The ability to practice stress-management and relaxation techniques, be resilient, boost self-love, and generate the emotions that lead to good feelings.
- **Mental Wellbeing:** The ability to channelize positive thoughts and practice hopefulness and goodwill.
- **Physical Wellbeing:** The ability to improve the functioning of your body through healthy living and good exercise habits.
- **Social Wellbeing:** The ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others, and maintain a support network that helps you overcome loneliness.
- **Societal Wellbeing:** The ability to actively participate in a thriving community, culture, and environment.

Digital Wellbeing

According to UNESCO, digital wellbeing is “The enhancement and improvement of human well-being, in the intermediate and long term, through the use of digital media”. Digital wellbeing is a term used to describe the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical, social and emotional health. It is a complex concept that can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and across different contexts and situations.

- **Individual perspective:** personal, learning and work contexts: this involves identifying and understanding the positive benefits and any potential negative aspects of engaging with digital activities and being aware of ways to manage and control these to improve wellbeing.
- **Societal or organisational perspective:** providers of digital systems, services and content have a responsibility for ensuring that these are well managed, supported, accessible and equitable. They also need to empower and build capability in users so that all who engage with them are equipped to do so in a way that supports and/or improves their wellbeing.

