

What is mental health?

Although mental health means many things to many people, self-esteem and the capacity to care about others are always important parts. Mentally healthy people understand that they are not perfect, nor can they be all things to all people. They experience a full range of emotions, including sadness, anger, and frustration, as well as joy, love, and satisfaction. While they typically can handle life's challenges and changes, they can reach out for help if they are having difficulty dealing with major traumas and transitions — loss of loved ones, marriage difficulties, school or work problems, the prospect of retirement.

People with good mental health feel comfortable about themselves

- They are not bowled over by their own emotions — by their fears, anger, love, jealousy, guilt, or worries.
- They can take life's disappointments in stride.
- They have a tolerant, easygoing attitude toward themselves as well as others. They can laugh at themselves.
- They neither underestimate, nor overestimate, their abilities.
- They can accept their own shortcomings.
- They have self-respect.
- They feel able to deal with most situations that come their way.
- They get satisfaction from simple, everyday pleasures.

People with good mental health feel right about other people

- They are able to give love and to consider the interests of others.
- They have personal relationships that are satisfying and lasting.
- They expect to like and trust others, and take it for granted that others will like and trust them.
- They respect the many differences they find in people.
- They do not push people around, nor do they allow themselves to be pushed around.
- They can feel that they are part of a group.
- They feel a sense of responsibility to their neighbors and fellow human beings.

People with good mental health meet the demands of life

- They do something about problems when they arise.
- They accept their responsibilities.
- They shape their environment whenever possible; they adjust to it whenever necessary.
- They plan ahead but do not fear the future.
- They welcome new experiences and new ideas.
- They make use of their natural capacities.
- They set realistic goals for themselves.
- They are able to think for themselves and make their own decisions.
- They put their best effort into what they do, and get satisfaction out of doing it.

Mental health and mental illness can be thought of as being on a continuum, so almost everyone will have difficulty at some time in their lives with at least a few of the items listed above. However, if symptoms interfere with your ability to enjoy life over an extended period of time, you should seek professional assistance.

It is not uncommon for a person to need help sometimes. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in ten Americans experience some disability from a diagnosable mental illness in the course of a year.

What Children Need for Good Mental Health

The basics for a child's good physical health include nutritious food, adequate shelter and sleep, exercise, immunizations and a healthy living environment.

For a child's good mental health, the basics include:

- unconditional love from family
- self-confidence and high self-esteem, built in receiving praise, having realistic goals, and being treated with honesty and encouragement
- the opportunity to play with other children
- encouraging teachers and supportive caregivers
- safe and secure surroundings
- appropriate guidance and discipline

Sources:
Mental Health America

Serving people in Crawford, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Missaukee, Roscommon and Wexford Counties.