

What is good mental health?

Mental health is how you think, feel and act. People in good mental health have a positive attitude, feel good about themselves and others, and act responsibly in their relationships.

Good mental health means you want the best in life and are ready to work to achieve it. Good mental health can be developed and maintained, but it requires work.

Yet mental health, like physical health, can have low points. For example, sometimes you may feel down, unhappy, or confused, or you may lack confidence. These fluctuations in mental health occur just as the common cold sometimes interferes with your physical health.

You can't prevent emotional low points or the common cold. But you can build your mental health, much the same as developing and maintaining your physical health. A healthy life style is important to good mental health.

Self-esteem best way to mental health

Building self-esteem is a good way to develop and maintain your mental health. Here are some helpful keys to remember while you build your self-esteem.

- **Honesty is the best policy** – Healthy self-esteem starts when you are honest with yourself. Look at yourself carefully and identify your strengths and weaknesses. Learn to work with them.
- **Improvement will happen** – Believe in yourself and keep trying to increase your self-esteem. In time you will overcome your weaknesses and enhance your strengths. Improvement takes time and persistence.
- **A job well done** – Be proud of yourself and always strive to do your best. Yet be realistic. Too much pressure to be perfect can harm your self-esteem.
- **Individuality is important** – Try not to compare yourself to others. Instead, realize all people are different and be yourself. Set your own goals for success and methods to attain them.

Even if you are in good mental health, you may feel stress sometimes. You, like everyone, may not have control over many of life's emotional situations. However, you can control how you respond to situations.

- Situations such as the death of a loved one, unexpected family issues, job loss or added stress may occur, threatening your mental health. Handling stress in a positive way can help you stay healthy.
- Because some emotional obstacles may be more difficult to overcome than others, it is important to know when to ask for help.
- Support is a plus – Talk over your situation with a friend, relative or clergy member. Knowing when to receive help is a sign of strength. Don't let a problem come between you and good mental health.
- Poor mental health is not the same as mental illness. Mental illness can affect anyone. Anyone with thoughts, threats or attempts of suicide must have immediate professional attention. Mental illness is serious, often requiring ongoing intensive treatment with possible use of medications and psychotherapy.

Remember that good mental health is important to your well-being, so take care of it daily.

If you need help

If you need more help, talk to a counselor, whose objective viewpoint can put things in perspective. To make an appointment, call (810) 257-3740. In an emergency, call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740, or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310.

Other Genesee Health System handouts include: *When unemployment hits home, Helping to survive a loss, Easy listening, Winter blues and blues busters, You are not alone, Codependency, Good night – sleep well, Signs of stress, and Art of stress reduction.* © www.genhs.org