

What Is The Purpose of Mental Health Promotion?

The purpose of mental health promotion is to help people develop and maintain **positive mental health**.

What Is Positive Mental Health?

Positive mental health is the state of well-being where we're striving to make the most out of life – doing the best we can with what we've got. It helps us feel satisfied with, and enjoy, life. The level of our positive mental health depends on the degree to which we're developing our potential; coping with the normal stressors of life; building strong, positive relationships; and contributing to our community. Positive mental health is crucial to our overall health and wellbeing and that of the entire community.

How Do You Promote Positive Mental Health?

We look at what determines positive mental health and then we work with individuals and community partners to enable them to increase control over the determinants that can actually be changed in order to improve the positive mental health and wellbeing of everyone.

What Determines Positive Mental Health?

Positive mental health is shaped by our life circumstances as well as by the life events and experiences we have throughout our lives. Our life circumstance includes our personal condition (e.g. genetic endowment, age, developed abilities, learning, gender, marital status, employment, financial state, etc.) and the condition of the settings where we live, learn, work, and play. Life circumstances, life events and life experiences are all influenced by a complex interaction of social, emotional, economic, educational, spiritual, ecological and cultural factors as well as by chance. The level or degree of our mental wellbeing can be increased or decreased by the quality of our life circumstances, the life events and life experiences we have.

What's Involved In Mental Health Promotion Work?

The following two **key action strategies** are the foundation of our work:

- creating supportive environments in our homes, schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods
- increasing protective factors in life conditions to strengthen resiliency of individuals and communities

For example, we promote and support the Developmental Assets® in our community. This positive youth development initiative provides a framework and common language for engaging all sectors and individuals to increase protective factors and resiliency for youth, strengthen support networks, build citizenship and create supportive environments for youth where they live, learn, work and play.

Some of our primary activities include:

Communications and public awareness to improve knowledge, understanding and support for health promotion, mental wellbeing and its promotion as well as the reduction of stigma;

Intersectoral partnerships to create supportive environments by taking collaborative action on the social, emotional, environmental, educational, cultural and economic conditions and public policies that influence mental wellbeing; and health equity

Community engagement to ensure meaningful public participation;

Personal skills development to build resilience in individuals and communities; and,

Evaluation and knowledge exchange to measure progress and identify/promote promising practices

How Is Positive Mental Health Achieved Over The Life Course?

First of all, it helps to have a positive start in life. Then we need to keep nurturing our positive mental health throughout all the stages and ages of life. We can increase our positive mental health by making positive changes to those determinants of positive mental health that can actually be changed (and that we have some control over) and by increasing or strengthening our protective factors. For example, there are **5 Daily**

Actions anyone can easily do that will increase positive mental health throughout life:

1. **Connect**...with family, friends, co-workers, neighbours; smile, wave or say 'hi'
2. **Give**...do something nice for someone (friend or stranger); volunteer; donate your talent or money;
3. **Keep Learning**...take up or renew a hobby; take a course or learn new skills (ex. how to relax)
4. **Take Notice**...be mindful of the world around you as well as of your inner thoughts and feelings;
5. **Be Active**...walk, run, dance, play a sport; eat well; get enough rest;

What are Protective Factors?

Protective factors are circumstances (conditions and characteristics) that increase the likelihood of creating and maintaining positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience. They can protect against and lessen the negative effects of difficult or stressful situations or life experiences. They vary somewhat depending on our age and stage of life but there are some protective factors that are common throughout life.

What Are Some Specific Protective Factors For Children & Youth?¹

<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy temperament • Adequate physical activity, nutrition and rest • Attachment to family • Above-average intelligence • School achievement • Problem-solving skills • Internal locus of control/self-regulation • Social competence • Social skills • Good coping style • Optimism • Sense of purpose • Moral beliefs • Positive values • Positive self-esteem and self-affirmation • Religious affiliation • History of competence and success <p>Life Events and Situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with significant other • Availability of opportunities at critical turning points or major life transitions • Economic security • Good physical health 	<p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive, caring parents • Family harmony • Secure and stable family • Small family • Responsibility within the family • More than two years between siblings • Supportive relationships with an adult • Strong family norms, morality <p>School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging • Positive school climate • Pro-social peer group • Required responsibility and helpfulness • Opportunities for some success and recognition of achievement • Social norms against violence <p>Community and culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of connectedness • Attachment to, and networks within the community • Participation in church or other group • Strong cultural identity and ethnic pride • Access to support services • Community cultural norms against violence
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Downloadable Positive Mental Health Resources Available At

<http://www.rqhealth.ca/mental-health-and-addictions/mental-health-promotion>

¹ Best practice guidelines for mental health promotion programs: Children & Youth, 2009, CAMH. Adapted from *Department of Health and Aged Care*. (2000). *Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health—A Monograph*. [Canberra, Australia: Author](#).