

Defining Good Mental Health

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This is the first in a series of columns on good mental health. Today's column is an attempt to define good mental health. According to John M. Grohol, PsyD, CEO and Co-founder of Psych Central, "mental health describes our social, emotional and psychological states all wrapped up into one." A person who experiences "good mental health has found a balance in his or her social, emotional and psychological areas of life,"

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2008/06/02/what-is-good-mental-health/>

In other words good mental health is achieved by maintaining a balance in your relationships with others, the management of your feelings and your view of yourself. Achieving this balance should result in a full and productive life. It is important to recognize that all three of these states are directly related to your brain and the physical health of your brain. Your mental health is affected by your physical health. Therefore, maintaining good physical health helps you to achieve good mental health.

Based on the above definition and its interpretation the next step in defining good mental health is accepting personal responsibility for your mental health. You are responsible for maintaining relationships with others, your feelings and your view of yourself.

By the way, only you can control your feelings. Others will try to influence your feelings but your feelings belong to you.

I recommend taking some time to assess these three areas of your life. You may also want to enlist a trusted close friend or family member to review your assessment as a form of a check and balance system. Remember we are often our own worst critic. An accurate honest assessment will provide you with the foundation to balance or maintain the balance of your social, emotional and psychological states. This should not be a once and done activity.

The below questions should be helpful in assessing these areas of your life:

1. Do you maintain relationships with others? What type of relationships do you maintain? What is your level of satisfaction with these relationships? Are they fulfilling relationships? Does the relationship need improvement?
2. How do you manage your feelings? How do you share your feelings? What makes you feel good? What makes you feel bad?
3. What do you find enjoyment in? What makes you laugh and cry?
4. How do you deal with adverse events in your life?
5. What do you do to manage stress in your life? Is your stress management working?
6. How do you manage change in your life? Is your change management working?

7. What are you confident about? How do you manage your self-esteem?
8. What is the meaning and purpose of your life?
9. Do you have goals? What are your goals?
10. Is your life balanced –adequate time allowed for work and play, rest and activity, family and friends? How do you achieve and/or maintain balance in your life?

After completing this assessment you should be ready to start your journey towards good mental health or you should be better equipped to maintain your good mental health. I suggest you develop a plan or road map to help guide you in your journey. Develop your plan/map around the concepts of maintaining a balanced life that includes relationships (social), management of your feelings (emotional) and improving your confidence and self esteem (psychological).

I plan to continue this discussion on good mental health by using my next three columns to introduce you to "The 6 Pillars of Good Mental Health," a series of brochures developed by the Mental Health Association to education the community on good mental health. I hope you will find this information helpful. I wish you success on your journey.

By Shem H. Heller, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Lebanon County.