

# Mental Well-being Matters

Mental well-being is about your quality of life: realizing your abilities, dealing with day to day stress, have meaningful relationships, working and contributing to family and community.<sup>i</sup>

About 80% of us struggle with mental well-being at some point, whether we have a mental illness or not. Common challenges and signs include:

- Lack of a sense of purpose
- Regularly stressed from daily pressures
- Lack of a good social support system
- Lack of housing or employment
- Experiencing social exclusion

## Life Implications

Poor mental well-being is linked with higher rates of:

- Injury
- Disability
- Chronic disease
- Job productivity
- Criminal justice involvement
- Life expectancy
- Lifetime Mental Illness<sup>ii</sup>

## Culturally Important

For groups that have experienced oppression, moving toward optimal mental well-being is an important goal. This struggle is fueled by historical and current collective trauma and injustice, which must be addressed to achieve mental well-being.

## Tools and Tips

**Develop relationships** with people who are caring, supportive, emotionally healthy and safe. This is critical at every stage of life. Join a group. Get your child a mentor. Invest in your friendships.<sup>iii</sup>

**Develop skills** to manage stress and to engage in your world. Learn about your unique strengths and passions. Use them! Volunteer. Develop a [gratitude practice](#)<sup>iv</sup>, guided imagery, mindfulness, yoga, or other centering activity.

**Find hope and connection** often found through community, culture, and faith is powerful. Cultivate connections that are important to you.

**Connect with nature** to reduce stress and improve attention. Walk outside. Play outside. Protect and expand green spaces near your home, daycare, and work.<sup>v</sup>

**Sleep, exercise, and eat healthy** Good choices for overall health also matters for mental well-being. Our bodies and brains are connected; our physical and mental well-being are linked.

**Organize** Get active in your community. Almost every government and business decision impacts our mental well-being. Decisions can influence inclusion or availability of key mental well-being ingredients. While you're at it, you will build and model self-determination and self-efficacy, key social and emotional health skills.

For more mental well-being resources go to [Mental Health Promotions \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/topic/mentalhealth/\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/topic/mentalhealth/).

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<sup>i</sup> Herman, H, Saxena, S, Moodie, R (2005). Promoting Mental Health-Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice. World Health Organization [http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/)

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<sup>ii</sup> Keyes, C. and Simoes, E. (2012). To Flourish or Not: Positive Mental Health and All-Cause Mortality. *American Journal of Public Health, 102* (11), 2164-2172. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2015)

<sup>iii</sup> Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper No 13. Retrieved from: [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

<sup>iv</sup> Emmons, R. and McCullough, M. (2003). Counting Blessings versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84* (2), 377-389.

<sup>v</sup> Wells, N. and Evans, G. (2003). Nearby Nature: A Buffer of Life Stress Among Rural Children. *Environment and behavior, Vol 35* (3), 311-330. Retrieved by: <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/NearbyNature.pdf>