

07 Fact sheet

Understanding mental health and wellbeing

Mental health

The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as “...a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”¹ Like physical health, we can all benefit from looking after our mental health.

Mental wellbeing (also known as ‘positive mental health’ and ‘flourishing’)

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential². Mental wellbeing is more than the absence of mental illness and it is more than feeling happy.

Poor mental health

Poor mental health is a state of low mental wellbeing where you are unable to realise your own potential, cope with the day-to-day pressures of life, work productively or contribute to a community².

Mental health problems

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health, but mental health problems develop when these difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want to. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing poor mental health².

- 1 World Health Organization. (2016). Mental health: strengthening our response.
- 2 Mind. (n.d.). Guide to employees: Wellness Action Plans (WAPS) - How to support your mental health at work.

