

Mental health is...



Mental health refers to a state of well-being. This includes our emotions, feelings of connection to others, our thoughts and feelings, and our ability to work productively and cope with normal stressors.

EVERYONE HAS MENTAL HEALTH

Similar to how we eat right, exercise and see physicians for our physical health, we also must look after our mental health and well-being.

Improving our mental health improves our level of personal resilience and ability to manage challenges we encounter throughout our lives. This may mean integrating new habits into daily routines, building strong support networks, seeking professional help, and in the case of mental illness, finding a course of treatment that works for you.

Many different aspects of your life can be a source for mental health challenges, including your:

- Housing
- Employment
- Access to resources
- Education
- Recreation and physical activity
- Daily living skills
- Support from friends and family
- Physical illness or condition
- Isolation and Loneliness
- Climate Anxiety

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Healthy, empowered people are the foundation of resilient communities, as are the quality community mental health and mental health services that buffer people from hardship.

People experiencing mental illness often face specific challenges in creating a high quality of life for themselves. They may have difficulty finding stable employment, accessing affordable treatment, and may face enduring stigma and discrimination. Those in rural communities can find it particularly challenging to navigate their mental illness.

"Accessing addiction and mental health services is challenging, especially in rural and remote areas."

- Alberta Mental Health Review, 2015

Mental Health Challenges for Rural Communities

Service Challenges

Scarcity: In general, it is more difficult to access services; rural residents cite long travel times as a reason for not accessing counselling or addictions services.

Cost of services: Professional aid can be very expensive without comprehensive healthcare coverage.

Effectiveness: Inadequate funding for programs leads to long waitlists, high rates of turnover, gaps in the types of services provided and limited follow-up ability.

Social Challenges

Stigma: Rural communities experience higher levels of mental health stigma than urban areas.

Lack of economic opportunity: Lower income levels and rates of unemployment or underemployment are major points of distress for rural residents

Indigenous intergenerational trauma: Deep-rooted trauma from the Canadian residential school system, discrimination and oppressive policy has created complex mental health problems for Indigenous peoples.

Community includes everyone, and strengthening our rural communities means we must have a compassionate, informed and properly equipped workforce that can uplift people struggling with mental illness and poor mental health.

Climate Change, Mental Health and Ecological Grief



Frequent disasters, changing ecosystems, displacement and loss of identity will continue to have profound psychological impacts on Canadians.

Climate change impacts people's mental health, erodes their sense of well-being and raises their stress and uncertainty. As disasters strike and slow-onset changes challenge people's way of life, mental illness and mental health issues will be on the rise.

"Impacts to mental health could be among the costliest climate-related health impacts for Canada."

- Canadian Institute for Climate Choices, 2021

Mental illness is putting significant strain on health care systems, social services, and sector productivity across the country, today. With climate change in the equation, the future situation will get worse. More Canadians will struggle with mental health issues and require affordable care, robust supports, and may need time off from work.



Climate change will lead to:

- More instances of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders and depression
- Stress and uncertainty
- Feelings of ecological grief
- Loss of identity and culture, particularly for Indigenous peoples
- Further inequities among disadvantaged populations who are more susceptible to mental health issues
- Strain on healthcare systems - more demand for programs, services and medications



Grief from acute disaster

PTSD and long-term anxiety disorders and depression follow major disaster events and can last up to 20 years or beyond following the trauma.



Vicarious grief

Globalized, instantaneous media broadcast disasters at a world scale, meaning that people witness disaster more often and grieve with those who have been directly impacted.



Grief from slow-onset changes

A sense of generalized stress, anxiety and sadness can overcome people as they experience changes to their environment and the resulting cultural, economic, and identity losses.



Anticipatory grief

It is normal, particularly for younger generations, to feel climate anxiety and a sense of hopelessness for what is to come if climate change action isn't sufficient and fails to mitigate challenges.

Resources for your mental health

FOR IMMEDIATE HELP: TELEPHONE, TEXT AND ONLINE RESOURCES

If suicide is a possibility, call 911 or the Canada Suicide Prevention Helpline at 1-833-456-4566

- Alberta Mental Health Help Line: 1 (877) 303-2642
- Alberta Addictions Helpline: 1 (866) 332-2322
- Health Link: 811
- Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741
- Crisis Services Canada: Call 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645
- Rural Distress Line: 1 (800) 232-7288
- Distress Line (Edmonton and area): (780) 482-4357
- Distress Centre (Calgary and area): (403) 266-4357
- Distress Line of South Western Alberta: (403) 327-7905
- First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1 (855) 242-3310
- Kids Help Phone: 1 (800) 668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868
- Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818
- MyHealth.Alberta.ca: List of Important Numbers

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

211 Alberta - call, text or chat online for help finding community and social services.

Strathcona.ca/wellbeing - access a range of information about mental health and programming in the region.

Gibbons Family Resource Centre:
P: 780-923-2374

Lamont County Family and Community Support Services:
P: 780-895-7404

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS, ORGANIZATIONS AND TOOLS

Canadian Mental Health Association

Physician & Family Support Program: 1-877-767-4637

Canada Drug Rehab: 1-866-693-5053

National Eating Disorder Information Centre: 1-866-NEDIC-20

Income Support: 1-866-644-5135

CASA - Child, Adolescent and Family Health

Anxiety Canada

Teen Mental Health: Parents

DiveThru Mental Health and Wellness Platform

Healthy, empowered people are the foundation of resilient communities.

Personal Resilience is one of the Canadian Mental Health Association's five characteristics for mental health fitness and well-being, along with *Ability to Enjoy Life, Balance, Self-actualization* and *Flexibility*. It describes a person's ability to bounce back after hardship, to put events into perspective and make plans to recover, to find support through friends and family, and to move forward with resolve and optimism.

How is your personal resilience?

Do the statements below resonate with you? Are you challenged by any of them? Take the CMHA's mental health meter quiz to learn more about your mental health and ways to manage your emotions, motivation, and outlook.

[Learn more and take the quiz >>>](#)

I am able to live my life and follow healthy routines even when I'm under considerable stress.

I can be happy without guilt following major emotional upheaval.

When I feel overwhelmed by problems, I can make a plan to address them.

I confide in and find support from my friends and family in difficult times.

I get involved in issues that are important and affect me.

I think there is potential to learn and grow from difficult times.

