

All about mental health

It's okay to ask for help!

If you're struggling or find the content upsetting, speak to a parent, therapist, school counsellor or another trusted adult. They can share tips and ideas to help you feel better. There are other resources available to you too:

- ▶ **Kids Help Phone:** Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT or CAFKIDS to 686868
- ▶ **Family Information Line:** Call 1-800-866-4546 or email FIL@CAFconnection.ca
- ▶ **Dial 911** if you or someone you know is in immediate danger

It may feel tough to reach out for help, but support will be there if you need it.

Your mental health matters

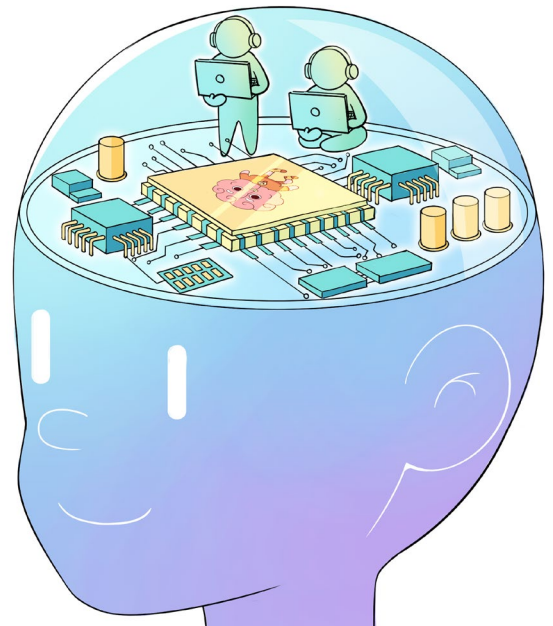
Mental health is all about how you think, feel and act in response to daily challenges. Your mental health can affect how you deal with these challenges and vice versa. Your mental health is just like your physical health. It's something you need to take care of every day.

The brain is like a control centre

Your brain is in charge of your thoughts and feelings, your senses and movements, your reactions to the world around you, and even your memories. In other words, everything you do, think, feel or experience is connected to your brain.

A team with a common goal

You can think of your brain as made up of different parts or "team members" that work together to achieve a common goal. They work together to form a network by sending messages to each other and other areas of the body. These messages are called "signals." Signals can make you wave hello to your friend and hear them say hello, or even remember your friend's name.



Your brain controls six key functions:



Thinking

Your brain processes information to help you understand things



Perception

Your brain helps you smell, hear, see, touch and taste



Emotion

Your brain helps you feel emotions, like feeling happy or sad



Signals

Your brain helps you send messages to different parts of your body



Physical

Your brain helps you move



Behaviour

Your brain helps you make decisions about how to act and behave

As you grow, your brain is still learning and changing

For example, it is learning how to:

Make new friends

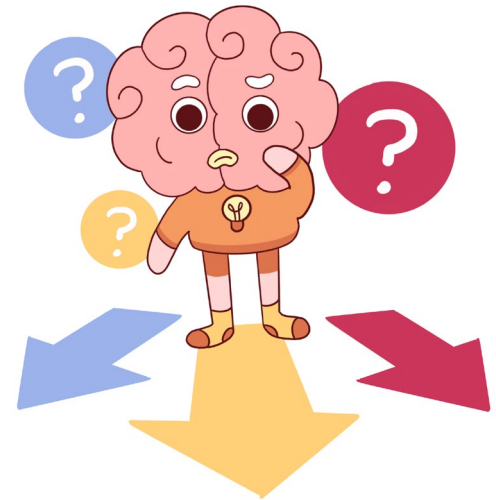
Take risks

Try new things

Mental health is a spectrum

We may label our mental health as either good or bad, when really our mental health is made up of many different states.

Each state is different but connected. People can experience one or more states at the same time. For example, a person can experience good mental health and have a diagnosed mental health condition too.



Here are some possible mental health states:



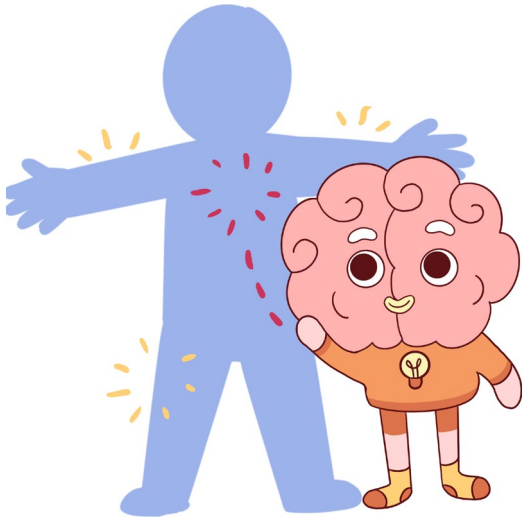
1 No mental distress, mental health challenges or conditions

You may be feeling calm, happy or excited.

When you're in this state, you may be having fun with friends or doing something you enjoy, like sports or art.

2 Mental distress

Mental distress often comes from everyday events. Have you ever felt anxious when writing a test or frustrated after a fight with your friend?



In the mental distress state, your brain sends a signal of anxiety or stress when something in your environment is challenging or demanding. This signal, called a stress signal or stress response, is made up of different parts:

- **Emotions and feelings:** Feeling nervous, worried or scared
- **Thoughts:** Telling yourself that you are going to fail your test
- **Physical symptoms:** Sweating, feeling sick, headaches
- **Behaviours:** Having angry outbursts, overeating or undereating

3 Mental health challenges

You might face bigger challenges or stressors that can create a mental health challenge.

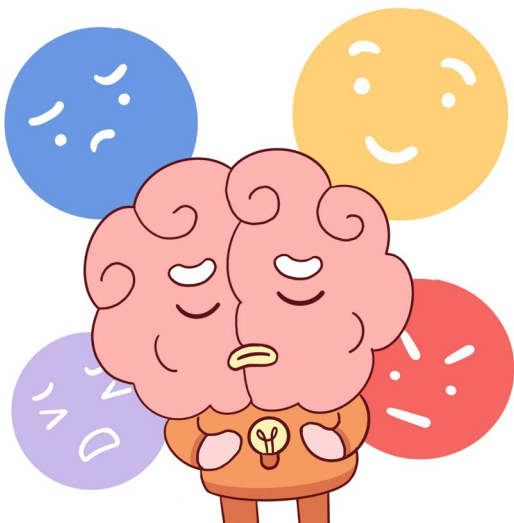
Some examples include:

- The death of a friend or Family member
- Being bullied at school
- Dealing with a serious illness

Mental health challenges are part of life. They are not the same as a mental health condition.

When you're going through a mental health challenge, you might have trouble with things you typically do well, like school, art or sports.

There are things you can do to feel better when you experience a mental health challenge, such as learning how to manage stress or talking to a trusted adult.



4 Mental health conditions

A mental health condition is different from mental distress and mental health challenges.

A mental health condition is a medical condition that affects how a person thinks, feels and behaves. In some cases, it can mess up routines and activities, like showering or going to school.

You can think of mental health conditions in the same way as a physical health condition. Both can be mild or severe and can make it harder to function like usual.

- A physical health condition happens because of changes in the body, like a broken bone.
- A mental health condition (like depression or anxiety) happens because of changes in the brain.

Mental health conditions need to be diagnosed by a doctor. You need to show specific signs and symptoms for a diagnosis to be made.



You can think of the mental health states as a pyramid.

Each level of the pyramid represents one of the mental health states.
You may need different types of support at each level.

TOP OF THE PYRAMID

Mental health conditions

You may be diagnosed with a mental health condition like depression, an eating disorder or schizophrenia at this level. You may need help from trained professionals and specific treatments, like counselling, medication or other types of care. Your treatment and care may be more take more time and focus than at the other levels.

THIRD LEVEL OF THE PYRAMID

Mental health challenges

You may be experiencing heartbreak, grief or worry at this level. If you are dealing with mental health challenges, you may need extra help, such as counselling, along with Family and community support.

SECOND LEVEL OF THE PYRAMID

Mental distress

You may be feeling annoyed, sad or worried at this level. You might not need any support if you experience mental distress once in a while. You may overcome distress by using specific coping tools or strategies, or with the support of your Family, friends, teachers or community.

BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID

No mental distress, mental health challenges or conditions

You may be feeling calm, happy or excited in this state. You may or may not use strategies to look after your mental health at this level.



The mental health pyramid can help describe what you may be feeling:

Mental state	Feeling(s)
Mental distress	I feel disappointed because my team lost the baseball tournament.
Mental distress	I feel nervous because I'm starting a new school.
Mental health challenge	I feel upset because my parents are getting divorced.
Mental health challenge	I'm grieving the death of a Family member.
Mental health condition	I feel so worried that I've started having panic attacks every couple of days.

All levels of the pyramid are part of your mental health

You can experience all, several or none of these levels, even at the same time. It's important to make sure that you don't think of good mental health as always being in a good mood or never feeling unhelpful or negative emotions.

Good mental health includes many different types of emotional states

If a person has a mental health condition, it does not mean that they have bad mental health. They can still experience good mental health, just as someone who doesn't have a mental health condition can experience poor mental health.



The words you choose matter, along with actions and beliefs

Have you ever had a bad day or week, and instead of saying, “I feel sad,” you say, “I am depressed”? These two words may seem like they have the same meaning, but they don’t really. With the first word, you’re talking about an emotion or feeling, while the second describes a mental health condition.

Learning what different words mean and thinking carefully about the language you use to say how you feel is really important.

By using the right words, you can help get rid of misunderstandings and harmful beliefs about mental health (known as stigma). Stigma can make people view and treat themselves and others differently or unfairly.

Emotion or feeling

I feel sad

Mental health condition

I am depressed

Stigma can come out in words, actions and beliefs:



Words

Using words like “crazy”, “dangerous” or “psycho” to describe someone with a mental health condition.



Actions and behaviours

Making fun of or excluding someone because they have a mental health condition.



Beliefs

Thinking that you’re weak because you have anxiety or that people with schizophrenia are more dangerous.

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