



UNION MATTERS

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You Should Know

Please don't judge people. You don't know what it took someone to get out of bed, look and feel presentable as possible and face the day. You never truly know the daily struggles of others.

Healthplace.com

The Mental Health Commission of Canada states that 5 in 5 people have mental health. What they really mean is everyone has mental health just like everyone has physical health. Mental health refers to our emotional and psychological state, our social well-being, and how we feel about ourselves, interaction with others, and most recently spiritual well-being has been added. Mental health does not mean being happy all the time.

Why is mental health important?

Good mental health allows you to:

- ◆ Feel in control of your life
- ◆ Make sound decisions
- ◆ Handle challenges and stresses
- ◆ Focus while at work and be productive
- ◆ Feel physically healthy

Good mental health gives you resilience which means being able to handle problems and challenges more easily. During the past year at work you have definitely needed to be resilient with constant changes in the worksite, influx of new programs, increasing demands to be in the community, new locations starting up, increase in incidences, and the list goes on.

Resilience gives you:

- ◆ The ability to learn new skills, ideas and concepts
- ◆ The ability to adapt to change and new situations
- ◆ A healthy attitude about yourself
- ◆ Confidence when managing conflict

- ◆ Good coping mechanisms for handling stress

How can you promote good mental health?

- ◆ Be involved and involve others in planning social events at your location
- ◆ Organize a program specifically for staff, such as a monthly book club, a running or walking group, shared healthy lunches
- ◆ Be accepting of changes in your environment
- ◆ Take care of yourself, eat well, sleep well, and remember to communicate

Recently, I attended a 2-day course on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) held at the St John Ambulance offices. The Mental Health Commission of Canada states that in any given year 1 in 5 people in Canada are living with a mental illness. Most of us have a good understanding of physical illnesses but tend to have little knowledge of mental illness. The course focused on how to have an awareness of your own mental health and that of others, to listen without judgement, recognize symptoms, offer information and reassurance, and if needed, encourage the person to seek appropriate help. It does not train you to be a therapist, counsellor, or psychiatrist. The long-term goal of the Mental Health Commission is to see people enrolling in MHFA courses to the same degree as CPR. If you are interested, check out www.mhfa.ca, speak with your manager and contact the Learning & Development Specialist to see about a possible refund on the course cost.

Your union executive looks forward to seeing you at the next General Membership meeting

What is mental illness?

Mental illness refers to health problems that affect the way we think about ourselves, relate to others, and interact with those around us. They tend to affect our thoughts, feelings, abilities, behaviours and can make it hard to enjoy everyday life. Depression and anxiety disorders are the most common forms of mental illness.

Below is a mental health continuum model (Mental Health Commission of Canada) showing different degrees of mental health and mental illness which we all move back and forth on throughout different stages of our lives. The model categorizes symptoms for good to poor mental and physical health on a four-colour continuum: green (healthy), yellow (reacting), orange (injured) and red (ill). It lists some of the behaviours associated with each part of the continuum, from healthy adaptive coping (green), through mild and limited dis-

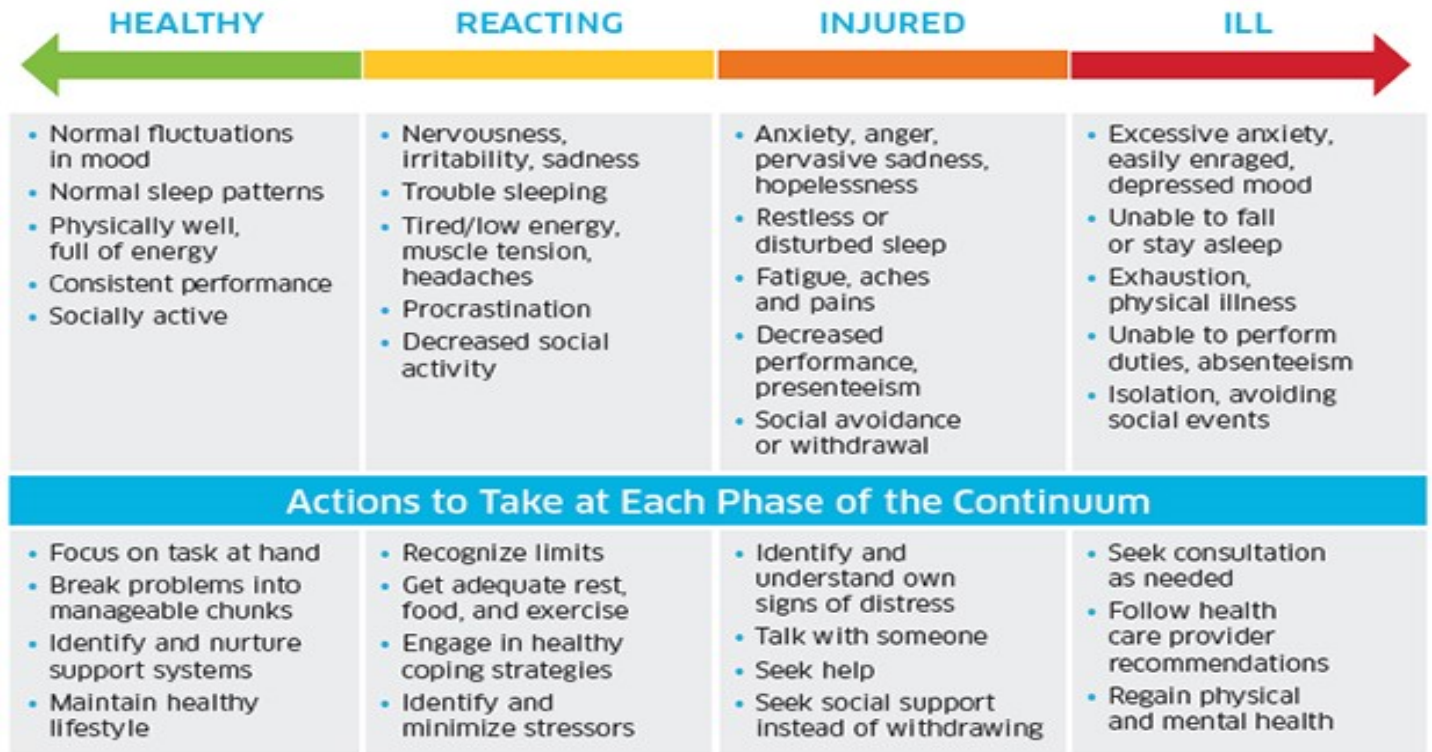
stress or disruption in normal function (yellow), to more severe, persistent injury or impairment (orange) and clinical illnesses and disorders that require more concentrated medical care (red).

Why learn about mental health?

In your job you are with people all the time whether it's your coworkers or the public. Learning about mental health can help reduce the stigma around behavioural health problems and help you in your day-to-day dealings. There are several awareness campaigns (Mental Health Awareness week in May, Mental Illness Awareness week in October, Bell Let's Talk, Lift the Silence) that are educating people and making it easier to discuss mental health and combat the stigma of mental illness.

*In solidarity,
Elsa Gee, President CUPE Local 1169
Calgary and Cochrane Public Library Workers*

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL



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