Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing

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No mental disorder = mental wellness?

As defined by the World Health Organization, mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can contribute to his or her community. Mental health is fundamental to maintaining personal health. A healthy mind allows us to face challenges, solve problems, achieve goals and enjoy life more.

According to the Hong Kong Mental Morbidity Survey (HKMMS) 2020, more than half of Hong Kong citizens aged 15 or above suffer from poor mental well-being, and those aged 15-34 have significantly poorer mental health.

The difference between normal emotional ups and downs and mood disorder

Mania

Normal mood

Depression
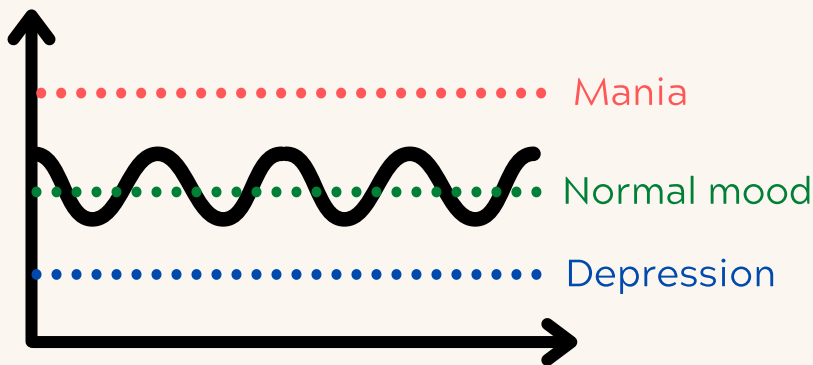
The changing environments have a direct effect on our moods. We have good times and bad times that influence our mood moving up and down within the "normal range". If your mood becomes overly elated or depressed, and your thoughts, behaviour, and normal life are significantly disrupted, you may suffer from mood disorders.

Is stress good or bad?

An optimal level of stress enhances our efficiency and performance in our work, study, or other aspects of our life. Stress can motivate us to strive towards our goals, overcome obstacles, and improve the situation where we are in. Nevertheless, when the stress level is too high, we can no longer unleash our potentials as usual. Our efficiency and performance would be hampered. Worst still, prolonged stress would affect our psychological health.

Performance

Pressure

Stress hormone cortisol
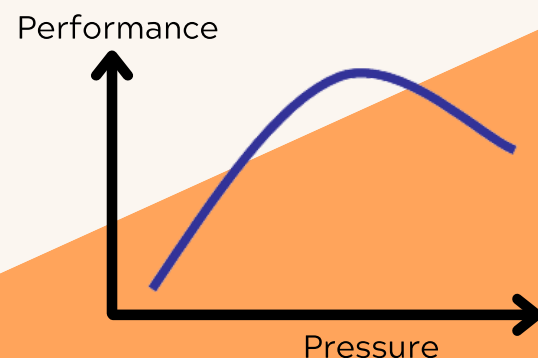
Cortisol is often called the "stress hormone." It is a hormone that is secreted by the adrenal glands when we are facing pressure. Cortisol causes an increase in our blood pressure, attention level, and sensitivity. These reactions allow the body to respond immediately and carry out the fight-or-flight response. An optimal level of cortisol helps us to cope with adversity.

Chronic stress puts your health at risk
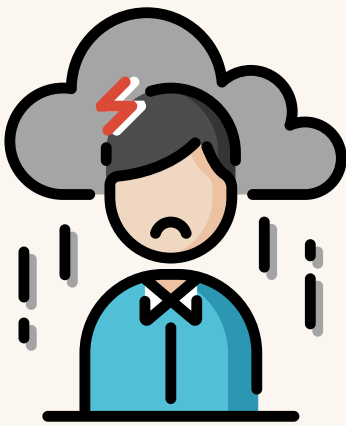
- Suppress the immune system
- Damage to the hippocampus that leads to memory loss
- Nervousness, anxiety, depression, and headache
- Poorer sleep quality and suffer from insomnia
- Increase in heart rate, blood pressure, increase the risk of heart disease
- Weaken bone and increase the risk of bone fracture
- Abnormal blood glucose levels and increase the risk of diabetes
- Weight gain

Self-awareness and stress management

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation. This means that instead of being overwhelmed by your feelings, it becomes easier to manage them.

Take care of your gut

Eat 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Intake adequate protein and healthy fats like omega-3 and 6. Drink water regularly.

Take care of your emotions

Practice daily gratitude

Notice and identify the things you are grateful for. Express your gratitude to others and yourself. Adopt a practice of self-gratitude regularly.

Try to keep active

When we exercise, our brain will release chemicals named endorphins that trigger a positive feeling in the body.