WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is the health of our emotions and thinking. It is as important as our physical health.

Our mental health effects how we see the world. It effects how we see other people. It effects how we understand and feel what is going on around us.

Good mental health helps us to enjoy life. It helps us deal with changes and things in our life that we find hard.

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

Changes in our thinking, feeling and behaving. So much so that daily living gets very hard and we are not coping as we use to.

If we have a mental health problem there may be changes in our THINKING.

Some of these changes may be...

Having strange thoughts.

Having a lot of negative thoughts.

Finding it harder to think clearly.
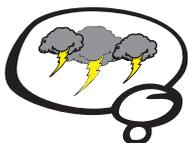
Finding it harder to make decisions.

Finding it harder to organize your thoughts.

Thinking slower.

Thinking very fast.

Thoughts zapping into our heads that upset us.

Having beliefs that do not match reality.

If we have a mental health problem there may be changes in our EMOTIONS.

Some of these changes may be...

Our feelings changing very easily.

Feeling more emotional than usual.

Feeling sad or down more than usual.

Feeling more angry than usual.

Feeling more irritable than usual.

Feeling more scared than usual.

Feeling flat.

If we have a mental health problem there may be changes in how we spend our time. These are changes in our ACTIVITIES.

Some of these changes may be....

Avoiding doing things.
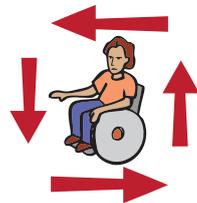
Eating more or less.

Sleeping more or less.

Not wanting to do things we used to like doing.

Being alone more and sometimes wanting to be alone.

Not taking care of ourself.

Not being able to stay still.

Doing the same thing over and over again.

Remember, just because someone has some of these changes it doesn't mean they have a mental health problem.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

About 1 in 5 people have a mental health problem.

TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There are many different types of mental health problems. These are some of the main ones:

DEPRESSION
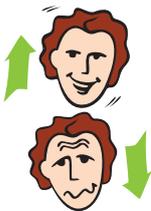Feeling sadder and more down than usual.

*You can find more information on depression in the Depression Fact Sheet of the Bridging Project.

ANXIETY
Having more scared/worried feelings and thoughts than usual.

*You can find more information on anxiety in the Anxiety Fact Sheet of the Bridging Project.

BIPOLAR DISORDER
Having big changes in feelings from feeling very down to feeling very up.

SCHIZOPHRENIA
Some of the following things can happen if we have schizophrenia:

- Believing in things that do not exist

- Believing things that no-one else believes. These beliefs are usually very upsetting

- Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that are not there

- Losing interest in other people

- Not taking care of ourselves.

PERSONALITY DISORDER
When someone has a type of personality that makes it hard to cope with life. There are different types of personality disorders.

WHAT CAN CAUSE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

There are many reasons why someone may have a mental health problem. Some reasons are:

Stressful things happening.

Having someone in our family with a mental health problem.

Not having a lot of support from others.
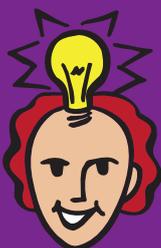
Using drugs like alcohol or marijuana.

Changes in our body.

Having a serious medical illness.

Having a sad childhood.

Remember, sometimes it is not just one thing but many reasons why someone may have a mental illness. Sometimes there is no clear reason.

DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

People with disabilities sometimes have more stressful things in their lives than people without disabilities. More stressful things in a person's life can cause a mental health problem. Some of these stressful things may be:
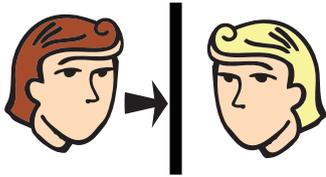
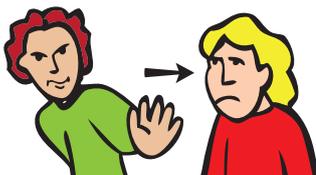Not being able to communicate.
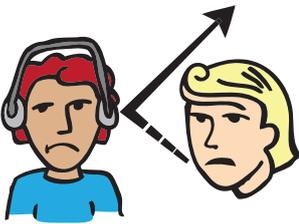
Not being understood.

Not having many friends.

Not having much to do.

Not feeling in control.

Being discriminated against.

Unhappy life experiences.

Not feeling included in things.

Living in places that don't suit them.

Dependant on a few people for a lot of support needs.

Money problems.

Health problems.

Remember, that everyone is different. Just because there are a lot of stressful things in someone's life, it doesn't mean that person will have or get a mental health problem.

LIFESTYLE SUGGESTIONS FOR GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

There are some things that we can do to help us keep a good mental health. Some suggestions that may help are...

Learning how to relax.

Doing things that we enjoy.

Trying not to worry. There are many ways of learning how to worry less. One is to learn how to solve problems. Another way is to talk to someone we feel comfortable with.

Keeping active.

Eating food that is tasty and good for us.

Sleeping well.

TYPES OF HELP

People with mental health problems can get help.

There are two main ways of helping someone with a mental health problem. These are psychological treatment and medication treatment.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT

Psychological treatment is when a person talks to a Psychologist. Psychologists know how to talk to someone with a mental health problem in a way that helps them.

A Psychologist can help us learn more about what we are feeling. They can help change some of our unhelpful ways of thinking. For example thoughts like 'I am bad' are not helpful. Psychologists can help us feel more relaxed.

MEDICATION TREATMENT

Sometimes a person who has a mental health problem takes medicine. This medicine helps them to cope better with a mental health problem. However, medications do not take away the things that may have led to a mental health problem in the first place.

Each person needs to find the treatment that's right for them.

WHERE TO GET HELP

People with a mental health problem may need to get help. Talking with someone they trust can be a good place to start. They may need to get help from someone like their doctor or psychologist. In an emergency they can do one of these things …

Call your Doctor

Call Lifeline if you live in Australia on 13 11 14

Go to a hospital

People who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can call Lifeline throught the National Relay Service (NRS);

TTY users phone 13 36 77 then ask for the Lifeline number which is 13 11 14.

Speak and Listen (speech - to - speech relay) users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for the Lifeline number which is 13 11 14. Internet relay users connect to the NRS website (http://www.relayservice.com.au) and then ask for the Lifeline number which is 13 11 14.
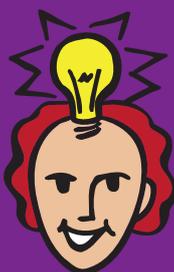
SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER

REMEMBER many people have a mental health problem.

REMEMBER people with a mental health problem can be helped.

This Fact Sheet is linked to the work of the Bridging Project. The Bridging Project is being undertaken by Scope in collaboration with the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, Monash University. The mission of the Bridging Project is to progress the knowledge and resource base to ensure that people with complex communication and mental health needs have access to quality services. The project has two complementary streams, Building Evidence (increasing the evidence base in relation to individuals with complex communication and mental health needs through research and related activities) and Building Capacity (building the capacity of services to address the mental health needs and preferences of individuals with complex communication needs). The project is designed around the needs of people who are 18 years or older.

More information regarding The Bridging Project can be found at the Scope Web Page, http://www.scopevic.org.au