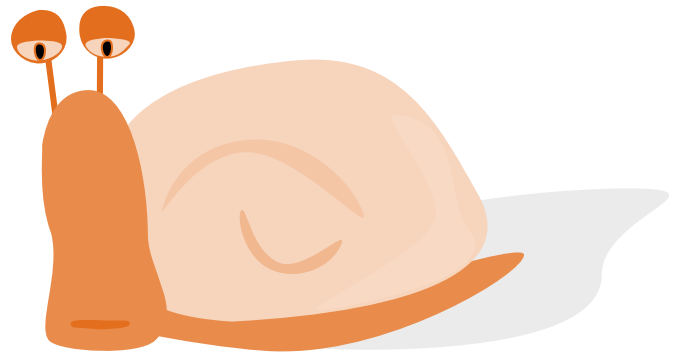


disappointed in life?

feeling stressed out?

not having any fun?

feeling worn out?



if your answer is **YES**,
you are not alone

No one experiences perfect mental health or well-being all of the time. We all have to learn how to balance the different aspects of our lives. When things in our life change, we have to re-establish the balance. However, ongoing mental health problems can take a real toll on your well-being.

Your mental health can affect many areas of your life:

- Work, school, or home life
- Relationships with others
- Sleep
- Appetite
- Energy levels
- Ability to think clearly or make decisions
- Physical health
- Life satisfaction and more ...

Mental health is just as important to our lives as our physical health

Mental health is not the same thing as the absence of a mental illness. Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. It can influence:

- How you feel about yourself, the world and your life
- Your ability to solve problems and overcome challenges
- Your ability to build relationships with others and contribute to your communities
- Your ability to achieve your goals

Many people take care of their physical health before they feel sick. They may eat well, exercise and try to get enough sleep to help maintain wellness. You can take the same approach to mental health. Just as you may work to keep your body healthy, you can also work to keep your mind healthy.

THOUGHTS

Examples of helpful thoughts:

- I know I can cope and get through these rough times
- There are things in my life that I feel excited about!
- I know my friends really care about me
- I feel good about the way my life is going these days
- I have some really cool talents and interests
- I want to do something that makes a positive difference
- I'm a good person even though I have some flaws
- I feel grateful for the good things in my life

Examples of negative thoughts:

- It feels like something really bad is going to happen
- Nothing good ever seems to happen to me
- I'm never going to get through this
- My flaws are too big to overcome
- I feel like I'm losing my mind
- I'm ugly and stupid
- They think I'm a loser
- Life sucks!

THOUGHTS
The way you think about something has a big impact on your mental health. Changes in your thoughts often go along with changes in your mental health. When you feel well, it's easier to see life in a more balanced and constructive way. When you aren't well, it's easy to get stuck on negative things and ignore positive things.

BODY REACTIONS

Examples of body reactions

- Muscle tension, muscle aches or headaches
- Dry mouth
- Upset stomach or nausea
- Upset bowels or diarrhea
- Lack of appetite or increased appetite
- Sweating, hot flushes or cold chills
- Chest pain, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Pounding, racing or abnormal heartbeat
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed
- Tingling in hands and/or feet

BODY REACTIONS

Body reactions are changes in your body functions such as heart rate, breathing, digestion, brain chemicals, hormones and more. Changes in your body reactions often go along with changes in your mental health.

- Feeling that you're separated from things around you
- Aggravation of an existing health problem (e.g., acne, digestive disorders, migraines, chronic pain, etc.)
- Changes in sexual functioning, such as decreased sex drive

4 BASIC DIMENSIONS of Mental Health and Well-Being

Examples of helpful behaviours:

- Working on a solution to a problem one step at a time
- Reaching out to a friend or family member for support and understanding
- Practicing your spiritual activities
- Doing something relaxing like taking a bath or practicing yoga
- Exercising
- Engaging in hobbies or leisure activities

Examples of harmful behaviours:

- Isolating yourself and pulling away from friends and family
- Using alcohol or drugs to make bad feelings go away
- Avoiding the things that upset you
- Overeating, not eating enough, or purging food (such as vomiting, over-exercising)
- Lashing out at other people (verbally or physically)
- Excessively depending on loved ones or clinging to loved ones

BEHAVIOURS

Behaviours are the ways you act and respond to your environment. Some behaviours are helpful, and some can be harmful. Changes in behaviour often go along with changes in mental health.

EMOTIONS

A big part of emotions is the way you feel. Emotions can be pleasant, unpleasant or blended, such as when you have two emotions at the same time. Changes in emotions often accompany changes in mental health.

Examples of emotions/feelings:

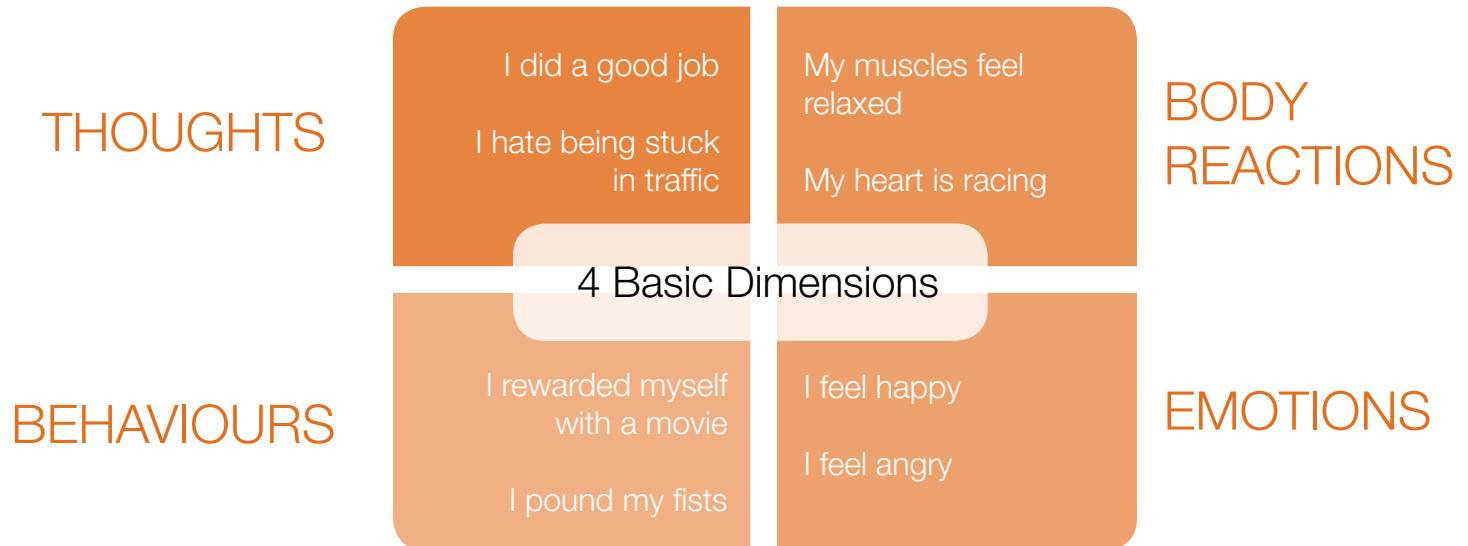
- Happiness or joy
- Contentment
- Calmness
- Excitement
- Feeling love or affection
- Confusion
- Boredom
- Relief
- Irritability or anger
- Frustration
- Anxiety or fear
- Sadness or feeling down
- Embarrassment
- Hopelessness
- Disgust

EMOTIONS

BEHAVIOURS

mental health is determined by our overall patterns of thoughts, emotions, behaviours and body reactions

Each of the four mental health dimensions can influence all of the others. Here's an example:



why should mental health matter to you and your family?

When your mental health suffers, it can become hard to enjoy life. You may start to feel run down, both mentally and physically. Many of these changes can make it harder to enjoy a balanced and rewarding life. Everyone can benefit from learning how to enhance and protect their mental health—whether or not they've experienced mental illness or a substance use problem.

where do I start?

The BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information have a lot of information on how to improve your mental health and well-being. Check out our other Wellness Modules, fact sheets, personal stories and other useful resources for you and your family at www.heretohelp.bc.ca. We're here to help.

You might also be interested in ...

- **Canadian Mental Health Association**
—visit www.cmha.bc.ca
- **HealthLink BC**—visit www.healthlinkbc.ca or call 8-1-1
- **Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre**
—visit www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Select sources and additional resources

- Snyder, C.R. & Lopez, S.J. (2002). *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2009). *Improving the Health of Canadians: Exploring positive mental health*. Ottawa, ON: Author. www.cpa.ca/cpasite/userfiles/Documents/Practice_Page/positive_mh_en.pdf
- BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. (2009). *Tips for Positive Mental Health [fact sheet]*. Vancouver, BC: Author. www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/ImprovingMH2010web.pdf
- Cowen, A. S. & Keltner, D. (2017). Self-report captures 27 distinct categories of emotion bridged by continuous gradients. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114, E7900-E7909. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.170224711>

what is your wellness level?

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks:

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5
MY TOTAL WELLNESS SCORE (add up all circled items) _____	+	+	+	+	

What does my score mean?

Your score reflects the degree of balance you have across the different areas in your life, how well you are coping, and how good you feel about things. These are all important aspects of wellness and mental health. There is no magic score that guarantees perfect wellness, so we have not included any guidelines on "high" or "low" scores and what they mean. Instead, we recommend using this self-test to track your own wellness status over time.

If you are actively working on ways to improve your health, your score will probably go up over time. Increases usually mean that you are feeling better about things and feeling like you can cope with life's challenges while still finding time for fun. If you are experiencing stress or

changes in your overall health, your score may go down for a period of time. Decreases usually mean that it is harder to feel good about things and that you are struggling to find a sense of balance. Decreases in scores can be an important sign that you need to take action to make things better for yourself. Most people experience ups and downs in their wellness scores over time. To track your own wellness and general mental health over time, we recommend taking this test once a month.

(Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale [WEMWBS], NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2016, all rights reserved.)