



OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL PERMANENT SECRETARY
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER



Caring for your **Mental Health**

Employee Support Programme



What is mental health?

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” Additionally, the World Health Organisation specifies that health in its entirety, “is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Being mentally healthy does not mean that you do not feel any emotional distress. In fact, such reaction is common in everyone. The difference is that, mentally healthy people experience emotional distress in proportional intensity to the situation that caused it.

The concept of mental health encompasses emotions, thoughts and behaviours. When people are mentally healthy they are in good spirits, can

tolerate reasonable amounts of pressure, are flexible when faced with the need to change and find themselves in satisfactory personal relationships and work. Mental health however, is affected by more than just the presence of these experiences. It is affected by individual factors, past experiences, the social and physical environment as well as societal and cultural traditions and expectations. The ability to work and fulfil roles appropriately is a key factor for mental health. If such capabilities are impaired, it could suggest that an individual’s mental health is not at its best at that point in time as there might be something that is interfering with their daily functioning. Keeping on the topic of work, employment is important for mental health as it produces personal and health benefits. It also provides a structure for the day and provides for social connections with others. Its absence, therefore, can be detrimental for mental health.

Influencing Factors

There are a number of factors that can help prevent the occurrence of mental health problems. Having a good social life, good physical health, seeking involvement in the community, engaging in some sort of physical exercise and having another adult present in your life that is supportive of you, are some of the things that protect your mental health. Other factors influencing your mental well-being in a positive manner include a positive work climate, the opportunity to have your achievements

recognised, financial security and appropriate support services. Additionally, a positive outlook on life, helping other people, adequate resting time and developing good coping mechanisms also help protect your mental health.

Despite your best intentions, there are some factors that may result in the deterioration of your mental health, some of which are not within anyone's control. For example, individual factors such as genetic predispositions and traumatic experiences increase the risk of experiencing mental health problems.



Mental Health Problems

Mental health problems can have a negative impact on one's quality of life including the economic and social aspects. Additionally, other issues such as stigma and discrimination may affect a person's wellbeing. Families can also suffer when a member has a mental health problem as they have to cope with reducing income and with the altered behaviour and personality of the individual who is suffering. They also experience disruption of routines and social activities and these kinds of adjustments take their toll on the members of the family who are helping the affected person.

Mental health problems encompass symptoms that are normally associated with mental disorders, but are not severe enough to be diagnosed a full-fledged mental

disorder. For example, stress results in symptoms such as distress and feelings that one is not able to cope. However, being stressed and experiencing these emotional issues does not mean that you are suffering from some kind of disorder. Also, although mental health problems cause impairments in one's work performance and in one's social relationships, they will not necessarily lead to mental health disorders.

Change in usual behaviour is one of the indicators that there may possibly be issues with the person's mental health. Some common indicators of mental health issues include changes in mood, erratic thinking, increased anxiety, impulsive actions and a lack of interest in the activities that the person used to enjoy doing. Individuals may also experience physical symptoms such as weight loss and fatigue.



For more information on this subject and how the Employee Support Programme can help you, please contact us on 2200 1210 or by email on esp.opm@gov.mt or visit our website www.esp.gov.mt