

Why is mental health important?

Mental health is the essential for a person's well-being and effective functioning. The World Health Organization defines it as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Do children get mental illness?

Yes, childhood is a vulnerable period and a whole range of mental illnesses can occur in childhood including various learning disorders, autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders, elective mutism. In addition, children may become depressed, anxious, or even develop psychosis.

Can mental illness be treated?

Absolutely. All the various types of mental illness can be effectively treated with medications, psychological treatments, or a combination of both. People with mental illnesses can recover completely or at least the symptoms may be controlled.

Is mental illness contagious?

Most of the mental illnesses are caused by multiple and interacting social, psychological, and biological factors. None of the mental illnesses is caused by germs and so mental illnesses are neither infectious nor contagious. So "catching" the same illness from close contact with someone with mental illness is a myth and completely untrue.

Are people with mental illness dangerous?

Generally people with mental illnesses are no more dangerous than those in the general population. However, the presence of certain disturbances like a delusion of persecution where the person believes that people want to harm him or her, and then may act on the delusion and take action against these people. People with certain types of mental illnesses may be dangerous to themselves e.g. those with severe depression may kill themselves.

What are the consequences of delayed treatment?

Mental illnesses are like many other physical illnesses e.g. diabetes where delay in treatment would result in more complications. For most of the mental illnesses, delay in effective treatment would lead to more distress to the person and family, greater impairment to either his or her academic or occupation functioning, disruption to the person's social network. For some mental illnesses, delay would also result in greater severity of the illnesses, and lessen the chance of a full recovery.

What are the common types of mental illness in Singapore?

The common illnesses are depressive disorders, various types of anxiety disorders including obsessive-compulsive disorders, and the psychoses. In the elderly, dementia is relatively common.

What can one do if their loved ones reject treatment?

This is a fairly common and difficult problem with no single solution.

The person may reject treatment from a number of reasons:

- lack of awareness that he or she is ill
 - fear of stigmatization
 - misattributing the disturbances to some other causes e.g. supernatural influences.
- 1 It may be helpful to
 - find out why the person does not want treatment, and address the apprehension or misconception.
 - persuade the person to seek help and relief for some of the complaints that he or she may also be having e.g. sleep problems, or feeling low in mood rather than suggesting the person should seek help because he or she may be having a mental illness.
 - 2 Enlisting the help of someone (e.g. friend, teacher, pastor, etc) the person trusts and respects to persuade the person to seek professional help is another approach.
 - 3 Contacting a professional mental health worker like a counselor or a psychiatrist, or even a family doctor to discuss this problem may also help. The family doctor or psychiatrist could make a home visit, make an assessment and persuade the person to take the appropriate treatment.



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