

Definitions of common terms related to Mental Well-being

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. In this positive sense, mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community.¹

Mental Illness is defined as “collectively all diagnosable mental disorders” or “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.” Under these definitions, substance use might be classified as either a mental health problem or a mental illness, depending on its intensity, duration, and effects.²

Mental Health Promotion consists of interventions to enhance the ability to achieve developmentally appropriate tasks and a positive sense of self-esteem, mastery, well-being, and social inclusion and to strengthen the ability to cope with adversity.³ This ability to cope is referred to as resilience.

Mental Health Treatment is the provision of specific intervention techniques by a professional for conditions identified in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). These interventions should have proven effectiveness, the ability to produce measurable changes in behaviors and symptoms, and should be person- and family-centered and culturally and linguistically appropriate.⁴

Prevention is a step or set of steps along a continuum to promote individual, family, and community health; prevent mental and substance use disorders; support resilience and recovery; and prevent relapse.⁵

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. People with mental illnesses can and do recover from these conditions, and hope plays an essential part in overcoming the internal and external challenges, barriers, and obstacles. Controlling or managing symptoms is part of this process. Reducing or eliminating substance use is critical for recovery from addiction.⁶

Recovery Support Services include a focus on providing for the health, housing, vocational, and social support needs of people with mental health problems. These include peer- and family-operated services.⁷

Substance Abuse is defined as the use of alcohol or drugs despite negative consequences.⁸

Substance Use is defined as the consumption of low or infrequent doses of alcohol and other drugs, sometimes called experimental, casual, or social use.⁹

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.¹⁰

Reference List

1. World Health Organization. (2001). Strengthening Mental Health Promotion (Fact sheet no. 220). Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/inf/fs/en/fact220.html>
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2013). Definitions of Trauma and Resilience. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/children/trauma-resilience-definitions.asp>
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). National Prevention Week Participant Toolkit (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4687). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery (HHS Publication No. PEP12-RECDEF). Rockville, MD. Retrieved from <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Working-Definition-of-Recovery/PEP12-RECDEF>
7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2009). Guiding Principles and Elements of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care: What Do We Know From the Research? (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 09-4439). Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Retrieved from http://partnersforrecovery.samhsa.gov/docs/Guiding_Principles_Whitepaper.pdf
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). National Prevention Week Participant Toolkit (HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4687). Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
9. Ibid.
10. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). Trauma definition. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/traumajustice/traumadefinition/definition.aspx>