

What Is Mental Wellness???

This tip sheet provides a framework to begin to talk to the community about the complex issues that surround mental health and wellness. As you begin more intensive outreach to engage those most in need of help, how do we explain to the community what mental wellness looks and feels like? First, we need to understand how members of the community think and talk about their mental state—what words do they use, is there a level of comfort with the concept, etc.? Then, build a bridge between professional knowledge and perspectives and “meeting people where they are.” People in the community need to understand that they have choices in the way they go about seeking mental wellness for themselves and their family. They need our guidance in finding the path that works best for them. In order to get them to “Point B” (where we want them to be), we have to understand both what to say and how to say it; this helps build bridges to better ways of dealing with the stress in their lives. Below are various perspectives on mental wellness uncovered in the MEE focus groups:

How Providers and CBOs Defined Mental Wellness

Providers defined mental wellness as:

- The ability to deal with everyday situations and stressors. (*“What gauges your day-to-day activities and how you respond and react to whatever’s happening with you.”*)
- Having “coping skills and survival techniques.”
- The ability to interact with people well.
- Being able to adapt to various situations.
- Actually functioning and doing well. (*“Their mental wellness is good because they’re working and succeeding in school. They have outlets and avenues and at the end of each one is something positive.”*)

How Mothers Defined Mental Wellness

When asked about mental wellness, mothers offered:

- Balanced and well-rounded (i.e., “able to bring balance and order to their own life”).
- Demonstrates stability. *“They’re a normal person living everyday life with no mental problems.”*
- Constructive, organized and having it all together.
- Functional.



- Someone that can accept changes in life.
- Can “see things clearly.”
- Having a connection with a power greater than yourself.
- Healthy and happy.

How Young People Defined Mental Wellness

Young people defined mental wellness as:

- Functioning well, able to take care of themselves, capable.
- Aware of everything they're doing/thinks straight/understands what's going on around them/has a “good mind”/“has their mind right.”
- Someone who is strong mentally/someone who can remain positive in the face of adversity/a positive person who sets goals and is able to handle tough situations.
- Happy, joyful.
- *“Someone who has self-control, who is calm, cool, collected with themselves.”*
- Someone who is “trying to work on the mental side of their mind”/someone who is trying to understand what “makes them tick.”
- Not stressed.
- Healthy/in good health.
- Someone who is trying to get help.
- Someone who has everything in order/solid/on top of everything/ “on their ‘A’ game”/ has their life together.
- Someone who is well-adjusted.
- Someone who is trying to better themselves/knows what they want in life.
- *“Coming from a well-balanced background, like a family or upbringing, [with] a healthy support system.”*