

Introduction

This leaflet has information about mental health problems and the help that one can search for to fix them.

People often think that mental health problems are something to be ashamed of and they are afraid to talk about them with others. Actually, those problems should cause no more embarrassment than any other health problem. They also do not indicate a mental illness. Good mental health means that you feel good emotionally, are satisfied with your life and feel secure in your personal life and when talking with others. When your mental health is disturbed, for example you are experiencing depression and anxiety, then know, that it can always be fixed. In this leaflet you will find instructions on what can be done about it.

Mental health is at particular risk amongst refugees. Often the ones seeking shelter have experienced war and persecution. Being away from one's country and home also has a bad effect on one's mental health.

It is important to know that it is totally normal to feel sadness when having lost something important and it is usual that at first, it is hard to manage in a new environment. These feelings are nothing to be ashamed of, they need to be learned to deal with.

What can furthermore affect mental health are problems in one's family or at work, losing one's job, divorce, death of a loved one, sickness, or another life change. What can also cause stress, is when a person does not know their rights in a new country and it interferes with day-to-day procedures. To improve one's mental health something can be done alone, but help can always be found from specialists.

What are the signs of mental health problems?

BODY

- ◆ Difficulties sleeping
- ◆ It is hard to relax
- ◆ Fatigue and exhaustion
- ◆ Fits of crying
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Indigestion
- ◆ Chest pain
- ◆ Back and neck pain
- ◆ Discomfort caused by loud noises
- ◆ Other physical symptoms, that do not have physical causes

THOUGHTS

- ◆ It is hard to make decisions
- ◆ It is hard to remember things
- ◆ It is hard to focus
- ◆ Too many thoughts at once
- ◆ Self-blaming
- ◆ Suicide thoughts
- ◆ Recurring flashbacks of disturbing experiences
- ◆ Constant thoughts of worry

FEELINGS

- ◆ Fear and anxiety without a clear reason
- ◆ Feelings of inferiority
- ◆ No interest in doing, what you usually like
- ◆ Helplessness and hopelessness
- ◆ Feeling alone
- ◆ Fear of losing control of your life
- ◆ Fear of going crazy
- ◆ Feeling loss
- ◆ Everyday life feels depressing
- ◆ Constant nightmares

BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNICATION

- ◆ No wish to be among others
- ◆ It is hard to trust others
- ◆ Tendency to be irritated easily

Here are some ways to support your mental health by yourself:

SOCIAL LIFE

We feel good when surrounded by positive and supportive people (family, friends, partners, etc), feel validated and loved, and can feel the same way about others, for example, take care of others and be helpful. Therefore, establish friendships in a new environment, meet new interesting people and participate in social activities. Take part in different events - even if you initially feel that you do not have the energy for it.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- ◆ Move for at least 30 minutes every day, advisedly outside. If your body relaxes, so does your mind. Physical activity lifts your mood, improves sleep, gives energy, and therefore boosts our confidence and self-esteem. It is even better to move with a friend, it helps to keep motivation and is simply more fun.
- ◆ Physical activity does not mean that you have to do sports or go to the gym. You can be active in many ways, for example by going for a walk or riding your bike or choosing physical exercise over transport or the lift at work or your everyday activities. Physical activity can be playing active games with kids or friends, but also simply cleaning your apartment or other household activities.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- ◆ Develop good habits, find time to regularly do something that you like.
- ◆ Do something you are good at. You then feel that you succeed at what you do. Try to have a healthy and balanced diet. What you eat and drink affects the way you feel, think and act.
- ◆ Take care of your home and surroundings, because the environment surrounding us affects our mental state.
- ◆ Try to get enough sleep, because feeling rested helps your mental well-being by a lot.
- ◆ If you are having trouble sleeping, try to avoid sleeping during the day and drinking coffee, watching the news, surfing on the internet, and other activities that stimulate and excite you before bedtime.
- ◆ Every evening think about three things you can be grateful for in your life or on that day.
- ◆ With all this do not be too hard on yourself - nothing is wrong if everything does not work right away, changes always come with tiny steps.



OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH



WHERE TO FIND HELP?

- ◆ It often helps to simply talk about things with family and friends, but sometimes the help of a specialist is needed. You can feel free to turn to the Estonian Refugee Council or your family doctor for help. Do not be afraid, because they have faced many topics of mental health and can give you advice on what to do next.
- ◆ Everything that you discuss with your doctor or with your support person is confidential. This means that they will not publish any information about you to any authority or person.
- ◆ If your family member is dangerous to themselves or to others and they refuse to turn to a doctor, you can call the emergency number 112.

Our mental states alternate and even if sometimes nothing seems to be good anymore, it does not have to stay that way. Every other person experiences mental health problems at some point in their life. There is always help to be found and you are not alone.



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