



INDIGENOUS WELLBEING MODULE

DEFINING MENTAL WELLNESS AND MENTAL ILLNESS:

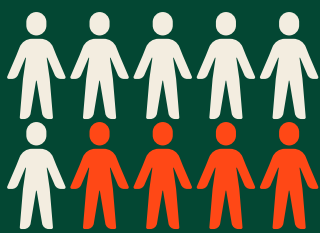
- **Mental Wellness** is a broader term that can be defined as a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and is able to make a contribution to their own community (First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework Summary Report, 2015).
- **Mental Illness** implies that a person has received a clinical diagnosis and/or is experiencing clinically significant symptoms of mental illness. Mental illnesses envelop a broad categorization of conditions and can be short-lasting episodes or chronic, lifelong disorders. (Mental Health and Mental Illness Module, Canadian SMH Network).

Mental wellness is a balance of the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional. This balance is enriched when individuals have:

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| <p>1 Purpose in their daily lives whether it is through education, employment, caregiving activities, or cultural ways of being and doing.</p> | <p>3 A sense of belonging and connectedness within their families, to community, to culture and to the Land.</p> |
| <p>2 Hope for their future and those of their families that is grounded in a sense of identity, unique Indigenous values, and having a belief in spirit.</p> | <p>4 A sense of meaning and an understanding of how their lives and those of their families and communities are part of creation and a rich history</p> |

Sometimes communities can place a lot of emphasis on focusing on the positives, such as strength and resilience when it comes to having poor mental wellness. However, it is also important to note that while your community might want to set aside your “deficits”, it is ok to take time to feel sorry for yourself. It is important more than ever, during periods of low mental wellbeing to be gentle and patient with yourself.

Risk Factors for Mental Illness



Social factors include intergenerational and multigenerational trauma, lived trauma, socio-economic factors, built environment, home life, lack of community support, isolation, abusive relationships, exposure to racism and discrimination, and low socioeconomic status.

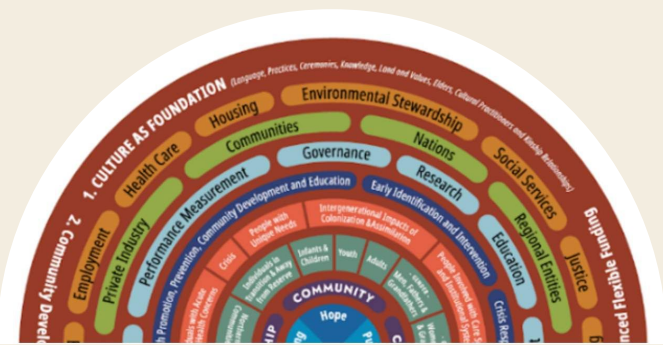


Biological factors include epigenetics, genetic vulnerabilities, health conditions and comorbidities, poor nutrition and sleep patterns, substance use, neurologic deficits or injuries, and adverse childhood experiences.



Psychological factors include prolonged exposure to stress, traumatic experiences, adverse childhood experiences, dissatisfaction with current life status, self deprecation, and certain personality traits, thoughts, emotions and attitudes.

First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework



Culture can foster optimal wellbeing: Cultural knowledge about mental wellness is grounded in strengths and resilience instead of one’s “deficits”. Culture is at the center of mental wellness, and it holistically addresses all four directions of our wellbeing; spirit, mind, body and emotions.

The centre of the model refers to the interconnection between mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional behavior—purpose, hope, meaning, and belonging. A balance between all of these elements leads to optimal mental wellness.

Improving Mental Wellbeing

1. Connect with the land
2. Meditation or mindfulness
3. Movement as medicine
4. Positive affirmations
5. Engage in ceremony
6. Connect with nature
7. Connect to spirituality

- Smudging • Being in nature • Naming ceremony • Learning your colours • Taking a cedar bath • Having a cedar tea • Berry fast • Vision fast • Putting down tobacco • Learning your clan • Pipe ceremony • Blanket ceremony/teaching • Powwow • Round Dance • Socials • Drumming Circles • Feasts and Giveaways • Moon Time Ceremonies • Potlatches • Creating spiritual items such as: a tobacco pouch, Drum, Drumstick or Rattle • Decorating an eagle feather • Medicine bundle • Regalia • Ribbon skirt • Ribbon shirt • Beadwork

We can honour the mental wellbeing of ourselves and others through the seven grandfather teachings:



Love



Humility



Bravery



Truth



Honesty



Humility



Wisdom

REFERENCES

1. First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework Summary Report, 2015. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1576093687903/1576093725971>
2. <https://suicideprevention.ca/>
3. <http://thunderbirdpf.org/>