Effects of Negative Mental Health on our Well-being

Tutor's Handbook

ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors

Effects of Negative Mental Health

Introduction

Through the resources in the ON-CALL Toolkit you may already viewed the material on what positive mental health is and what we can do to maintain it. In this short handbook we will provide some additional information to you about what negative mental health is and why it's so detrimental to our overall well-being. We will begin by discussing what negative mental health is.

What is Negative Mental Health?

While certain individuals may be more susceptible than others, due to lifestyle choices, genetics and hormone imbalances, nobody is immune to negative mental health. It can be caused by a tragic event, or it is something that can gradually develop over years through poor lifestyle choices and bad habits. Issues you're your mental health are primarily health conditions which come about as a result of a change in your mood, behaviour, thinking, ability to make decisions, etc. However, it is worth mentioning that having good mental health is not the same as not having any conditions or problems. Having good mental health is something that requires you to take time to make time for yourself, your family and friends, your favourite hobbies, etc. It is not something

that comes naturally to many people, but without adequate supports and ways to handle stress, we can all be vulnerable to negative mental health.

Negative mental health is categorised by feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, a lack of motivation, feeling of helplessness, losing control of emotions and thoughts, withdrawing from social groups and situations. It encompasses negative thoughts and feelings about yourself, about others, about your situation and the world around you. When you get in a spiral of negative mental health, you begin to believe that there is no way back, but there is always something you can do.

This handbook presents some of the habits that you should stop, and that you should encourage group members to stop, because they actually encourage negative mental health. If group members are looking for advise on how to replace these negative habits with techniques and activities that promote positive mental health, please direct them to the resources on this topic in the ON-CALL toolkit.

Habits We All Need to Stop

In this section, we are going to present some of the main habits that people have that encourage negative mental health. Because these habits are detrimental to

our health, it is important that you share these habits with members of your local health network and encourage them to replace these habits with more positive activities linked to maintaining positive mental health.

- Poor Posture:

You might not think it, but research suggests that even slouching in your chair can contribute to negative mental health, and as an antidote, sitting up straight and having good posture has been proven to improve self-esteem and mood, leading to positive mental health.

- Guilt:

You may feel guilty that you forgot a friend's birthday, or you forgot to thank someone in work for a favour. Whatever it is, you need to let go of the feelings of guilt. Harbouring these negative feeling about something you did will only create a negative self-image of yourself and will do nothing to improve your mental health.

- Not Exercising:

A sedentary lifestyle – as well as being bad for your weight, your heart and your overall physical health – research shows that it is also bad for your mental health and well-being. Regular exercise relieves symptoms of depression because of the endorphins (feel-good chemicals) that your body releases when you exercise.

- Excessive Use of Social Media:

Excessive use of social media is promoting anxiety and lowering self-esteem in teenagers. The mental health issues resulting from social media use can also affect adults. The Telegraph reports "a recent survey of 1,500 adult Facebook and Twitter users in which 62 percent of participants reported feelings of inadequacy and 60 percent reported jealousy from comparing themselves to other social media users. Thirty percent said using just these two forms of social media made them feel lonely". Consider replacing some of the time you spend on social media, meeting up with family or friends, or dedicating time to a hobby.

- Excessive Use of Smartphones:

Habitual smartphone use causes you to check your device constantly in fear of missing out. Some mental health professionals worry excess smartphone use can cause a form of addiction, with users compulsively checking for notifications and updates. Compulsive or excessive use of a smartphone could worsen symptoms of depression, anxiety, chronic stress and/or low self-esteem.

- Inadequate or poor sleep:

Research shows people with mental health problems tend to sleep poorly. Sleep is a source of physical and emotional resilience. By providing your brain and body an opportunity to recover from the difficulties of the previous day, sleep helps you rise to the challenges of tomorrow. Losing sleep for one or two nights can make you feel groggy, grumpy, and out of focus, but a habit of poor sleep can wreak havoc on your mental health.

The Signs of Negative Mental Health

Two of the evils related to mental health are anxiety and stress. Anxiety is a source of stress and, in turn, stress in one of the most common sources of anxiety.

Anxiety is a response of the brain to perceive a threat or danger. It is the way your body prepares you to escape or fight a problem by producing the hormone, adrenaline. This is known as Fight or Flight. Anxiety taken to an extreme can cause panic attacks, so it is important that you work on learning to stay calm in anxious times.

Stress is also a mechanism of defence of the body before a demand, usually external. If something causes you stress and you live with stress daily, you may have muscle or body aches. In addition, one of the natural reactions of the body when a person encounters stress is that they lose the ability to differentiate between a scenario that needs a quick response and a dangerous situation.

The most common signs of negative mental health include:

- Feelings of anxiety, frustration, fear, irritability, confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Having repetitive or racing thoughts that you can't get control of
- Excessive self-criticism
- Forgetfulness
- Concern for the future

- Difficulties in speaking to others.
- Nervous laughter.
- Excessive crying
- Tightening the jaws
- Increased consumption of drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Physical pains caused by contracted muscles, including headache, back or neck problems, upset stomach.
- Fatigue and lack of motivation
- Tight feeling in the chest, palpitations and agitated breathing.

Effectives of Negative Mental Health on our Wellbeing

We now understand that many of our daily habits can result in us developing negative mental health If these issues are allowed to go untreated, we become more vulnerable to developing serious mental health issues and event some permanent illnesses. Our minds are wonderful, but if they are not cared for, they can be fragile. Understanding the consequences of negative mental health for our health and sense of wellbeing, can help to motivate us to take action and to adopt healthier habits in our daily lives.

So, what are the consequences of negative mental health?

- Schizophrenia, depression and bipolar disorder are a few types of mental health disorders that can develop as a result of poor mental health. If not addressed, these mental illnesses can have major

effects on your body. They can even lead to premature death.

- Some life-threatening physical health problems caused by mental health issues include:
  - High Blood Pressure
  - Heart Disease
  - Cancer
  - Obesity
  - Diabetes

In respect of our wellbeing, negative mental health can have a negative impact on our moods, our personality, our relationships and friendships, our performance in work and school, how far we will go in life. If we don't take action now to improve our mental health, we may be left with a life of regret, and this will only further lead to negative mental health. Therefore, it is important to break the cycle and to develop habits and behaviours that promote positive mental health.

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents some introductory information on the topic of negative mental health, what it is, what habits contribute to it, what the symptoms are of it and how it can affect our overall wellbeing. It is worthwhile to review this handbook before your session with the group so that you are supported to facilitate a discussion about mental wellbeing. Be mindful however, as this is a topic which relates to the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of members of your group, if a group member presents with serious mental health concerns, please support them to seek professional medical support and do not try to tackle the issues raised in the group.

To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce the habits and signs of negative mental health. This has been developed to elicit group discussion on the topic. Use this resource to start a conversation in the group about any habits they have and how they might change these habits to adopt more positive habits for their mental health.

Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion about the habits associated with negative mental health. Ask if group members have these habits, if they even notice they do these activities and how they generally feel about the habits they have. Once all group members have shared some examples of what they do, ask them to work on their own to think of alternative activities they could do each day to replace these negative habits. Ask each group member to share one change that they will make to their daily routine. When everyone has shared ask all members to adopt their change for one week and to feed-back at the next session about how they felt it impacted their mental health.

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