

# Chai and Chat: What is mental health? What is mental illness?

---

## What is Mental Health?

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>).

## How do you know when you have good mental health?

Here is a short check list.

- Self-esteem: Feeling good about who you are
- Managing emotions: Recognizing and expressing a wide range of emotions constructively
- Responding to stress: Managing and coping well with stress
- Mindfulness: Being aware of the details of this moment
- Relaxation: Being able to unwind and calm the body and mind
- Getting help: Seeking or accepting help from others when needed

(<https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness/mind/emotional-well-being>)

## Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends

(<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>)

## Where are your local mental health clinics?

What are their phone numbers?

## What is Mental Illness?

The Mayo Clinic defines it as, “a wide range of mental health conditions — disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

Many people have mental health concerns from time to time. But a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function.

## When should you seek help?

- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

## What can I do to keep my mental health strong?

Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media.

Take care of your body

Eat healthy, well-balanced meals

Exercise regularly

Get plenty of sleep

Avoid excessive use of alcohol and tobacco

Make time to unwind — Try to do some other activities you enjoy

Connect with others—talk with people you trust about your concerns

Connect with your community or faith based organizations

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/cope-with-stress/index.html>

## Advice from the Bible; what about revenge?

St. Paul, the writer of much of the New Testament restates what Jesus taught his followers.

“Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them...Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;

I will pay them back,”

says the Lord.

Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap

burning coals of shame on their heads.”

Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (Romans 12:14,17-21).

*What are the main ideas stated by St. Paul?*

*How do you think that praying for your enemies and doing them good helps them and you?*

*Explain the motivation and reasoning behind not taking revenge on people?*

*What is difficult about taking such advice? How can one live this way?*

## Chai and Chat: Annoyance and Aggressive Anger.

---

Anger is the feeling of strong annoyance, exasperation, or irritation. It is the feeling that makes you want to hurt whoever is causing you the difficulty.

There are four kinds of anger: justifiable anger, annoyance anger, aggressive anger, and temper tantrums. It is wise to pay attention to all of these kinds of anger. Recognizing our anger can alert us to good actions to correct an injustice, but anger can also destroy our personal tranquility if we do not handle it correctly.

Annoyance anger is the day to day things we find irritating. The bathroom drain clogs and water spills on the floor everywhere. We lose our keys and when we talk to our friend, they are preoccupied and don't really listen. Your professor is not clear about the assignment and you did not do it right and got a bad grade.

*What are the day to day things that annoy you often?*

It is very easy to let the things that annoy you pile up in your mind until you find you lost your joy in living and everything seems negative and the world seems against you.

*What do you do when you find yourself annoyed and angry throughout the day?*

*What tips do you have for shrugging off day by day irritations?*

Aggressive anger is when the angry person tries to relieve their anger in unhealthy ways for themselves and for the people around them. Sometimes they have temper tantrums with shouting, throwing things, and saying terrible things about others. This would be an attempt to hurt, intimidate, manipulate, or control someone. These destructive patterns destroy relationships and harm one's sense of self, both for the person exhibiting such behavior and those who receive that behavior.

*If you are on the receiving end of aggressive behavior, how do you protect yourself?*

*If you find yourself acting aggressively when you are angry, how can you stop yourself?*

### Activity based on **Picture This, by Molly Bang**

Choose three colors of the geometric shapes and make a picture that is related to the discussion or Bible