

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 is your local mental health clinic?

What are its 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>

Real People, Real Trouble, Real Faith

“Have you considered my servant Job?” (Job 2:3). With these words come the story of suffering, depression, confusion, and final resolution to Job’s experience and life. As we see today, sometimes bouts of mild to serious depression are preceded by a personal disappointment or catastrophe like the loss of a job, relationship, or health. Job suffered all of these. His income and possessions were wiped out by terrorism. All of his children died in a freak weather accident. Finally, Job became deathly ill. He utters, “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come?...I have not peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Job’s friends come to comfort him but they end up accusing him of some hidden sin as an explanation for his trouble. “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it” (Job 4:8). Job responds with, “How long will you torment me and crush me with words?” (Job 19:1). Job has times of faith along with times of despair, “I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me” (Job 19:25-29).

Describes Job’s relationship with God thus far.

As Job continues to suffer, he begins to accuse God of not treating him fairly. “He throws me into the mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes. I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me. You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me” (Job 30:19,20). In the same chapter he recounts all the good he had done to help the poor and keep himself from sin.

Describe Job’s attitude. *How would you answer Job at this point?*

In the end, God answers Job, by asking him questions about the mysteries of the universe and natural world that reveal Job’s ignorance. Could it be that Job has no right to accuse God? “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted...Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” Job 42:2,6.

Repentance is a feeling of regret and a wish to do better. Why do you think Job needed to repent?

What can we learn about God and ourselves from Job’s experience?

Chai and Chat: What is Depression?

According to the Cleveland Clinic, depression is “a medical condition that affects your mood and ability to function. Treatment options range from counseling to medications to brain stimulation and complementary therapies.”

There are many kinds of depression.

- Major depressive disorder (MDD): Major depression (clinical depression) has intense or overwhelming symptoms that last longer than two weeks. These symptoms interfere with everyday life.
- Bipolar depression: People with [bipolar disorder](#) have alternating periods of low mood and extremely high-energy (manic) periods. During the low period, they may have depression symptoms such as feeling sad or hopeless or lacking energy.
- Perinatal and postpartum depression: “Perinatal” means around birth. Many people refer to this type as postpartum depression. [Perinatal depression](#) can occur during pregnancy and up to one year after having a baby. Symptoms go beyond “the baby blues,” which causes minor sadness, worry or stress.
- Persistent depressive disorder (PDD): PDD is also known as dysthymia. Symptoms of PDD are less severe than major depression. But people experience PDD symptoms for two years or longer.
- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD): [Premenstrual dysphoric disorder](#) is a severe form of premenstrual disorder (PMS). It affects women in the days or weeks leading up to their [menstrual period](#).
- Psychotic depression: People with psychotic depression have severe depressive symptoms and delusions or hallucinations. Delusions are beliefs in things that are not based in reality, while hallucinations involve seeing, hearing, or feeling touched by things that aren’t actually there.
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD): [Seasonal depression](#), or seasonal affective disorder, usually starts in late fall and early winter. It often goes away during the spring and summer.

How familiar are you with these categories of depression?

Does anything surprise you about this list?

How difficult is it to persuade someone to go to the doctor? How would you do it?

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