Understanding the **Spectrum of Mental Health**

**What is mental health?**

Our mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we feel, how we see ourselves, how we handle stress, how we make choices, and how we relate to others. It has a powerful influence on our quality of life.

Good mental health means more than not having a mental illness. A person can have poor mental health and still not have a mental illness. And just because someone doesn’t have a mental illness doesn’t mean they have good mental health.

**What is the connection between mental health and physical health?**

Mental health and physical health are equally important and closely related. For example, exercise can improve both physical and mental health, and good mental health can help prevent and manage diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

We all have good days and bad days. When we wake up feeling sick, we know what to do. We adjust our plans so we can rest. We may even visit our doctor. But when we feel mentally unwell, we may not know what to do and may be less likely to act. Mental health problems are no less serious than physical health problems. Just as with physical health, it is important to strengthen and support our mental health before there is a serious problem.

**What is the spectrum of mental health?**

Imagine a spectrum running from mental wellness to mental suffering. Everyone falls somewhere on the spectrum, and where we fall can change over time, depending on many factors.

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Determining where you or someone you care about falls on the mental health spectrum can help you to catch problems early and take action to prevent things from getting worse.