

Mental Health Matters



What is Mental Health?

It's a term that we often hear, perhaps in phrases like "he's got a mental health condition", or 'she's taking some time off to look after her mental health" and "they were concerned about their mental health".

However, everyone has mental health, in the same way we all have physical health. And just like we have days when our physical health might not be very well, we can have days when our mental health may not be in good shape too.

We might call this poor mental health or mental ill-health. Sometimes you'll hear the term, mentally unwell, or "has a mental health illness/condition".

Just as the way we live and work evolves, so does the language we use. At Inclusion Included, we don't believe there is a single term, definition or a prescriptive list that tells you what words to use, because every conversation, every context and every person's preferences are different. What is important, though, is to speak with kindness and to understand the impact of your words, and the language you use, being mindful of terms and words that are outdated, or may cause upset or offence. You can learn more about the evolution of language in our member resources on our website.

Preventing mental ill-health

When we talk about prevention, we're talking about the steps we can take — as individuals, workplace leaders, managers and peers and communities and workplaces — to reduce the likelihood of mental ill-health developing or worsening.

We're talking about

- Creating environments where people feel valued, connected, and safe — whether that's at home, in school, in the workplace or in public life.
- Encouraging everyday wellbeing habits like eating well, staying active, sleeping enough, connecting with others, and having opportunities to grow, contribute and find meaning.
- Building emotional resilience, especially around life's unavoidable changes and uncertainties. This includes understanding that feeling low, anxious or overwhelmed at times is normal — and having tools and support in place to help navigate that.

It's important that we start this section by saying that, sometimes, no matter how proactive you are in looking after yourself, it isn't always possible to stop all mental ill-health from developing.

There are many, many factors that contribute to, or influence our mental health, including our physical health, our family history and relationships, our view of ourselves and the world around us, and social circumstances such as education, finances, employment, housing and our social network.

At its heart, prevention is about giving people the best chance to stay mentally well, whatever their circumstances. It's about recognising signs early, responding with compassion, and removing the barriers that stop people from thriving.

Three approaches to consider

Firstly, **stopping mental health problems before they start**. This means increasing awareness of what mental health is, starting those conversations in our formative and early years and continuing those conversations right the way through our lives, in all settings we encounter. Normalising the conversation about mental health helps to reduce uncertainty, confusion and stigma.

It also means trying to look after ourselves in all other aspects of our lives - eating well, taking regular exercise, enjoying the outdoors, having meaningful relationships with others, having access to education, employment and housing and having something to look forward to. It also means understanding that, throughout our lives, we will experience change, uncertainty and a range of emotions. Preventative mental ill-health approaches also include work to acknowledge that change is a constant, to build resilience in how we respond and cope in those moments and to understand the emotions we might feel during difficult times.

Another form of prevention focusses on **identifying and supporting individuals and communities who maybe a higher risk of experiencing mental ill-health**. This could be for a range of reasons, such as those who have one or more physical health conditions, those who have experienced or are experiencing trauma and those who are marginalised or stigmatised in our communities. It also may include those who have genetic characteristics they are born with and those who experience bullying, hate incidents or hate crimes or those who face systemic inequality, discrimination, or social exclusion.

Finally, there is a preventative approach that **supports those who are living with mental ill-health diagnosis to be well and stay well**. The focus is to reduce the risk of deteriorating mental health and wellbeing and to prevent a relapse by providing support and help to manage symptoms along with encouraging positive steps that improve their quality of life.

So, while we can't always prevent mental ill-health entirely, we can take meaningful steps — both as individuals and communities — to support ourselves and each other. Prevention isn't about being perfect; it's about being aware, taking small actions where we can, and creating stigma free environments where people feel safe, connected, and able to thrive.

With that in mind, our **Mental Health Matters Toolkit**, provides practical tips to help you focus on your mental wellbeing and building resilience — whether you're supporting yourself, someone else, or thinking about how to shape a more supportive workplace.

Need to talk to someone? Click [here](#) to access a range of support that's right for you.