

Your mental health

Directorate:
Counselling
and Career
Development
JUNE 2020



Define tomorrow.

UNISA



Defining Mental Health

- Mental health is a state of well-being that allows someone to be productive, have fulfilling relationships, cope with difficult circumstances, and adapt to change.(Kellogg ,2008).
- It's about how **YOU** feel about yourself, how happy you are, how much **YOU** believe you can overcome challenges in your life and whether **YOU** feel able to interact with other people.
- **Mental Health is physical too:** You may get headaches, dizziness, heart palpitations, fatigue, upset stomach, sweating, shaking, restless legs, etc.
- You may never have been diagnosed with mental illness, but this won't mean that you are mentally healthy.
- Your daily thoughts (positive and negative) contribute to your mental health status.
- It's okay to feel a lot of different things about something at the end of the day. You are only human,- feeling different is normal too.

**Keep your thoughts positive because
your thoughts become
YOUR WORDS.**

**Keep your words positive because
your words become
YOUR BEHAVIOUR**

**Keep your behaviour positive because
your behaviour becomes
YOUR HABITS**

**Keep your habits positive because
your habits become
YOUR VALUES**

**Keep your values positive because
your values become
YOUR DESTINY**

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Causes of mental health challenges

The following factors may contribute to mental health challenges:

- **Biological factors:** Microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi and microscopic parasites), cell cultures, human endoparasites and components from microorganisms that can cause damage to health in humans.
 - Examples; genetic influences, brain chemistry, hormone levels, nutrition and gender.
- **Psychological factors:** Elements of your personality that limit or enhance the ways that you think.
 - Examples; social support, loneliness, social disruption, bereavement, work environment, social status, and social integration.
- **Environmental factors:** Factors in your environment and how you relate to your environment.
 - Examples; occupational hazards, climate change, exposure to hazardous substances in air, water, soil, and food.

Understanding Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that involves a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. It is different from the mood fluctuations that people regularly experience as a part of life.

Symptoms of depression:

- a depressed mood
- reduced interest or pleasure in activities, once enjoyed
- Poor concentration and attention on a task, impaired memory.
- Reduced confidence and self-esteem
- Feelings of guilt and unworthiness.
- Bleak and pessimistic views of the future
- Ideas or acts of self-destruction or suicide
- Changes in appetite
- Unintentional weight loss or gain
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Agitation, restlessness, and pacing up and down
- Slowed movement and speech

Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Types of anxiety include agoraphobia, general anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and specific phobias.

Symptoms include:

- feeling nervous, restless or tense.
- Hypervigilance, irritability, or restlessness.
- Lack of concentration, racing thoughts, or unwanted thoughts.
- Fatigue or sweating.
- Excessive worry, or having difficulty controlling worry.
- Sweating.
- Fear of impending doom.
- Insomnia, nausea.
- Palpitations, or trembling

Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- **PTSD** is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a **traumatic event** such as a **natural disaster**, a **serious accident**, a **terrorist act**, **war/combat**, **rape** or other personal assault.
- Any traumatic event can cause PTSD.
- Anyone who has experienced trauma may suffer from PTSD.
- PTSD usually appears **three months** after the trauma, but sometimes it may come on months or **even years later**.

Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

- **Intrusive symptoms:** Memories of the traumatic event.
- **Flashbacks:** Feeling as if the trauma is happening all over again, nightmares.
- **Avoidance symptoms:** Avoiding a situation that may remind you of the traumatic event.
- **Hyper-arousal symptoms:** Insomnia, difficulty sleeping, trouble concentrating.
- **Guilt:** Trauma includes loss and many people can't cope with the guilt that they caused the incident or that they should have somehow stopped the trauma from happening.

Understanding Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe mental disorder that affects the way a person thinks, acts, expresses emotions, perceives reality, and relates to others.

Though schizophrenia isn't as common as other major mental illnesses, it can be the most chronic and disabling.

- People with schizophrenia often have problems doing well in society, at work, at school, and in relationships.
- They might feel frightened and withdrawn and could appear to have lost touch with reality.
- This lifelong disease can't be cured but can be controlled with proper treatment.

Symptoms of schizophrenia

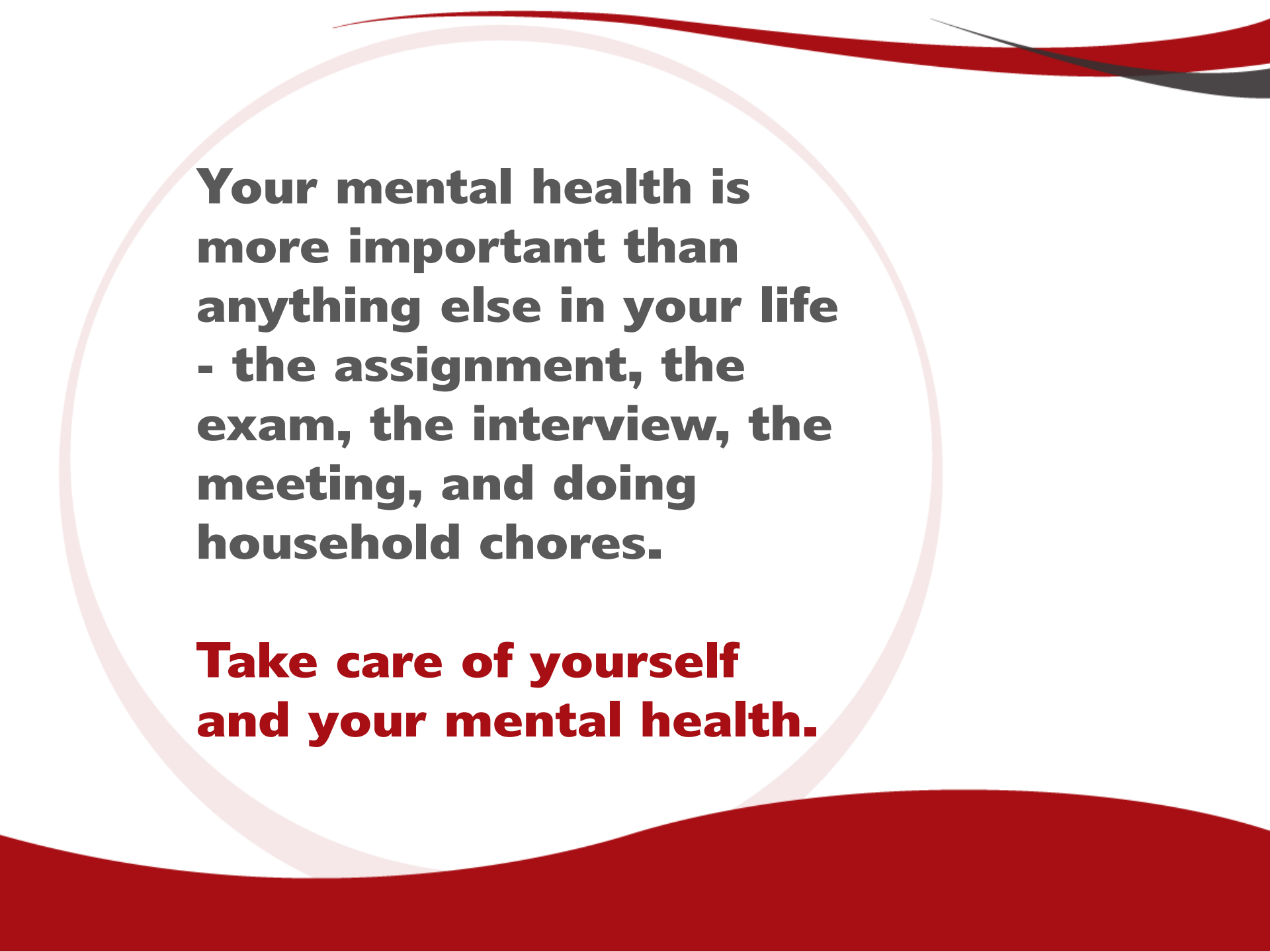
- Social isolation, disorganized behavior, aggression, agitation, compulsive behavior.
- Thought disorder, delusion, amnesia, slowness in activity, or false belief of superiority.
- Hallucination, paranoid, hearing voices, depression, fear, persecutory delusion.
- Circumstantial speech, incoherent speech, speech disorder.
- Fatigue, impaired motor coordination, lack of emotional response, or memory loss.

Common concerns during lockdown (COVID-19)

- Fear that a loved one may get infected by the Corona virus and pass away.
- Fear of being retrenched or unemployed as many companies have shut down.
- Fear of not being able to access educational resources online as a rural area resident.
- Loneliness, as many are used to social life e.g. Clubbing, going to church, outings.

Counselling services

- Unisa: counselling@unisa.ac.za
- Gender-based violence: **0800 428 428** or dial: ***120*7867#** (free for mobile)
- South African Police Service: **08600 10111**
- National Crisis Line: **0861 322 322**
- Child Line: **0800 055 555**
- Person with Disabilities: **SMS 'help' to 31531**
- AIDS Helpline: **0800 012 322**
- Suicide Helpline: **0800 567 567 / 0800 456 789**
- Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit: **0800 150 150**
- National Human Trafficking Helpline: **0800 222 777**
- SASSA Call Center: **0800 60 10 11**



Your mental health is more important than anything else in your life - the assignment, the exam, the interview, the meeting, and doing household chores.

Take care of yourself and your mental health.

Further resources

- Unisa Covid-19 resources and messages: [https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Coronavirus-\(COVID%E2%80%9319\)-update](https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Coronavirus-(COVID%E2%80%9319)-update)
- Emergency Hotline: 0800 029 999
- WhatsApp Support Line: 0600 123 456
- COVID-19 Corona Virus South African Resource Portal: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>
- The *SA Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)* offers online resources related to your mental health and COVID-19. Learn more about managing stress and anxiety as well as living with a mental illness on their website at <http://www.sadag.org/>.
- The Psychological Society of South Africa General Public Information Resource contains useful links related to COVID-19 and working from home: <http://psytalk.psyssa.com/general-public/>.
- Find information about reporting and receiving assistance related to gender-based violence here: <http://gbv.org.za/>.

Contact us

We are available by e-mail:

- Send an e-mail to counselling@unisa.ac.za should you need to discuss any needs you may have in terms of further support.
- Contact Counselling and Career Development at a [regional centre closest to you](#).

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