

What is mental health and why is it important?



Mental health is an important part of your overall health and wellbeing. It includes your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and affects how you think, feel and act. It also affects how you handle stress, the way you relate to others and the everyday choices you make. Having good mental health enables you to live your life to the full, whether that's with your family and friends, at work or in your community.

There are numerous myths about mental health that contribute to harmful attitudes and fuel stigma about mental illness. Take the following quiz to see if you can separate the facts from the fiction.¹

Self-assessment: Mental health myth buster

Tick "True" or "False" for each statement.

Correct answers are provided at the end of this handout.

1. Mental health problems are rare.	T	F
2. People with mental health problems are violent.	T	F
3. People can recover from a mental illness.	T	F
4. On average, people with severe mental illnesses die 10 years younger.	T	F
5. The stigma and discrimination around a mental illness can be more difficult than the illness itself.	T	F
6. There's not much you can do to help a friend experiencing a mental health problem.	T	F
7. People can't work if they have a mental health problem.	T	F
8. If you use a mental health service, there's a one in three chance you'll lose contact with friends.	T	F

Conversation starters

Raising awareness of mental health will help to put it on a par with physical health, enabling more people to speak openly about their problems and receive the help they need. To help start the conversation, Time to Change² recommends the following steps:

- Ask someone how they are, and take time to listen and engage with their response
- If you have a personal experience of mental health problems, and you are comfortable sharing it, talk to your colleagues about it
- Talk to your colleagues about what you all do to deal with stress, relax and maintain your mental health and wellbeing
- Use news stories or storylines from soaps and dramas that are related to mental health to start a conversation
- Raise money for a mental health charity and talk to your colleagues about why it's important to you



Did you know?

At least one in six workers experience mental health problems like anxiety and depression, according to Mind.

Quiz answers

1. **False.** Mental health problems affect one in four people in any one year. This means that even if you don't have a mental health problem, it's likely that your friend, a family member or work colleague will be affected.
2. **False.** People with mental health problems are much more likely to be the victim of violence. The violence myth makes it harder for people to talk openly about mental health problems. It can also make friends reluctant to stay in touch.
3. **True.** Many people can and do recover from mental health problems. Alongside professional help, the support of friends, family and getting back to work are all important in helping people recover.
4. **True.** It's not the mental illness that kills – it's the discrimination. The physical health needs of people with mental health problems are often dismissed, causing higher rates of death from heart attacks, diabetes and cancer for people with severe mental illness.
5. **True.** A survey found that 58% of people say this stigma and discrimination is equally damaging, or harder to deal with, than the illness itself. In addition, 87% of people with a mental health problem have experienced discrimination.
6. **False.** If someone you know is experiencing a mental health problem, just staying in touch can really help. Small things like visiting or phoning can make a big difference.
7. **False.** With one in four people affected, you probably work with someone with a mental health problem. Many successful people, including MPs, sports stars and business leaders have been open about the difficulties they've experienced with their mental health.
8. **True.** Sometimes friends can feel uncomfortable or like they don't know enough to help. But you don't need to be an expert on mental health to be a friend. It's often the everyday things, like a phone call or text, that make a difference.

Sources:

1. [Mental health myth buster quiz | Time To Change \(time-to-change.org.uk\)](https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/mental-health-myth-buster-quiz/)
2. [Tool Starting the Conversation.pdf \(time-to-change.org.uk\)](https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/tool-starting-the-conversation.pdf)

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