



EXPLAINING MENTAL HEALTH HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

To be effective and perform at his best, a man's brain must be whole and healthy. Every human action and reaction is a by-product of what is going on in the brain. According to WHO, Health is a "state of complete physical, mental, and social well being of the individual, not just the absence of disease or infirmity".

Mental Health "is a state of being; this is relative rather than absolute. The best indices of mental health are: simultaneous success at work, loving and creating, with capacity for nature and flexible resolution of conflicts between instincts and conscience, other people of importance and reality".

If the health of the brain largely determines the health of every man, advocating and promoting good mental health means advocating and promoting a nation's health.

To have a healthy nation, we must have healthy people with healthy brains.

Advocating for National health through promotion of good mental health among people is one of the most needed solutions to the steaming depression, and other forms of mental disorder, sweeping through our land.

Mental disorder is described "as an illness due to social, political, economic, psychological, genetic, physical/chemical, and/or other biological disturbances and manifesting through psychological and/or behavioral phenomena together with impairment in functioning (socially, occupationally or otherwise), and in which psychological or psychosocial methods are important as curative or preventive agents". The prevalence of various types of mental disorders in Nigeria is quite alarming. In 1993, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Services stated that 20% of the country's population suffered from one form or another of mental disorder, while 20-40% of patients attending general medical out-patient clinics suffer from some form of mental disorder most of which the doctors fail to detect. These figures are rather conservative considering the socio-economic and political situation in the country today. The various disorders range from mild depression to severe forms like psychotic disorders.



‘Mental health’ is perhaps best explained as how well we cope with daily life and the challenges it brings. When our ‘mental health’ is good, we can deal better with what comes our way – at home, at work, and in life. When our ‘mental health’ is poor, it can be difficult to function in our daily lives. It is a fluid state with disability and untreated illness at one end, and recovery and complete wellness at the other end. Most of us live and move within the middle range of the spectrum.

However, most of us take our mental health for granted. After all, since it’s such a basic yet unseen, part of who we are, it doesn’t seem to merit a lot of thought compared to everything else going on in our lives or in the world. But the reality is that mental health is a major factor in all aspects of our lives. We see it play out in our relationships, in our performance at work or school and in health issues. Today, protecting and strengthening our mental health couldn’t be more important. With our fast paced, 24/7 culture, we face more stress from our daily lives than ever before. Many of us work extended hours or multiple jobs and take less vacation. In fact, one in three Africa employees is chronically over worked. The line between work and home life is often blurred, so home is no longer a place of rest. Sleep and exercise feel like luxuries. We are eating poorly more often. We are constantly bombarded with information, which agitates our mind. We are also more disconnected from family, friends and neighbors, and less engaged in our communities than we used to be. Trust in one another has steadily declined over the last thirty years. Kids aren’t immune either; many are racing from one activity to another without any downtime.

What is a mental illness?

Mental illness can strike anyone! It knows no age limit, economic status, race, creed or color. During the course of a year, millions of Nigerians are affected by one or more mental disorder.

Medical science has made incredible progress over the last century in understanding, curing and eliminating the cause of many diseases including mental illness. While doctors continue to solve some of the mysteries of the brain, many of its functions remain a puzzle. However, researchers have determined that many mental illnesses are probably the result of chemical imbalance in the brain. These imbalances may be inherited, or may develop because of excessive stress or substance abuse.

It is sometimes easy to forget that our brain, like all of our other organs, is vulnerable to disease. People with mental illness often exhibit many types of behaviors such as extreme sadness and irritability, and in more severe cases, may also suffer from hallucinations and total withdrawal. Instead of receiving compassion and acceptance, people with mental illness may experience hostility, discrimination and stigma.



A mental illness causes mild to severe disturbances in a person's thinking, perception, and behaviors. If these disturbances significantly impair a person's ability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines, then he or she should immediately seek proper treatment with a mental health professional. Depending on the type and severity of the mental illness, with the proper care and treatment, a person can recover and resume normal activities.

Many mental illnesses are believed to have biological causes, just like cancer, diabetes and heart disease, but some mental illnesses are caused by a person's environment and experiences. Mental illnesses, such as those listed, should not be confused with temporary psychological or emotional disturbances in a person's life which may also be caused by life's situations such as death, divorce, or a serious illness. These disturbances may also be treated with psychotherapy and /or medication, but are usually short term.

REMEMBER:
PEOPLE WHO HAVE MENTAL ILLNESS,
THEIR FRIENDS, AND FAMILY ALL HAVE
MANY CHALLENGES TO MEET.

GET THE FACTS.
GIVE HOPE
AND
RESPECT TO ALL.



The five major categories of mental illness:

- **Anxiety Disorders**

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses. The three main types are: phobias (extreme fear or dread from a particular object or situation), panic disorders (sudden, intense feelings of terror for no apparent reason and are often accompanied by heart threatening symptoms), and obsessive-compulsive disorders (anxious impulses to repeat word or phrases or engage in repetitive, ritualistic behavior, such as constant hand washing).

- **Mood Disorders**

Mood disorders include depression and bipolar disorder. Symptoms may include mood swings such as extreme sadness or elation, sleep and eating disturbances, and changes in activity and energy levels. Suicide may be a risk with these disorders.

- **Schizophrenia**

Schizophrenia is a serious brain disorder which affects how a person thinks, feels and acts. Schizophrenia is believed to be caused by chemical imbalances in the brain that cause a variety of symptoms including hallucinations, delusions, withdrawal, incoherent speech, and impaired reasoning.

- **Dementias**

This group of brain disorders includes diseases such as Alzheimer's, which leads to loss of mental functions, loss of memory and a decline of intellectual and physical skills.

- **Eating Disorders**

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are serious and potentially life-threatening diseases. Symptoms include a preoccupation with food and an irrational fear of being fat. Specifically, anorexia is self-starvation, while bulimia is cycles of bingeing (consuming large quantities of food) and purging (self-indulging vomiting or abusing laxatives).

Common misconception about mental illness

MYTH: “Young people and children don’t suffer from mental health illness.”

FACT: It is a fact that children and young adults do suffer from mental health disorder that severely disrupts their ability to function at home, in school, or in their community.

MYTH: “People who need psychiatric care should be locked away in institutions.”

FACT: Today, most people can lead good productive lives within their communities thanks to a variety of care providers, programs, and /or medications.

MYTH: “A person who has had a mental illness can never lead a normal life.”

FACT: People with mental illness can recover and resume full and normal activities. There are countless numbers of people who had clinical depression, and having received treatment, are today leading an enriched and accomplished life.

MYTH: “People with mental illness are dangerous”.

FACT: The vast majority of people with mental illness are not violent. If violence does occur, the incidence typically result from the same reasons as with normal person such as feeling threatened or excessive use of alcohol and /or drugs.

MYTH: “People with mental illness can work low-level jobs but aren’t suited for really important or responsible positions.”

FACT: People with mental illness, like everyone else, have the potential to work at any level depending on their own abilities, experience and motivation.

A lot of our youths and the working class daily struggle with varying levels of mental illness, and try various unhealthy and un-clinical means of addressing the problems. These mental disorders can be mild, moderate, or severe.

Mental Health Foundation, a Non-governmental organization, is out to create awareness on the reality and existence of various types of mental disorders beginning from Lagos, to the nooks and crannies of our nation. It shall seek to educate the populace about the causes, effects and prevention of mental illness. Mental Health Foundation is a team of mental health advocates. We shall campaign and assist in the management of those already suffering from psychological and all forms of mental disorders.

The fact that most mental disorders have both psychological and spiritual dimensions cannot be underestimated, and this organization is prepared to tackle the problem head-on.



WARNING SIGNS

Mental illness can strike anyone! It knows no age limit, economic status, race, creed or color. During the course of a year, millions of Nigerians are affected by one or more mental disorder. The signs to watch so we can submit ourselves to counseling are glaring on many of us. But we don't care.

1. Constant feelings of sadness, irritability, or tension
 2. Decreased interest or pleasure in usual activities or hobbies
 3. Loss of energy, feeling tired despite lack of activity
 4. Change in appetite, with significant weight loss or weight gain
 5. A change in sleeping patterns, such as difficulty in sleeping, early morning awakening, or sleeping too much
 6. Restlessness or feeling slowed down
 7. Decreased ability to make decisions or concentrate
 8. Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or guilt
 9. Thoughts of suicide or death
 10. Seeing strange things or hearing strange voices
 11. Inability to forgive or experiencing a prolong and growing bitterness
- If you are experiencing any or several of these symptoms, you should talk to your doctor about whether you are suffering from a form of mental disorder.

BE CAREFUL FRIEND!!!

- Being critical leads to envy and jealousy
- Grumbling and murmuring lead to bitterness and resentment
- Chronic complaining leads to selfishness and greed.
- Arrogance leads to envy and jealousy, which lead to hatred.
- Being argumentative leads to anger
- Always seeing the negative leads to being programmed for failure, this leads to depression and hopelessness.
- Taking offence leads to resentment

It doesn't matter how brilliant you are or how much education you've had. You still need to improve and expand your mind.

1. You are what you eat, and that includes your brain. Your brain is the greediest organ in your body. So it is hardly surprising that what you eat can affect how you think.
2. The type of music you listen to can affect your thinking.
3. Never underestimate the power of a good night rest.
4. Physical exercise can boost brain as well as brawn
5. Practice forgiveness constantly.
6. Surround yourself with positive people. Since words, thoughts and attitudes are contagious, choose your friends carefully.
7. Feed your mind with healthy thoughts. What enters our mind comes out in our actions- and affects our well-being.



BECOME AN AMBASSADOR

Become an Ambassador: Changing people's attitudes and perceptions about mental illness is one of our greatest challenges, but you can help!

An ambassador of the Mental Health Foundation must be knowledgeable about the facts related with the illness and educates others about mental illness. As an ambassador of the Mental Health Foundation, you promote a greater understanding of what mental illness is, and show there is help and hope for all those affected by the illness. You are an agent of change, working towards a world where people affected by mental illness, either mild, moderate or severe, do not face the stigma currently associated with the illness.

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MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION is a Non Governmental Organization based in Lagos, Nigeria. It was duly registered. Its administration and network comprise of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, educationists, inspirational writers and psycho-dynamic counsellors, coupled with a fleet of dynamic young non-religious motivational speakers who have saddled themselves with the responsibility of coaching and inspiring the enormous depressed/stigmatized ones in Africa.

We strongly advocate massive awareness of the mental health of citizenry as it represents a vital integral element of every individual's overall health and well being. We advocate against stigmatisation and solicit policy reform for the care of people living with mental disorders.

Mental Health Foundation works assiduously to help all people prevent and overcome mental disorders, providing adequate information, education, encouragement, and support for people living with either mild or severe mental disorders alongside their family member.

On the other hand, we believe our society can be healed from the rampaging social ills, juvenile delinquent, secret emotional pains/disturbances and other influences that distort behavioural/thinking patterns. Knowing fully well that the law never changes the mind nor does it impact values, but teaching not only changes the mind, it instils values which in turn corroborates the law by setting the standard of behaviour.

Suffice to say, a mentally ill person is not only limited to the one with torn clothes, the beggars, penniless, rootless, homeless, those found under bridges, in uncompleted buildings or even wandering about. Psychiatrists however, faulted this view of mental illness, saying it is narrow. There are many people that are mentally ill and not psychotic.

OUR MISSION

Mental Health Foundation is dedicated to creating awareness on the state of mental health of our people, promoting mental health, preventing mental disorders and rehabilitating the mentally ill through, advocacy, education, and professional services.

OUR VISION

To free Nigeria and its environs of naked walking mentally ill, beginning from Lagos. By working with the Local Government councils and the Ministry for Youth, Sports and Social Development, we also want to advocate for care, support and campaign against stigma of the mentally ill.

PROJECTS

As part of the mandate of Mental Health Foundation to educate people on how to maintain and retain their dignity in the face of mounting problems, challenges, and disorders that confront them in their daily encounters, the following contains but not limited to our projects:-

- Emotional Development Academy
- Nationwide Reformatory Centers.
- Soul Institute (Open and Prison versions)
- The Companion
- Care on Wheels
- Mental Health and You Publication series
- The Relief Panel

For counselling, partnership and sponsorship please contact:



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