NAMI Cook County North Suburban
National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI CCNS is an affiliate of the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, providing support, education, and advocacy for people affected by mental illness. **www.namiccns.org**

Understanding Mental Health: The Foundation of Wellbeing



Mental health is more than the absence of illness; it is the bedrock of our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It shapes how we interpret the world, manage stress, and connect with the people around us.

Because it exists on a continuum, our mental health can fluctuate throughout our lives. Prioritizing it at every stage is essential for realizing our full potential and leading productive, meaningful lives.

The Three Pillars of Mental Health

To understand our overall well-being, it helps to look at these three key areas:

- **Emotional Well-being**: The ability to navigate your feelings, maintain a hopeful outlook, and lean into positive emotions even during transitions.
- **Psychological Resilience**: Your "mental bounce-back" factor: the capacity to cope with the ordinary demands of life as well as significant trauma or stress.
- **Social Functioning**: The ability to build and maintain healthy, meaningful relationships and stay connected to your community.



What Shapes Our Mental Health?

Mental health is not determined by a single factor; rather, it is a complex tapestry woven from several influences:

- **Biological Makeup**: This includes your unique genetic blueprint and brain chemistry.
- **Life History:** Experiences such as childhood trauma, past abuse, or periods of chronic stress can leave a lasting impact.
- **Family Legacy**: A history of mental health challenges within a family can play a role in one's own journey.
- **Daily Habits**: Lifestyle choices, including physical activity, nutrition, and substance use, directly influence your mental state.

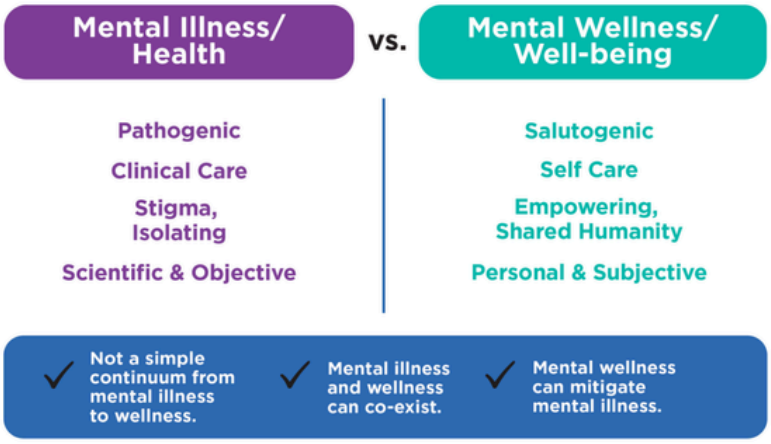
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This content is modified from an issue of our weekly newsletter, ***Mental Health Wire***. Scan this QR code to register for our mailing list.

Mental Health vs. Mental Illness: Knowing the Difference

It is a common misconception that these terms mean the same thing. In reality:

- Everyone has mental health. Just like physical health, it can be "good," "poor," or anywhere in between, depending on the season of life.
- Mental illness refers to specific, diagnosed conditions (such as clinical depression, anxiety disorders, or bipolar disorder) that significantly impair a person's ability to function in daily life.



Perspective Shift: A person can live with a diagnosed mental illness and still experience periods of "good" mental health through proper support, treatment, and self-care.

From Awareness to Action

Compassion is a verb. Here is how you can support the mental health movement:

1. **Practice Active Listening**
   - Compassion starts with a check-in. Listen without judgment. You don't need to provide a "fix," often, just being present is the most powerful support you can offer.
2. **Shift Your Perspective**
   - Moving from fear to understanding decreases the desire for segregation and increases the desire for community support.
   - Remember: mental health challenges are a shared part of the human experience.
3. **Support Whole-Person Care**
   - Recovery is most effective when we address the "whole person," including mental health challenges, physical health, and potential substance use issues.
4. **Know the Resources**
   - NAMI HelpLine: For one-on-one help and information, call (800) 950-6264 or text "NAMI" to 62640
   - Immediate Help: If you or a loved one is in crisis, call or text 988 (US and Canada) for 24/7 immediate support.
   - NAMI CCNS: Connect with our local support groups, classes, and advocacy programs.

