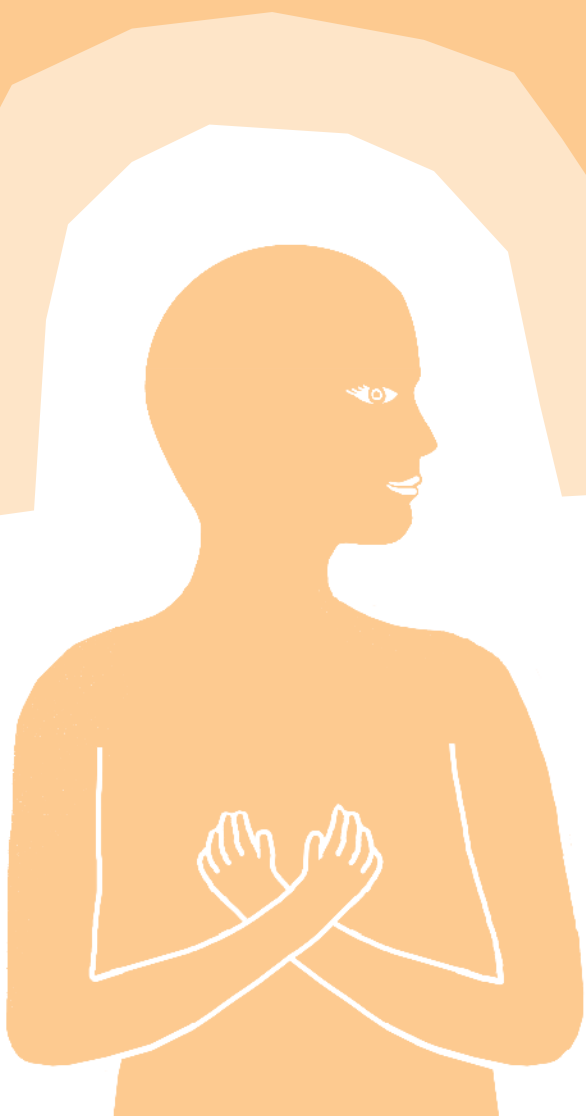


Promoting Health
in Everyday Environments

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH





Mental health is just as important as physical health, and the two are linked.

This brochure looks at some of the multiple ways indoor and outdoor environments can affect women's mental health in general ways. It includes resources and tools to help promote and protect everyone's mental health.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health means that the social, physical, mental, economic, and spiritual aspects of one's life are balanced.

Mental Health also means living in harmony with others and with one's community. Finding and keeping this balance is not always easy. Life's difficulties and challenges sometimes tip the scales one way or another – and it can take an effort to bring everything back into balance.¹

Mental health is experienced in ways that are influenced by gender (being a woman or a man) as well as by age, race, immigrant, and ability status. This means that even when women are exposed to what may seem to be the same events and experiences as men – and even other women – each individual may react and actually sense them very differently.

WHAT CAN AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH?

There are times when a person feels sad, down, or concerned about things. This is **nothing to be ashamed about**. Difficulties can make someone feel anxious, low, or just without the energy or desire to do the things normally done – including the things that ordinarily **bring pleasure**.

As with physical health, many factors can influence mental health:

Some relate to the **personal features and the biology** of the individual

Others relate to the **context of our lives and the resources available** for healthy living

To help stay in good mental health, individuals can:

- * Take time for themselves when needed
- * Get all the sleep needed
- * Be physically active on a regular basis
- * Reach out to others, listen, and share ideas and stories
- * Find strategies for handling stress
- * Join a community group whose members share your interests



PROTECTING AND PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health doesn't just depend on individuals. Public policies that improve living conditions (income, housing, etc.) and living environments (school, workplace, work-family balance) also have major influences on individuals' and the population's mental health.²

Trust in others and having social networks – what some call “social capital” – are also important.

For promoting and protecting the mental health of everyone, society must provide:

- * A prejudice-free environment in which there is respect for each person, without discrimination
- * Public and accessible community services of high quality
- * Welcoming and safe places to meet and work with others, including libraries and places of worship
- * Work that is satisfying and fulfilling and comes with appropriate pay
- * Good quality housing at affordable rents

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The following is a list of online resources that can help you to learn about, promote, and protect mental health:

* **National Network for Mental Health**

www.nnmh.ca

* **Canadian Women's Health Network**

www.cwhn.ca

* **Mental Health – Coping with Stress**
Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/stress-eng.php

* **Mental Health At Work, a toolkit**
Université Laval

www.cgsst.com



ENDNOTES

1 Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Québec, available at: www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/sujets/prob_sante_mentale/camp09/indexen.html.

2 Ibid.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This pamphlet was developed by project **Éco-santé tous ensemble**, a partnership between the **South Asian Women's Community Centre** and **McGill University**.

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We are deeply grateful to the members of our Community Consultation Group for their valuable input to this pamphlet:

- * Action des femmes handicapées (Montréal)
- * Breast Cancer Action Montréal
- * Chinese Family Service of Greater Montréal
- * Éco-Quartier Parc extension
- * Environmental Health Association of Québec
- * Immigrant Workers Centre
- * Québec Native Women Inc.
- * Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre
- * Women on the Rise

ISBN : 978-0-7717-0689-9

Cette brochure est disponible en français.

This brochure is funded by a grant from the *Fonds des services aux collectivités, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, gouvernement du Québec*; it does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the funders.