



# Mental Health

Theresa Girardin, Supervisor  
Rehabilitation & Residential Services ,  
Mental Health & Addictions  
(306) 842 8665  
January 2016

# Overview

- Definition of mental health
- Risk Factors
- Risk and protective factors- specifically Suicide
- What signs/symptoms may be observed
- Myths around Suicide
- How do you help yourself or others?
- Questions

# Definition of Mental Health

Mental health refers to our cognitive, and/or emotional wellbeing - it is all about how we think, feel and behave.

According to WHO (World Health Organization), mental health is *"a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"*. WHO stresses that mental health *"is not just the absence of mental disorder"*.



**Rule out any underlying physical problems**

# Risk Factors that Affect Mental Health

- Biological
- Psychological
- Environmental

# Additional Risk Factors in Suicide

- Risk Factors
  - Hopelessness
  - Previous suicide attempt
  - Substance abuse
  - Family history of suicide
  - Local clusters of suicide
  - Exposure to others who have died by suicide (real life or via social media)
  - Cultural/religious beliefs that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma

# Additional Risk Factors in Suicide

- Youth
  - Co-occurring disorders
  - Previous suicidal behaviour
  - Impulsivity
- Elderly
  - Multiple losses
  - Physical illness
  - Functional impairment
  - Social isolation
  - Poor resiliency



# General Signs and Symptoms

- too much or too little sleep
- feeling down, hopeless, helpless for long periods of time
- feeling anxious for long periods of time
- feeling suspicious, guarded
- having difficulty concentrating
- having difficulty making decisions
- work and home life begin to be affected by symptoms
- using alcohol, drugs, nicotine as a ways to cope with emotions
- frequent negative self-destructive thoughts or fears that can't be controlled
- thoughts of death or suicide



# Protective Factors

- Easy access to clinical interventions and support
- Restricted access to lethal means of suicide
- Social connections
- Medical/Mental Health Support
- Coping skills
- Cultural/religious beliefs

# Myths about suicide

**MYTH:** People who talk about suicide are just trying to get attention

*FACT: The vast majority of people who are suicidal do not want to die. They are in pain, and they want to stop the pain.*

**MYTH:** People who talk about wanting to die by suicide do not try to kill themselves

*FACT: People who die by suicide usually talk about it first. They are in pain and often times reach out for help because they do not know what to do and have lost hope. Always talk about suicide seriously.*



**MYTH:** Suicide always occurs without any warning signs

*FACT: There are almost always warning signs.*

**MYTH:** Asking about suicide would plant the idea in the person's head.

*FACT: Asking how a person feels doesn't create suicidal thoughts, any more than asking how a person's chest feels would cause angina.*

# How do you help?

- If necessary do not leave them alone- if a threat to life is imminent, call 911
- Go to the nearest hospital
- Provide reassurance and encourage them to seek help
- Talk about their supports- friends, family, neighbours
- Encourage them to call SCHR Mental Health & Addiction Intake Services (306) 842-8665
- Ensure your own personal safety.



**QUESTIONS?**