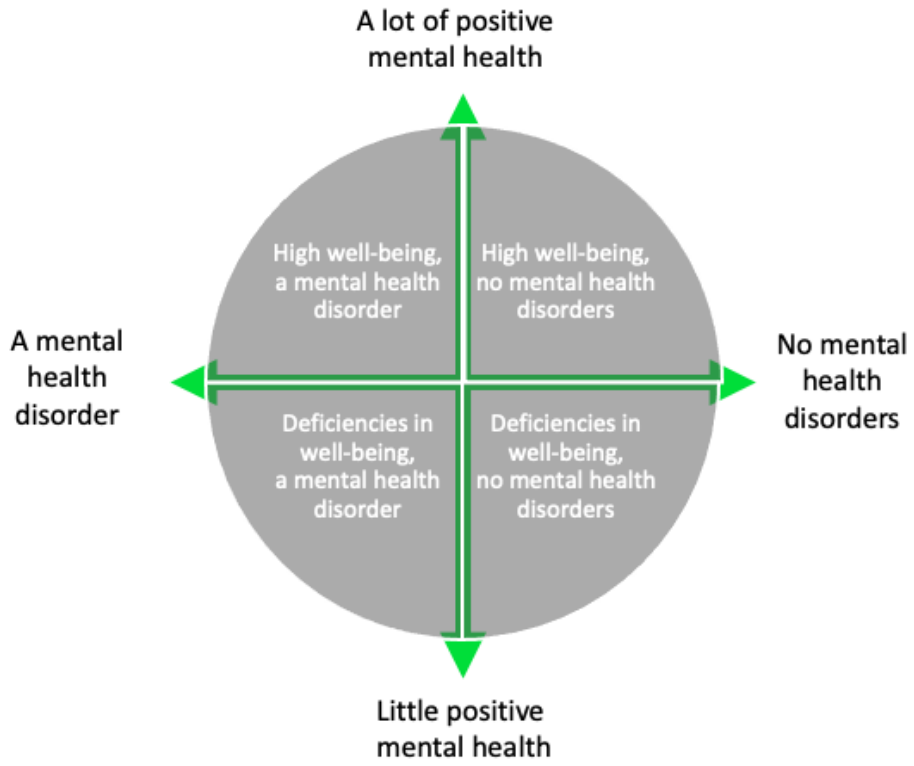
Positive mental health

Mental health is an essential part of a person's health, and this goes for all of us humans. The word 'mental health' may sound negative because it may be associated with mental health challenges and problems. By mental health we can, however, also refer to a resource that every human being has and that can also be strengthened. By positive mental health we refer to wellbeing, which is a lot more than the presence or the absence of mental health problems.

Positive mental health and mental health disorders are thus seen as different dimensions of health, which are not mutually exclusive. For example, a person suffering from a severe mental health disorder can experience joy and closeness with other people in their life. On the other hand, a person who does not have a mental health problem may feel unhappy and alone under their own burden.



How does positive mental health show?

Good mental health does not mean that one is in a good mood or feeling happy all the time. Variation is part of normal mental health. Mental health is like the weather: it varies. At times, we are in a good mood, and at other times, we feel sorrowful or irritated.

When one has a lot of positive mental health, it may show for example in the following ways:

- being able to adapt to changes and having the resources to face the difficulties in life too

- being able to take care of one's own affairs and feeling that one can have an influence on one's own life
- being able to feel closeness with other people and feeling that one gets support from other people
- having a positive perception of self and feeling content with who one is
- being able to study, work, and be active
- having positive feelings too, such as contentment, happiness, love, compassion, and joy. Feeling hopeful often, and life feels meaningful

Mental health problems can feel like a scary thing. It is sometimes hard to talk about problems such as depression. Shame and a fear of being labeled can make it difficult to look for help. Part of good mental health is also knowing how to and daring to seek help when there are problems.

Mental health is part of a person's health, and it must be taken care of, just like we take care of the health of our body. Mental health is also a skill that one can learn. When one strengthens one's own positive mental health, it protects against stress and challenges and helps to survive and cope with the difficulties in life.

How can I take care of my own mental health?

- Many things that are good for the physical health of our body also support our mental health. For example, a suitable daily rhythm, physical exercise, a varied diet, and sufficient sleep and rest support mental health.
- The physical exercise does not need to be hard to achieve positive effects. What is important is to find a way of exercising that feels pleasant. Exercising outdoors in the nature can strengthen the positive effects of the exercise on mental health. The same goes for exercising in a group, where there is a possibility to experience a connection with others.
- Make time for being with people and maintaining important relationships. For example, in a challenging life situation, one can feel that one wants to be alone. However, we need other people to be well. We can find comfort and support in the company of safe others.
- Learning new things and maintaining a curious attitude support positive mental health.
- Keep such things in your daily life that give you joy when you do them and with which you can relax.
- Notice negative thoughts and how often you have them. When one is not feeling good, it may be easy to tell oneself mostly negative things. Try to find, for example, one positive thought or perspective to the matter every time you notice one negative thought.
- In addition, a compassionate attitude towards oneself is an important skill connected to positive mental health. It helps in relating to oneself and to one's own situation with understanding. With it, one can relate to one's own suffering with acceptance, without criticism. Try to be a good friend to yourself. In your thoughts, can you talk to yourself like to a friend?