Emotional Health

What is good emotional health?

People who are emotionally healthy are in control of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They feel good about themselves and have good relationships. They can keep problems in perspective.

Even people who have good emotional health can sometimes have emotional problems or mental illness. Mental illness often has a physical cause, such as a chemical imbalance in the brain. Stress and problems with family, work or school can sometimes trigger mental illness or make it worse. However, people who are emotionally healthy have learned ways to cope with stress and problems. They know when to seek help from their doctor or a counselor.

What about anger?

People are sometimes not aware of what causes their anger, how much anger they are holding inside or how to express anger appropriately. You may be angry about certain events, your own actions or other people's actions. Many little things can build up to make you feel that life is unfair.

If you find yourself becoming increasingly irritable or taking unhealthy risks (such as drinking too much or abusing drugs), you may have a problem dealing with anger. It's very important to talk with your doctor or a counselor about getting help.

Tips on dealing with your emotions

•Learn to express your feelings in appropriate ways. It's important to let people close to you know when something is bothering you. Keeping feelings of sadness or anger inside takes extra energy. It can also cause problems in your relationships and at work or school.

•Think before you act. Emotions can be powerful. But before you get carried away by your emotions and say or do something you might regret, give yourself time to think.

•Strive for balance in your life. Make time for things you enjoy. Focus on positive things in your life.

•Take care of your physical health. Your physical health can affect your emotional health. Take care of your body by exercising regularly, eating healthy meals and getting enough sleep. Don't abuse drugs or alcohol.

What can I do to avoid problems?

First, try to be more aware of your emotions and reactions. To help you do a better job of managing your emotional health, learn to identify and address the reasons for sadness, frustration and anger in your life. The box to the right gives some other helpful tips.

How does stress affect my emotions?

Your body responds to stress by making stress hormones. These hormones help your body respond to situations of extreme need, such as when you are in danger. But when your body makes too many of these hormones for a long period of time, the hormones wear down your body -- and your emotions. People who are under stress a lot are often emotional, anxious, irritable and even depressed.

If possible, try to change the situation that is causing your stress. Relaxation methods, such as deep breathing and meditation, and exercise are also useful ways to cope with stress.

Can emotional problems be treated?

Yes. Counseling, support groups and medicines can help people who have emotional problems or mental illness. If you have an ongoing emotional problem, talk to your family doctor. He or she can help you find the right type of treatment.

Other Organizations

•Mental Health America

•National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

•American Psychiatric Association

•American Psychological Association

•National Institute of Mental Health