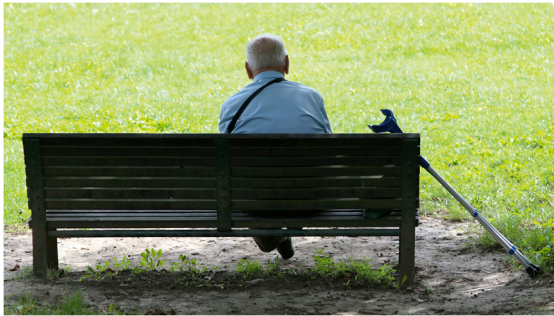


Training for Retirement
Module #5: Mental and Emotional Health

Setting the Facts Straight! (Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health, 2009)



Mental health is the capacity of each person to feel, think and act in ways that allow them to enjoy life and deal with all the challenges they face.

Mental health problems are NOT a normal part of aging. Difficulties with mood, thinking and behaviour are not an inevitable part of aging. Nor are they signs of personal weakness. They may be signs that something is wrong that requires attention from a health care professional.

Mental and emotional health can be promoted and improved at **all stages of life** – even if someone currently lives with a mental health problem or illness.

Mental Disorders (Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health, 2009)

Over 20% of adults aged 60 and over suffer from a mental or neurological disorder and 6.6% of all disability among over 60s is due to neurological and mental disorders. The most common neuropsychiatric disorders in this age group are **dementia** and **depression** (WHO, 2013).

Dementia

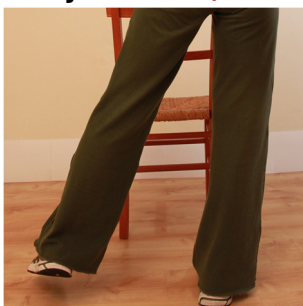
What is it? The loss of intellectual abilities that is severe enough to interfere with a person's ability to function. It results in the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves, as well as memory impairment. It tends to develop slowly over a period of months of years. Alzheimer's disease is an example of dementia.

Depression

What is it? Depression is more than feeling the "blues." It can be feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in things you usually like to do. You might be worried about depression if you've felt this way for a couple weeks or longer.

Depression is the most common mental health problem in older adults. Although depression can be quite common in later life, depression is not a typical part of aging. Symptoms can be successfully treated in almost all cases!

Daily Dose: **Alternating Side-Leg Lift**



Complete these leg lifts in the bathroom when brushing your teeth.

Tuck in your pelvis and tighten your stomach muscles (like when coughing). Stand tall with your legs apart and knees slightly bent. You can hold counter for support.

Moving from the hip, lift your right leg out to the side with controlled speed. Slowly bring the leg back to starting position. Repeat on other leg 10x.



Zoning in on Depression (Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health, 2009)

Risk Factors

****Even if you have some or many of these risk factors, it does not mean you are depressed or will experience depression in the future. ****

- History of depression
- Biological relatives have depression
- Female
- Widowed or divorced
- Changes in the brain resulting from stroke, Parkinson's disease, or Alzheimer's disease
- Trouble developing close relationships or having low self esteem
- Certain medications
- Drinking too much alcohol or abusing drugs
- Illnesses that last a longtime and cause pain and disability
- Sleep problems that last a long time
- Weak social network
- Taking care of a family member who has a serious illness such as dementia

Did you know?
Regular physical activity benefits older adults who have gone through depression and anxiety. Symptoms will likely decrease. Self confidence improves. Physical activity also helps with thinking, memory, and concentration.

Symptoms

****Depression does not get better on its own. If you have experienced many of these symptoms for a long time, talk to a health care provider. ****

- Feeling sad
- No interest or pleasure from the things you used to enjoy
- Less energy and feeling tired
- Not feeling well, having aches and pains
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Difficulties thinking and concentrating
- Problems sleeping
- Changes in appetite and weight
- Feeling agitated, restless, and/or sluggish
- Thoughts of suicide or death



Depression is not caused by personal weakness. It's a medical illness that can be treated.

Noticing symptoms of depression?

If you think you are depressed, **get help from a health care provider.** Depression is an illness like any other so *it's okay* to be as open and honest as possible. You may feel uneasy but this is an important step in getting the help you need to feel better. **You are not alone.**

A final note on depression. People with depression CAN get better. More than 80% of older adults with depression can be treated successfully when treated quickly and properly.



Zoning in on Dementia (Health in Aging, 2013)

Risk Factors for Alzheimer's disease

- Age: While 6 to 8% of adults 65 and older have Alzheimer's disease, nearly 30% of 85 year olds do.
- Family history: About half of those who have a parent or sibling with Alzheimer's develop the disease by age 90.
- Depression
- Downs syndrome
- Serious head injury
- Fewer years of formal education
- Delirium

Symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia

Increasing confusion and growing difficulty with:

- Remembering names, words, or where they put things. Those with advanced dementia may no longer recognize people they are close to.
- Paying attention
- Recognizing objects
- Using and understanding language – lose the ability to speak or only able to repeat words.
- Making decisions, planning, and getting organized.
- Finding their way from one once-familiar place to another.
- Walking – people with dementia have a high risk of falls; these can cause serious or life-threatening injuries.
- Carrying out daily tasks such as shopping, cooking, taking medications, dressing, bathing, and, eventually, eating.
- Controlling their bowels and bladder.

Also “behavioral symptoms of dementia,” if they:

- Show changes in mood, becoming more agitated, anxious, or depressed.
- Seem drained of energy, or as though they don't care.
- Undergo changes in behavior, becoming more aggressive or behaving inappropriately. Aggressive behavior may range from cursing and spitting to physical attacks.
- Wander
- Have hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there) or delusions (false beliefs, such as the belief that a family member, friend or caregiver is trying to hurt them or is stealing from them).

Source:

Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health. (2009). Depression in older adults: A guide for seniors and their families. Retrieved from www.ccsmh.ca/

Health in Aging. (2013). Dementia. Retrieved from <http://www.healthinaging.org/>

World Health Organization. (2013). Mental health and older adults. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/>

