



Mental Health Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Mental Health?

Mental health is made up of our beliefs, thoughts, feelings and behaviors. When talking about mental health, we are talking about mental wellbeing – the ability to solve problems, overcome difficulties, maintain healthy relationships and understand the world around us. ***Everyone has a mental health.**

2. What is Mental Illness?

Mental illnesses are major disturbances in the way a person thinks, feels or behaves (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are of different types and different degrees in severity. Mental illness can also be referred to mental health conditions, mental health problems or mental health challenges.

***Everyone has a mental health but not everyone has a mental illness**

3. Can mental health problems be prevented?

Everyone will struggle or have a challenge with their mental health, especially when experiencing stressful situations (just like we all have challenges with our physical wellbeing from time to time). Developing our wellbeing, resilience, practicing self-care and seeking help early can help prevent the challenges from getting severe and threatening.

4. What causes mental health problems?

Problems with your mental health can arise from psychological, biological or social issues, as well as stressful life events. Some stressful life events may include work-related stress and burnout, death of a loved one, relationship problems, perceived failure at an office project or at school work, accidents, family discord, financial or housing problems, unemployment, crisis, severe medical conditions, bullying, retirement.

5. Does it mean somebody with mental illness is one who has poor mental health?

Just as people who feel unwell may not have any serious illness, someone may have a poor mental health without a mental illness. We all have days where we feel a bit stressed out, moody, or overwhelmed by events happening in our lives. Thus, being moody or overwhelmed does not indicate having mental illness.

An important part of mental health is the ability to adapt to change and cope with problems and stressful life events. It involves effective functioning in daily activities and healthy relationships.

6. What are some types of mental health problems?

There are various types of mental problems with varying degrees of severity. Some of the most commonly known mental disorders are depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, suicide, substance and alcohol use disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, sleep disorders, eating disorders and sexual dysfunction disorders.

7. Who is more vulnerable to getting a mental illness?

Mental illness is no respecter of persons; it can affect anyone irrespective of age, gender, demographic, ethnicity, income, social status, religion, background or any other aspect of identity. There are however certain factors that may predispose some people to being at risk of having a mental challenge.

8. Can mental illness run in the family?

Yes, genetics play a role in the development of a mental health disorder. A person's genes may make that person more likely to experience mental health symptoms if a parent or grandparent struggled with the disorder. Also, living in a family in which one or more members is living with an untreated mental health disorder may cause someone to learn those behaviors and be less likely to recognize the need for treatment later.

9. How can mental health issues lead to addiction?

If a person has mild mental health issues and leaves it untreated or unattended to, a person may turn to drugs and alcohol, or other addictive substances, to manage the symptoms of their mental health issues. The substances may initially serve to suppress the pain or feelings, but can over time create a new and equally intrusive problem: addiction.

10. How will I know when I have a mental illness?

Mental illnesses take many forms and each has its own set of signs and symptoms. Generally, if your beliefs, thoughts, feelings and/or behavior have a significant impact on your daily functioning and social relationships, it is important to seek help. Many people who have mental health conditions consider their signs and symptoms a normal part of life or avoid treatment out of shame or fear. If you are concerned about your mental health or that of your loved ones, don't hesitate to seek advice. Find out more about the symptoms [here \(hyperlink to tab on general MH Symptoms\)](#)

11. What do I do if I am worried about my mental health?

It is important to talk to someone you trust, whom you are sure will be a good source of support to you. It may be a friend, colleague or family member. In addition to talking to a family member, it is advisable to find out more information about what you are experiencing. These will be a start to getting help.

12. What should I do if I am worried about a friend or relative?

Gently encourage the person to seek appropriate support. It will be useful to consider your relationship with the person before giving advice, as some people may be averse to mental health discussion. Be cautious with how you approach the situation. You may start by providing them with **self-care resources** ([hyperlink to self-care resources tab](#)) and letting them know that you are a source of support for them. Use some helpful **conversation starters** ([hyperlink here to the tab for MH Conversation starters](#)) about mental health. Try leading with these questions and make sure to carefully listen to your friend or family member's response.

In dire situations - for example, when a person demonstrates threats to his/her personal safety or that of others - it may be necessary to enforce an involuntary treatment hold. Immediately call the emergency lines 727 or 112 to report the situation and get immediate assistance.

13. Are there cures for mental illnesses?

Mental health conditions are often treated with medication, therapy or a combination of the two. However, there are many ways to manage it, including peer support and self-help plans.

14. What do I do if the treatment doesn't help?

Effectiveness is based on the nature of the mental health condition and/or symptoms as well as the person experiencing it. It is important to be open to a range of approaches and to be committed to finding the right help and to continue to be hopeful, even if some things don't work out

15. Where is mental health treatment offered in Lagos State?

The Lagos State Suicide Hotline called the Lagos Lifeline provides behavioral health response.

57 flagship **Primary Health Centers (PHCs)** ([hyperlink to tab for PHCs](#)) across Lagos State are the first points of call for getting mental health assessments. Depending on the acuity of the mental health problem, a treatment pipeline continues at any of the **5 District General Hospitals** ([hyperlink to tab for GHs](#)).

16. How do I get started with mental health care?

You can start by calling the Lagos State Mental Health Lifeline on 6040. Send "HELP" to 6040 or to help@lagosmind.org. You can also visit the nearest flagship **Primary Health Center** ([hyperlink to tab for PHCs](#)) closest to you.

17. Does seeking mental health services indicate that a person is "mad"?

Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical problem, just like heart disease or diabetes. Mental illnesses are illnesses of the brain and a vast majority of individuals with mental illness continue to function in their daily lives. The term "MAD" has been used to refer to persons who have some mental illness, however, recent

policies and research have advocated against the use of the term as an identifier due to its stigmatizing and discriminating effect.

18. I have thoughts of suicide, or someone I know is talking about suicide. What do I do?

Seek help right away if you are worried about yourself or someone else. You can also encourage someone else to seek help. Send "HELP" to help@lagosmind.org.

There are also some good resources to help you cope with thoughts of suicide ([hyperlink to the tab for "COPING WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS"](#)) and find help.

Call 727 or 112 for any emergency situation.

19. What if I do not want to be seen getting help?

Mental health treatment is highly confidential, and health practitioners are bound by a code of ethics to maintain all confidentiality protocols and seek consent before the release of medical information to persons outside the health team that will be treating you. If you are seen by a friend or family at any of the facilities providing mental health treatment in Lagos, you do not have to tell them the purpose of your visit if you are uncomfortable with it. Fortunately, these facilities are multidimensional and also provide a variety of other health services. Hence, it will be unlikely that they come to a correct assumption about the purpose of your visit.

20. Why must I get help?

Just like physical health, mental health is integral to living a healthy, balanced life. Having your mental health treated can positively improve your functioning, allowing you to focus on daily tasks and will give you the motivation to get things done.