

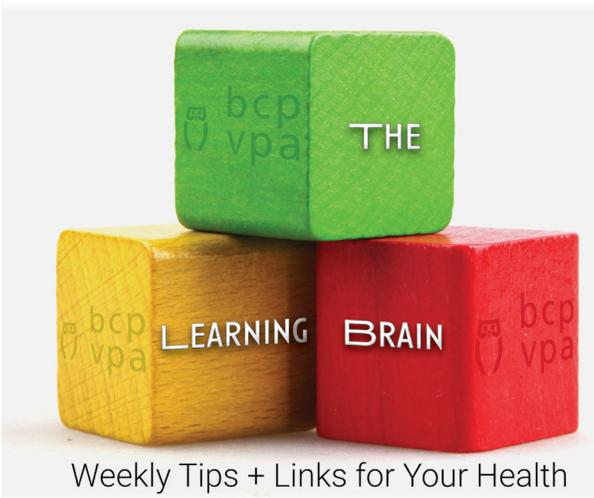
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THE LEARNING BRAIN

Each week in BCPVPA eNews, we share tips, links and self-assessment tools that will help our members to better understand the mental health continuum, and to use the resources that are available.
bcpvpa.bc.ca/thelearningbrain

Friday February 14, 2020

MENTAL HEALTH



Weekly Tips + Links for Your Health

We go to the gym and eat well to look after our bodies, but what have you done lately to nourish and strengthen your brain?

Over the next few months, we will share bite-size info-nuggets that promote psychological health, with the goal of helping you to enhance your professional and personal joy, and support your contribution at work, in the community and in your personal life.

These tips and tools run the gamut, from building resilience and maintaining good mental health across the continuum, to addressing mental strain, to accessing the right help to cope and/or recover when mental disorder hits.

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.

(CMHA: Canadian Mental Health Association)

The Mental Health Continuum

Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal fluctuations in mood, calm, takes things in stride • Normal sleep patterns, few sleep difficulties • Physically well, good energy level • Consistent performance • Sense of humour, in control mentally • Physically active and socially active • Limited or no gambling/alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervousness, irritability, impatience, sadness, feeling overwhelmed • Trouble sleeping, intrusive thoughts, nightmares • Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches • Procrastination • Displaced sarcasm, forgetfulness • Decreased physical and social activity • Regular but controlled gambling/alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness • Restless or disturbed sleep, recurring images or nightmares • Increased fatigue, aches and pains • Poor performance and concentration or workaholic, presenteeism • Negative attitude • Social avoidance or withdrawal • Increased gambling/alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive anxiety, easily angered, depressed mood, suicidal thoughts • Unable to fall or stay asleep, sleeping too much or too little • Exhaustion, physical illness • Unable to perform duties/control behavior/concentrate, overt subordination, absenteeism • Isolation, avoiding social events, not going out or answering the phone • Alcohol/gambling addition, other addictions
Actions to take at each phase of the continuum			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on task at hand • Break problems into manageable chunks • Identify and nurture support systems • Maintain healthy lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize limits • Identify and minimize stressors • Engage in healthy coping strategies • Get adequate food, rest, and exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and understand own signs of distress • Seek social support and talk with someone instead of withdrawing • Seek help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek consultation as needed • Follow health care provider recommendations • Regain physical and mental health

bcfirstrespondersmentalhealth.com

The Learning Brain series visits each section of this continuum starting with **HEALTHY**, because as the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

**In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences
a mental illness or addiction problem**

**By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age,
1 in 2 have — or have had — a mental illness**

Smetanin et al. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011-2041.
Prepared for the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Toronto: RiskAnalytica.

On any given day we are all on a continuum of mental health depending on our exposure to risk and our protective factors of resiliency and support.

On the **“Healthy”** side of this continuum we successfully cope with the stresses (or stressors?) and challenges of every day life. We may find ourselves in the middle section of **“Reacting”** due to a temporary upset from a major stressor that may leave you feeling disrupted. Ideally, we are able to cope, we have support and return to **“Healthy”**. We may fluctuate back and forth between these two states often but may never experience a mental disorder as we are capable of “bouncing back” to the left of this continuum.

We may, unfortunately, experience a major stressor that we are unable to bounce back from, or may be exposed to repeated stress, and find we can no longer return to **“Healthy”**. We have exhausted our coping skills. This is when we are at the greatest risk of moving further right to **“Injured”**.

Nearly everyone will experience a mental health challenge to one degree or another in their lifetime. This might include periods of worry, grieving, trouble sleeping or eating, feeling fatigued, anxious, having difficulty concentrating and focusing on work-life responsibilities or being in a depressed mood.

Generally, we return to the left of the continuum when we draw on resources and personal coping strategies, such as taking some downtime to connect with close friends or family, getting a good night’s sleep, or speaking with a healthcare provider or psychological counsellor.

If we do not seek help or, even when required, treatment when **“Injured”** or are continuously exposed to significant stressors, this can lead to a more chronic mental health illness which affects your overall health, as well as cognitive and even physical functioning. At this stage, you have slipped to the right of the continuum to **“III”**.

Want to know how you are doing? Take this quick assessment:

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/screening/online/?screen=wellbeing#>

So, what do you do to promote your own mental health and stay to the left of the Continuum?



We’ll be posing that question on Twitter and Instagram this week
Follow **@bcvpva** to read, engage, share and comment!

Next week

Positive Psychology – Can you change your perspective?

Get in touch! If you have any questions about The Learning Brain series, contact
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