

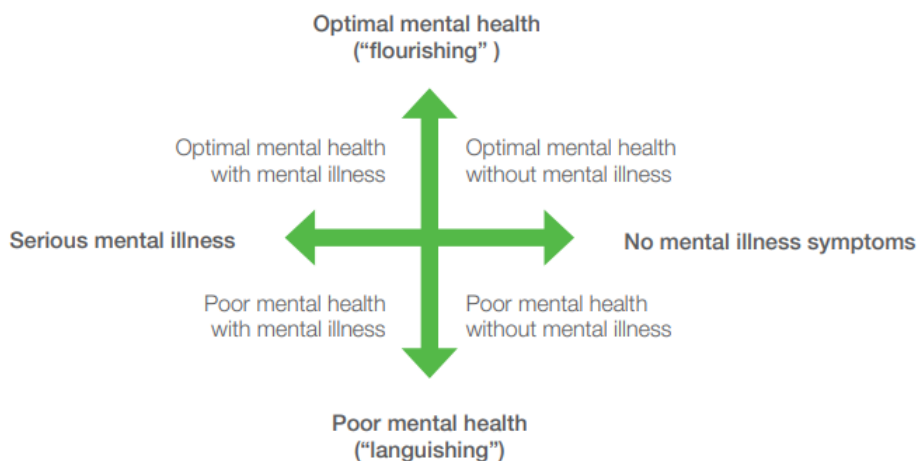
# Mental Health in the Classroom

## WHAT?

**Mental Health:** Mental health has many definitions, including “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can reasonably cope with the stresses of life, can live, study, and work well, and is able to make a contribution to the community” (CSA, 2020). Mental health can also be defined as ““The capacities of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity” (Government of Canada, 2006). It’s important to note that everyone has mental health, regardless of the presence or lack of mental health diagnos(e)s.

**Mental Health Concerns:** a range of concerns that range from a temporary decline in mental wellbeing to the presence of a diagnosed mental health disorder that affect “one’s mood, thinking behaviour, or physiological responses” (CSA, 2020).

### Dual Continuum of Mental Health:



(MacKean, 2011)

## WHY?

Mental health concerns are increasing in the post-secondary environment. Nearly 60% of students report experiencing mental health concerns directly related to academic stress (CMHA, 2020). Further, a study conducted by the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) in 2016 found that 46% of students reported feeling so depressed in the previous year that it was difficult to function; 65% of students reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety in the previous year; 14% had seriously considered suicide in the previous year; and 2.2% of students reported a suicide attempt within the previous year. While faculty/instructors are not expected to be mental health experts, work can be done to create a learning environment in which students feel supported, respected, and seen. Being able to notice the signs when your students are struggling is a key part of early intervention for mental health concerns.

<https://www.jibc.ca/policy/student-code-conduct>

## References:

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MacKean, G. (2011). Mental health and wellbeing in post-secondary education settings: A literature and environmental scan to support planning and action in Canada.

## HOW?

Examples of signs of mental health concerns can be seen in a student’s academic performance, behaviors and emotions, and appearance. Examples include:

**Academic:** decreased work quality, missed or late assignments/exams, increased absenteeism, reduced engagement in class.

**Appearance:** change in physical hygiene or dress, bloodshot/watery eyes, disorganized or disheveled appearance.

**Behaviour:** expressions of severe anxiety, difficulty controlling emotions, noticeable withdrawal or sudden increase in energy, expression of hopelessness or helplessness, physical aggression towards themselves or others, or uncharacteristic disruptive behaviour.

Remember, when it comes to mental health, you are looking for a change from the student’s ‘normal’, or baseline.

Simply taking the time to initiate a conversation with a student that you’re concerned about and listening to that student’s concerns can make a difference.

Take the time to highlight the mental health supports and services available at the JI at the start of the term, and around particularly stressful times of year (i.e., midterms and finals).

Students can find resources at

[https://www.jibc.ca/student-services/resources-mental-](https://www.jibc.ca/student-services/resources-mental-wellness)

[wellness](https://www.jibc.ca/student-services/resources-mental-wellness) and they can contact the **Senior Manager, Student Learning Supports & Disability Resources** with any concerns.

Students can access chat sessions with a trained counsellor at [here2talk.ca](https://www.here2talk.ca) or by downloading the [Here2Talk](https://www.here2talk.ca) app.