



What are mental health issues

Recognising the signs

What are mental health difficulties? You may have heard the phrase 'mental health difficulties' used before. It's helpful to think about mental health on a spectrum from mentally healthy to mental illness.

Everyone sits somewhere on this spectrum, and where you are can change from day-to-day or week-to-week, depending on lots of things.

Let's explore the mental health spectrum



Healthy

This means you feel able to work, feel connected to others, be involved in activities in your community and 'bounce back' when life's changes and challenges come along.

Coping

This is when people feel some pressure but are doing OK.

Difficulties

This is where people might feel like they aren't doing so well and having a chat with a professional might help.

Mental illness

This is a broad term that refers to a group of conditions like anxiety or depression. These can significantly affect how a person feels, thinks, what they do and how they interact with others.

Understanding mental health difficulties

Everyone can experience mental health difficulties from time to time. During these times people might notice their sleep, mood, motivation or energy are not going as well as they would like.

If these experiences last a few weeks or more, and are starting to affect things like relationships, or work, it's a sign that you might be heading towards the difficulties area of the spectrum.

If you've noticed these sorts of changes, it's important to look after yourself, learn a bit more about what's happening for you, and get support from family and friends and others.

Contributors to mental health difficulties

Current circumstances such as

- stress at work or on the farm
- money problems
- difficult personal relationships
- problems within your family

Difficult life experiences such as

- abuse or neglect
- the loss of someone close to you

Individual factors such as

- coping skills
- thinking styles

Biological factors such as

- family history of mental health difficulties



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Looking after your mental health

There are a number of things you can do to look after and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. As a start, include the tips for a healthy headspace into your everyday routine.

This will leave you more prepared to cope with the challenges you face in your everyday life. These include:



How do you know if you're experiencing a mental health difficulty?

Signs and symptoms of mental health difficulties:

- not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that you would normally enjoy
- feeling sad or 'down', or crying more often
- changes in appetite, eating, or sleeping patterns
- being easily irritated or having more problems with family and friends
- finding that you aren't performing at work like you used to
- being involved in risky behaviour that you would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol, or depending on these substances to feel 'normal'
- having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- having negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts
- feeling unusually stressed or worried
- feeling like things have changed or aren't quite right

Getting Support

Taking that first step can be tough, but if you are experiencing mental health difficulties, it's important that you reach out. You can also get in touch with your GP or use our online or phone-based service by calling **1300 327 624** or emailing mhwb@ruralaid.org.au

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately or call **000** or speak to someone at **Lifeline (13 11 14)**