



Parent's Guide to Mental Wellbeing

A guide to support parents understanding and management of mental wellbeing and empower them to lead a psychologically healthy life.



The guide was developed by...



دائرة تنمية المجتمع
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Community Development established in 2018, to raise the quality of services in the social sector by creating an inclusive and cohesive society in the Emirate, providing opportunities and services for all individuals in Abu Dhabi to grow economically and socially, build integrated communities, and ensure a decent standard of living for all members of the community.



هيئة أبوظبي للطفولة المبكرة
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) established in 2019, is an Abu Dhabi based government entity, that supports holistic early childhood development. They do this by developing policies and informing decision-making through research and transforming behavior from the early stages of pregnancy to the age of 8.



مركز أبوظبي
للصحة العامة
ABU DHABI PUBLIC
HEALTH CENTRE

Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC) established in 2019, to ensure a public health system that maintains the health of the population in the Emirate and guarantees workers' safety through the promotion of public health and preventive health concepts. The Abu Dhabi Public Health Center is the first of its kind in the region.





Dear Parents,

You are one of the most important factors to the wellbeing of our community.

The time and effort you spend with your children, at your jobs and in service of your community is the key to Abu Dhabi's sustainable social development.

We have created this guide with the intention of supporting your mental wellbeing in your daily lives.





Your wellbeing is essential to the wellbeing of all those around you and through this guide we would like to provide you with the knowledge you need to navigate your everyday life with the peace of mind you deserve.



Navigation:



What do the colors represent?

-  Mental Health
-  Strengthen family bonds and stability
-  Engaged and resilient community
-  Resources

What is Mental Wellbeing?

What is Impacting your Mental Wellbeing?

How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?

What are Stressors?

How can you manage stress?

Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Your Partner

Your Child

Your Family

Your Colleagues

Where can you find Mental Health support in Abu Dhabi?

When do you need to seek Mental Health Support?

Disclaimer

Resources





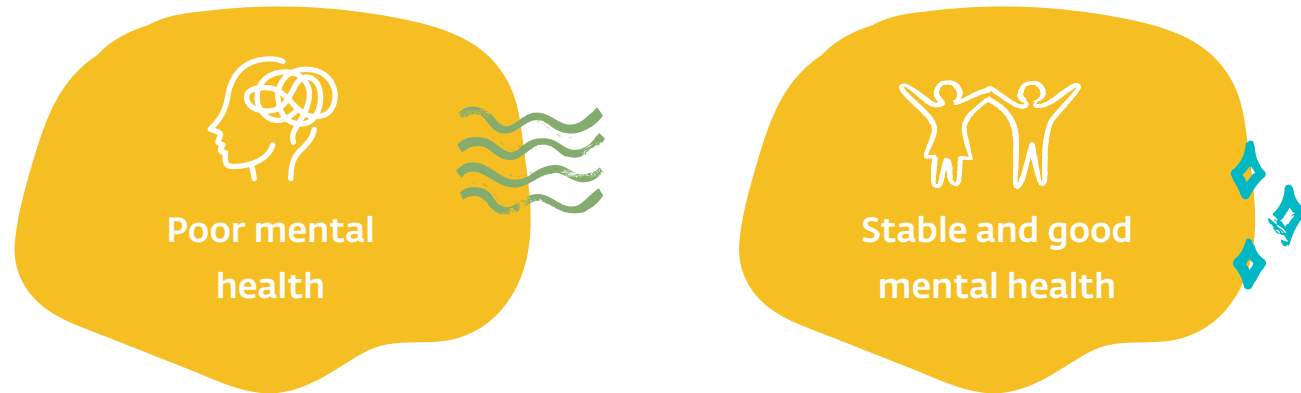
Mental Health



Keep your answers in mind as you continue to read through the guide to assess how your understanding of mental wellbeing might change or can be enhanced and what are the emotions you are carrying with you as you experience this guide

What is Mental Wellbeing?

**When you come across the term Mental Wellbeing...
What do you think it means?**



**Choose some
of the words you associate with your Mental Wellbeing**

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| • Happiness | • Worry | • Motivation |
| • Calm | • Disappointment | • Awareness |
| • Stress | • Improvement | • Hopeful |
| • Peace | • Care | • Anger |
| • Anxiety | • Support | • Guilt |
| • Focus | • Resentment | |

What is Mental Wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing is an essential factor to your ability to feel good and function well as individuals and as parents.

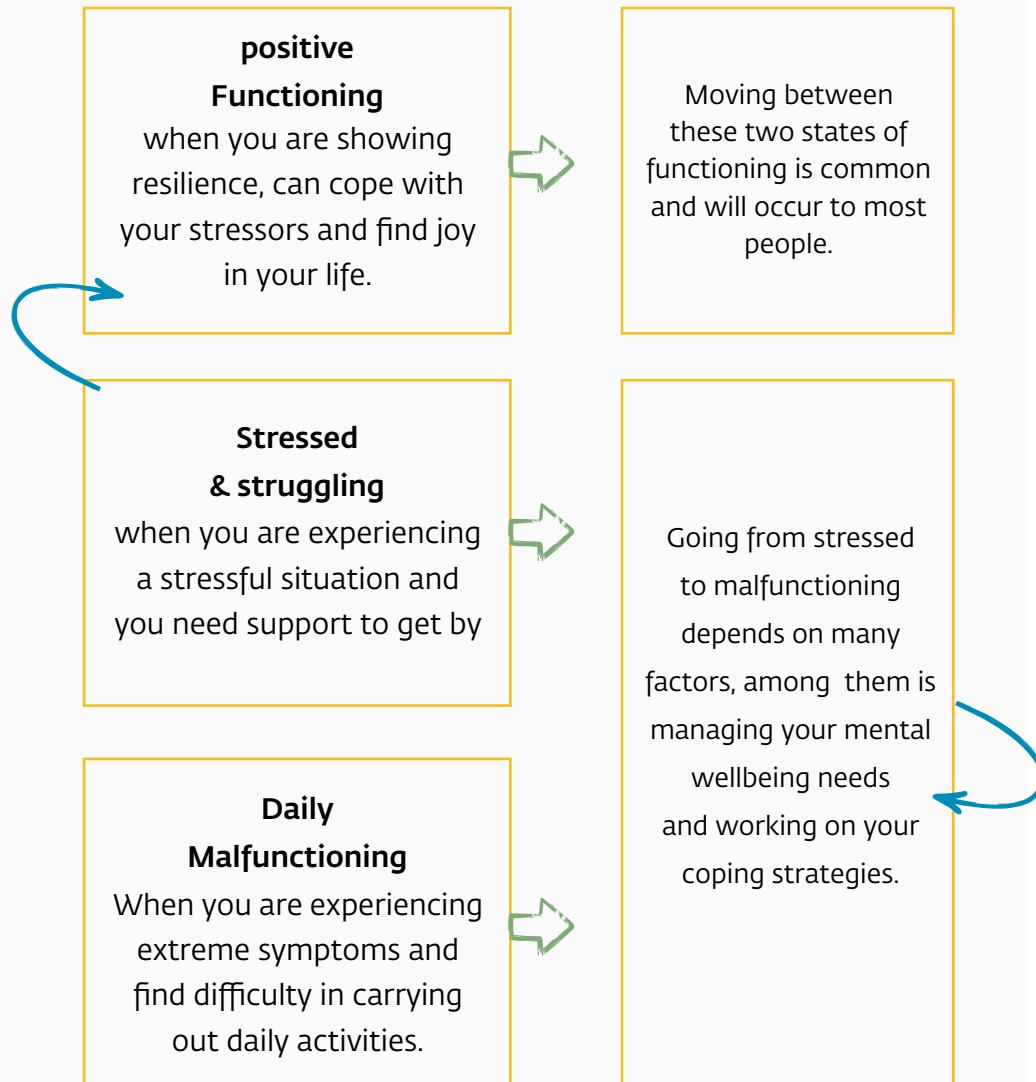
The World Health Organization describes good mental wellbeing as the ability of an individual to manage the demands of everyday life, the ability to work productively and to be an active member of the community.



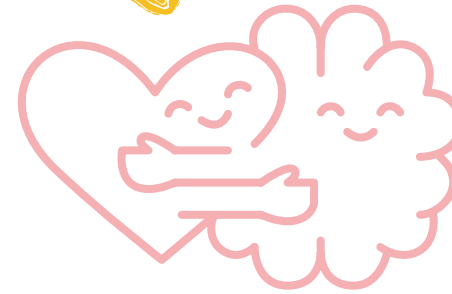
Feeling content, happy, curious, engaged & enjoying life is a right everyone is entitled to.



What is Mental Wellbeing?



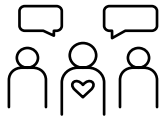
Your mental wellbeing influences how you behave, think, feel and ultimately affects your relationships, daily functioning and stress coping abilities.



Mental health is a continuum; our mental health fluctuates and is dynamic.

It is normal that some days we might feel happy and productive and have good mental health, but other days we might struggle to feel positive and productive.

What characteristics are essential to being mentally healthy?



Ability to build and sustain healthy relationships



Ability to cope with changes and unpredictable circumstances



Ability to feel and express both negative and positive emotions



Ability to learn



What is impacting your Mental Wellbeing?

Which factors do you think are impacting you the most?



Keep your answers in mind as you continue to read through the guide to assess which areas you need to focus on.



My Relationships

Which
phrases do
you relate to?

I don't feel like I
have a support
system

I feel like I am
not doing my
best for my
children

Nobody can
relate to my
problems

My family
causes me a lot
of stress

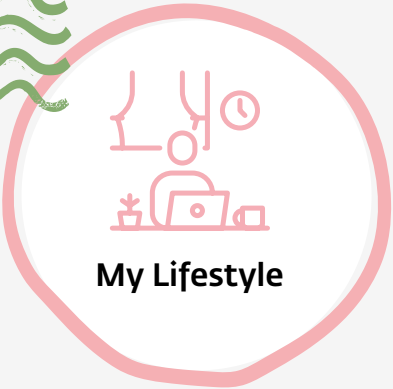
My partner's
expectations
of me are
overwhelming

I can't share
my concerns
with the
people in my
life

My partner is
not supporting
me the way I
need

I feel
uncomfortable
around
my work
colleagues





Which
phrases do
you relate to?

I have difficulty
falling asleep

I struggle to
eat healthy
and maintain a
balanced diet

I wake up
feeling tired

I struggle with
the way my
body looks and
feels

I am not active
enough

I don't take
enough time
for myself

I want to
cut down on
unhealthy food

I don't feel
relaxed and
rested



External Factors

Which
phrases do
you relate to?

I have a
demanding and
draining job

I am anxious
about COVID19
and another
lockdown

My job doesn't
allow me the
time to do the
things I enjoy

I feel stressed
that my
children might
get sick

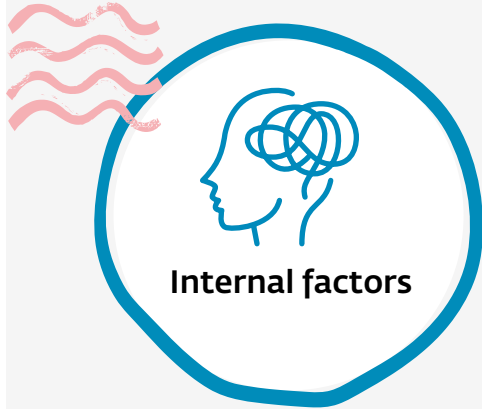
I don't feel
comfortable in
my home

I have concerns
about safety
and security in
my community

I feel
overwhelmed
when my home is
messy and
unorganized

I have fears
about climate
change





Which
phrases do
you relate to?

I engage in
negative self-
talk (E.g., "it's
always my
fault")

I try to be
objective when
I evaluate
myself and my
surroundings

I have
unrealistic
expectations
and need to be
perfect

I have a positive
attitude
towards life

I hold negative
perspectives
about myself,
the world and
future

I engage in
positive and
healthy
self-talk (ex. "I
am worthy")

I lack flexibility
or have "all-
or-nothing"
thinking

I acknowledge
my imperfect self
and set realistic
expectations

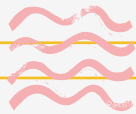


Core Beliefs

These thoughts and phrases that may overwhelm your mind are called your core beliefs.

Core beliefs are deeply rooted, inflexible perceptions of yourself, others, the world around you and the future.

They may be held as absolute truths with conviction; you may not question them or be aware of them, but they determine how you may feel about yourself and how you treat others.



Core beliefs can be positive or negative and are often created in your early life.

They can become distorted through causes such as trauma, rejection and other significant events.

Negative core beliefs:

- "I am incompetent"
- "People are mean"
- "The world is hopeless"
- "The future is scary"



Positive core beliefs:

- "I am a good person"
- "People are kind"
- "The world is a safe place"
- "The future is promising"



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs that are maintained by cognitive distortions which are habitual ways of thinking that are often inaccurate and negatively biased, may lead you to focus on information that validates your negative thoughts and disregards the evidence that shows otherwise.

If a person holds a negative core belief that they are **“unlovable”** they might go to a social event and have thoughts such as **“People are not approaching me because they do not like me.”**

This may lead to not taking the initiative to start conversing with others even if there is no reason to support that others at the event do not like them.



Negative core beliefs detrimentally affect how we perceive or judge the world around us and the actions of others towards us.

If we tell ourselves that we are not

competent or lovable or worthy

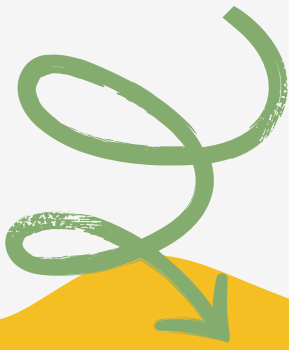
we will continuously find information in our surrounding that supports these negative core beliefs instead of perceiving things objectively and focusing on the positives in our environment as well.



Core Beliefs

After identifying our beliefs, we can challenge them by questioning their validity and truth.

Remember that these experiences are supposed to show that your core belief is not always accurate and true.



Also, an effective way to eliminate negative core beliefs is to seek cognitive behavioral therapy with a trained mental health professional to ensure that you sustain your efforts and improve your thought process for the long term.



The initial step in working on negative core beliefs is to be aware of our thoughts and self-talk and dig deep into our thoughts to discern our core beliefs.

Try asking yourself these questions:

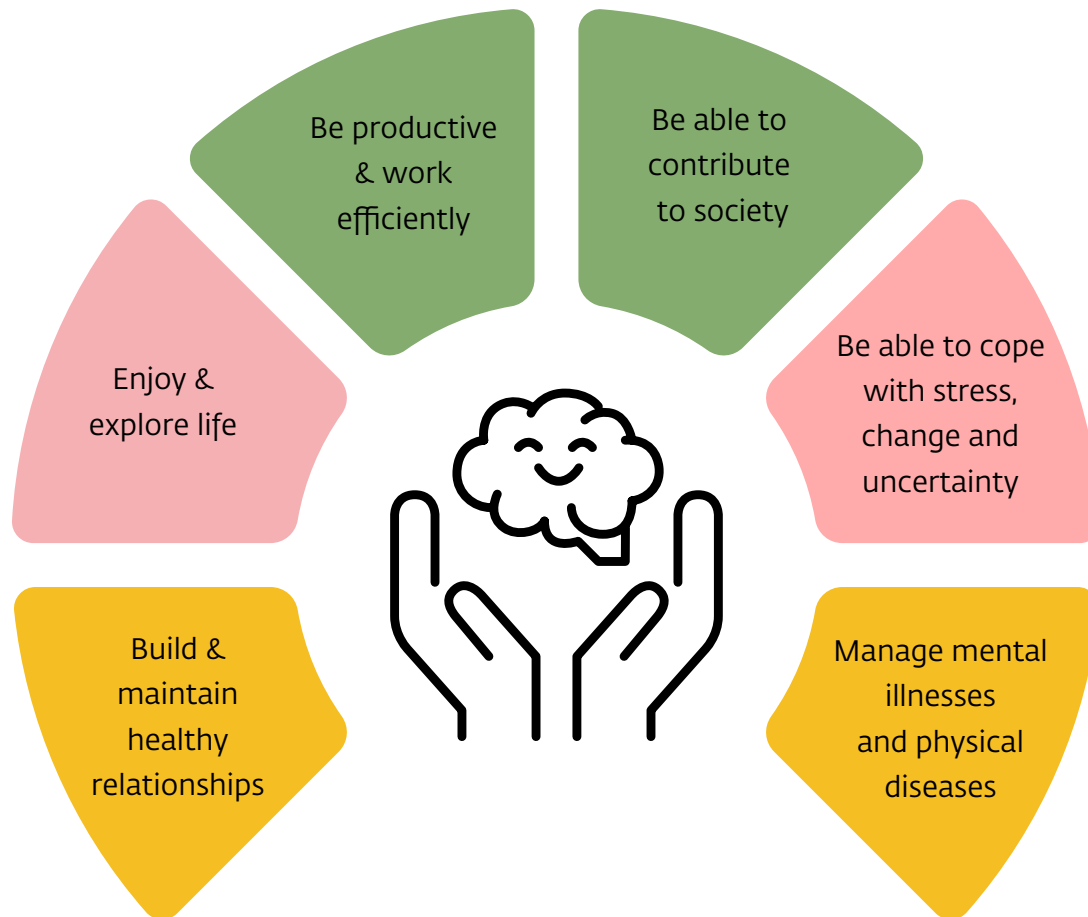
"what do my thoughts say about me?"

"What do my thoughts mean?"

"What experiences/events show that this belief is always true?"

How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?

It is important to work on enhancing our daily lives to achieve mental wellbeing to...



How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?

In order to obtain and maintain good mental wellbeing or health, we need to ensure that certain psychological, social and physical needs are met.



Manage your stress

Stressful situations and events might be constant or occur suddenly.

Being able to manage your stress levels in a realistic way is essential.



Take notice

Mindfulness is the state of being attentive and aware of your surroundings, taking notice of the sky, your garden, your children's laughs and how you feel when you take a deep breath and are present for a few minutes.

Being mindful will also help you be aware of your reactions and behaviors to events occurring throughout your day and help you choose how you let these events impact you.



Find a support system

It is important for us to feel valued and loved by the people around us.

Having a strong and stable connection with those closest to you is essential to your ability to take on the struggles of daily life.

How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?

Understand your emotions..

Identifying and acknowledging your emotions is the first step in regulating your feelings and achieving a healthy mental state. This can be done by:



Expanding your emotional vocabulary. Being able to place a name on how you are feeling will help you better understand your emotional state.



Tracking how your emotions are impacting you physically. How is your body feeling? Are you tired? Are you restless?



Acknowledging the stressor. Knowing what triggered your emotions will help you think of how you can manage the situation and change the feelings you are experiencing.

Express your feelings..

Talking about your emotions can help you cope with your problems and worries.

Allow others to provide you with emotional support; yes, it may not be easy sometimes to show your vulnerability but expressing your emotions does not mean you are weak.



How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?



Connect

Socializing and staying connected with the people around you can help you cope with stress.

Connecting can help make you happier and less lonely and improve your general well being.



Give

The ability to give to others enhances your sense of purpose within your family and your community.

Giving can be small acts of kindness, words of encouragement, or actions that improve another person's day.



How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?



Balanced Diet

Research shows that poor diets negatively affect our brain and influences onset of mental health problems.



Try to consume a healthy diet comprised of more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (fish and nuts).



Sleep

Good quality sleep helps you build emotional and psychological resilience and poor sleep can make us feel more anxious or irritable.



The WHO recommends adults get **7 – 8 hours** of sleep a night.



Be active

Physical activity does not necessarily need to be particularly intense to make you feel good. Slower-paced activities, like walking, can also have the benefit of making us feel good.



It's important to consider your activity level and recognize that whether you prefer to work out or take things slow the important thing is to keep moving.

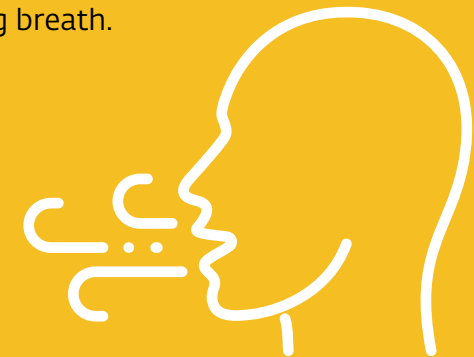
How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?

Breathing Exercises

When you breathe deeply, you feel calmer and more relaxed. Take some time and try this simple breathing exercise.



- Close your eyes.
- Slowly breathe in through your nose.
- As you breathe in, notice your chest filling up with air.
- Notice your stomach rising.
- When you feel that your lungs are full, hold your breath.
- Focus on the feeling of fullness in your chest and tummy.
- Now slowly breathe out through your mouth.
- As you breathe out, notice your chest emptying.
- Notice your stomach relaxing.
- Now.. While you breathe, scan your body from top to bottom.
- Check for any tension or discomfort.
- You'll probably notice that you're feeling tension somewhere.. Perhaps in your neck, chest, legs, or shoulders.
- Visualize breathing slowly into the areas of your body where you've noticed tension or discomfort.
- Think of it as a warm, healing breath.
- Open your eyes.
- Repeat through out the day.





How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?



THE TENSION – RELAXATION RESPONSE



Step 1: **Tension**

- First, focus on the target muscle group, for example, your left hand.
- Next, take a slow, deep breath and squeeze the muscles as hard as you can for about 5 seconds.
- It is important to really feel the tension in the muscles, which may even cause a bit of discomfort or shaking.
- In this instance, you would be making a tight fist with your left hand.



Step 2: **Relaxing the tense muscles**

- This step involves quickly relaxing the tensed muscles.
- After about 5 seconds, let all the tightness flow out of the tensed muscles. Exhale as you do this step.
- You should feel the muscles become loose and limp, as the tension flows out.
- It is important to very deliberately focus on and notice the difference between the tension and relaxation. This is the most important part of the whole exercise.



TIPS:

It is easy to accidentally tense other surrounding muscles (for example the shoulder or arm), so try to **ONLY** tense the muscles you are targeting. Isolating muscle groups gets easier with practice.

During the progressive relaxation exercise, you will be working with almost all the major muscle groups in your body. To make it easier to remember, start with your feet and systematically move up (or if you prefer, you can do it in the reverse order, from your forehead down to your feet)

How can you seek Mental Wellbeing?



Guided Visualization:

Using Guided Imagery For Relaxation:

With the help of a guided imagery recording, a professional helper, or just one's own imagination, those who practice guided imagery get into a deeply relaxed state and envision, with great detail relating to all of the senses, a relaxing scene.

- Get into a relaxed position and close your eyes
- Focus on breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly
- Begin to envision yourself amid the most relaxing environment you can imagine
- As you imagine your scene, try to involve all of your senses...
- What does it look like?
- How does it feel?
- What special scents are involved?
- Do you hear the roar of a fire, the splash of a waterfall, or the sounds of chipper birds?

TIPS:

Try these tips to enhance your guided imagery experience:

- You may want to use ambient sounds that compliment your imagery. This way, you feel more immersed in your 'environment', plus the sounds of real-life will be obscured.
- You may also want to set an alarm, just in case you lose track of time or fall asleep. This way, you'll be more able to relax and let go, knowing that your schedule won't be in jeopardy.
- As you get more practiced, you'll be able to go more deeply and quickly. You may also want to communicate with your subconscious mind, with the help of a tape you record for yourself or purchase, or a therapist.

What are stressors?

Stressors can be situations, individuals, conversations or events happening in your life that cause the release of stress hormones.

Stressors are relative to your interpretation of a situation and how strongly it impacts you.

Arguments with your partner, your child being sick, a demanding job and many other daily scenarios that could lead you into a state of stress.

The 4 types of stress:



What are stressors?

What type of stress are you having?



Threat to the self

Your abilities as a person are being questioned.

E.g. your boss questioning your productivity and work quality, or your child's teacher asks you how much time you spend helping your child with homework.



Novelty

Something new, you have not experienced before.

E.g. You are expecting your first child, or you are starting a new job.



Sense of control

You feel you have little or no control over a situation.

E.g. Your child is not sleeping well, and you don't know what the cause is, or you are in a hurry to get to work and you find yourself stuck in traffic.



Unpredictability

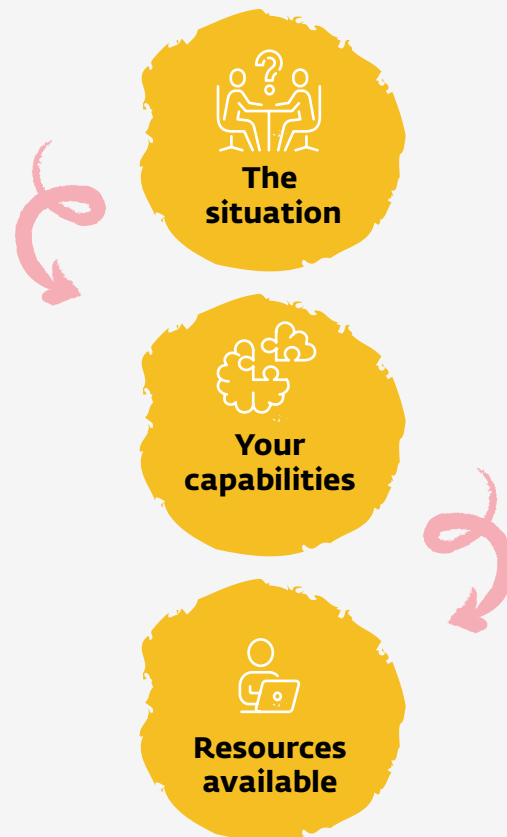
Something you could not have known would occur.

E.g. Change in management at your job that could impact your position or your child injuring themselves at school. A global pandemic that would change the course of everyday life.

Stress Management

Coping strategies are the ways you process your thoughts and the actions you take when faced with a stressful situation.

Choosing a coping strategy for your stress will depend on many variables



When experiencing any scenario as stressful take a minute to recognize how you are feeling and ask yourself these questions...

What triggered my stress?

How is this stress affecting me?

What have I done successfully in the past to manage this type of stress?

Stress Management

Stress Coping Strategies In the moment of stress

Make the Choice to not allow certain situations to give you stress. Be aware that you are in control of your emotions and when you feel your stress levels rise try to make the choice on how to react to them.



Accept that you will make mistakes, be in difficult situations, must deal with unpleasant individuals and sometimes lack control over an occurring event.



Be objective by assessing the possible outcomes of the situation that is causing you stress and reframe the way you are thinking about it.



Communicate clearly when you are able on what your concerns are with your partner, your friend or in professional setting.



Maintain your efforts to manage your stress no matter how many times you feel overwhelmed with the same stressful situation or a new one. Continue to be aware of yourself and work on your coping strategies.

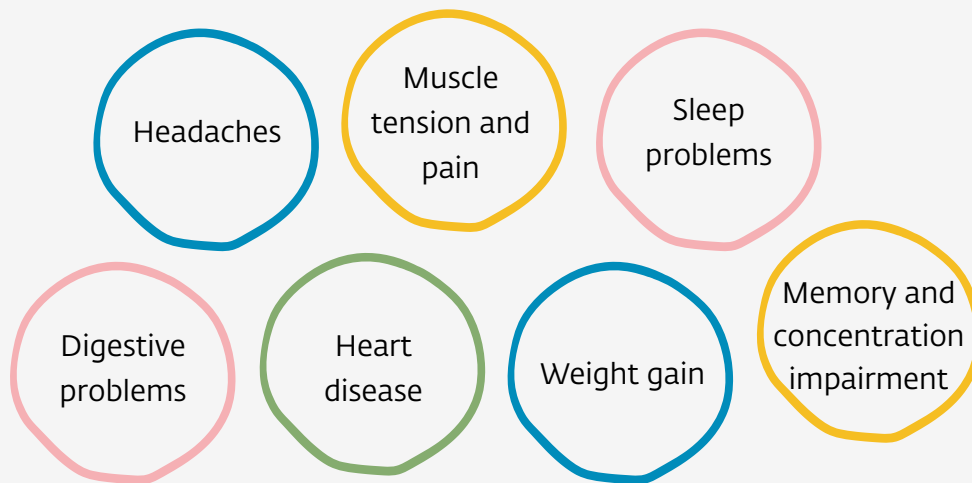


Stress Management

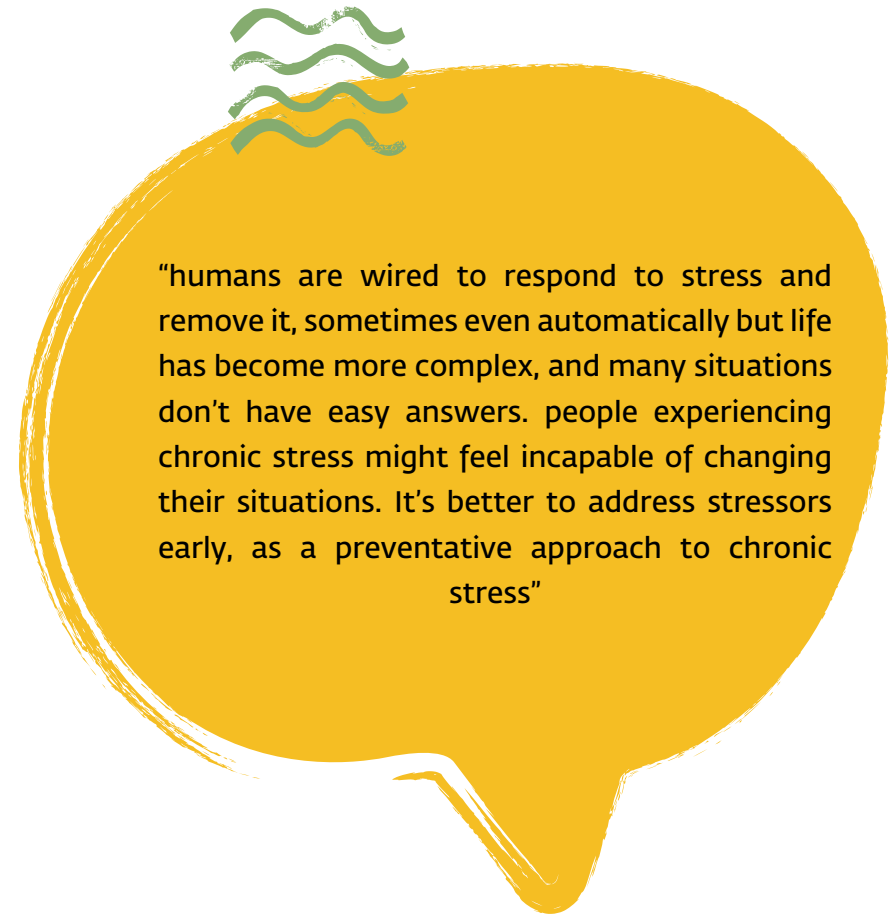
Stress Coping Strategies Long-term

Long-term stress or chronic stress is a consistent sense of feeling pressured and overwhelmed for a period of two weeks or more.

Chronic stress slowly drains a person's psychological resources and can also cause...



This is why it's so important to learn healthy ways to cope with your life stressors in a sustainable way.



Rajita Sinha, PhD, Director
Yale Medicine's Interdisciplinary Stress Center



Stress Management

Stress Coping Strategies Long-term

Long-term healthy coping strategies are the strategies you use that benefit you beyond the moment of stress and contribute to your overall journey of overcoming your stressors.

TIPS:

It seems quite easy yet many people forget to give themselves this daily time to recharge.

The hour depends on your schedule and responsibilities, it can change every day but honor this one hour like any other important responsibility.

Start with 15 mins and work your way up to 1 hour until it becomes a natural part of your routine

Spend 1 hour alone every day without any stimulation, no tv, no telephone, no kids.



Stress Management

Stress Coping Strategies Long-term

TIPS:

This might not be easily done with **work and family responsibilities** but when you are experiencing increased stress and your ability to function in your daily life becomes difficult..

Allowing yourself to take a day or two or a week to step out of your routine in any form will give you **the opportunity to approach your stressors from a wider lens.**

Take Time out to step back from your daily life and reassess the areas and matters that are causing you stress.

Day Trips



Staycations



Travel



Stress Management

Stress Coping Strategies Long-term

Time Management Skills

Break it Down:

Get a good understanding of what you need to do. How complex is the task? What is your deadline?

Divide the task into smaller pieces. How small they need to be will depend on how overwhelmed you feel.

Turn the small pieces into a plan of action and do the task step by step.

Prioritize:

The more meaningful and important a task is, the more stress it will likely cause you. Consider the factors that make a task or project a priority.

Personal tasks: how meaningful a task is to you might prove more important than anything else

Work-related task: a close deadline might take higher-priority than a task without a deadline.

Goal Setting Skills

Realistic:

Set realistic and attainable goals based on your resources and skills. Small goals that can be achievable will boost your confidence.

Example:

I will stop eating junk food
I will eat more salads for lunch.

Specific:

Make your goals focused so they will be easier to accomplish.

Example:

I will work out
I will do 15 mins of physical activity twice a week

TIPS

Time management requires consistency, the more you practice these skills the easier they will be to do in many aspects of your life.

Goal setting creates structure that allows you to see your success and mitigate stress. Write down your goals in categories: Daily, Weekly, Yearly, Overall Wellbeing



Stress Management

Finding the good stress



Good Stress drives you to achieve better things, explore exciting experiences and can be key to developing resilience, which is an important skill for your emotional health.

Also, good stress can help you see that some challenges might be difficult momentarily, but they can be overcome.



While we need to address bad or chronic stress there is also good stress or as specialists refer to it "Eustress".



"Eustress" is the type of stress we feel when we are excited. Our pulse quickens and our hormones surge, but there is no threat or fear.

We feel this type of stress when we ride a roller coaster, compete for a promotion, or meet your partner for the first time. There are many triggers for this good stress, and it keeps us feeling alive and excited about life.





**Strengthen family
bonds and stability**



Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Relationships are the bonds you form with



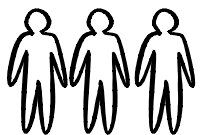
Your Partner



Your Children



Your Extended Family



Your friends & work colleagues



A study conducted by human development specialists explored every part of human life, the physical, psychological, social life and IQ to determine what is essential for human happiness...

The key finding was that happiness and health were not a result of wealth, fame or job status, but were directly related to the relationships in human's lives.

The quality of these relationships is the foundation to supporting your life and improving your wellbeing.

Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Social Connection

A sense of connection is internal. The benefits of connection are linked to your subjective sense of connection.

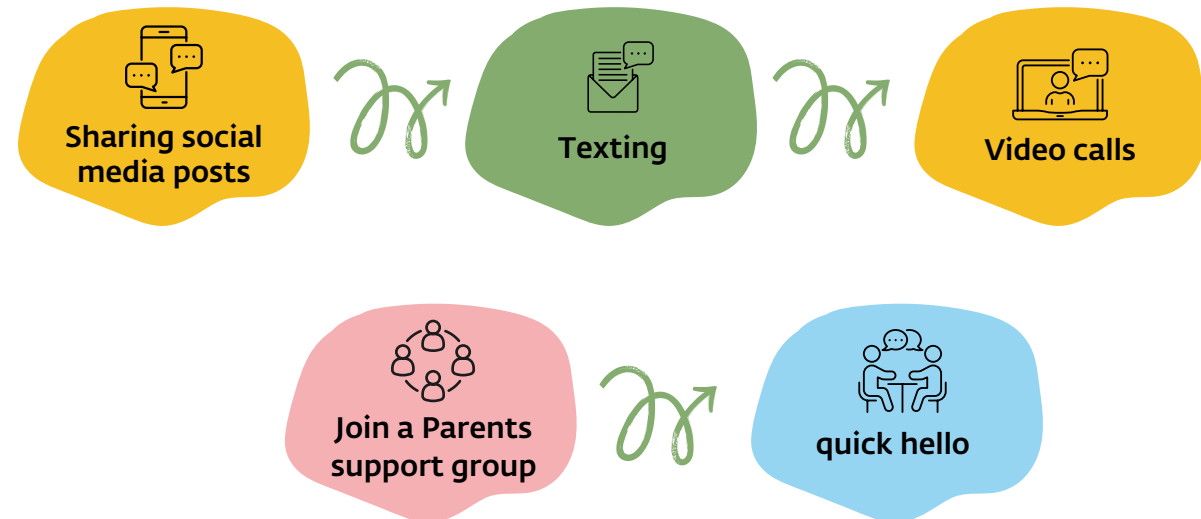
Find your own meaning of social connection.

While you may not be able to control the number of close relationships you have, you can determine the impact these connections have on you.



As parent's you might not have the time or support to step out and enjoy a good time with your friends...

Find the ways that are comfortable for you to stay connected...

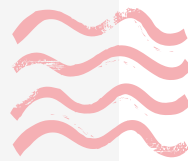


Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Exploring these factors will allow you to..

Address any stressors that may arise from them.

Understand where you need support.



Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Social Connection and social media

What are some ways you use social media?

How many hours do you spend on your phone?

How does social media make you feel?

What are the top 10 social media accounts that you follow?

How do these accounts effect you?



Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Social media enables you to

- Communicate and stay up to date with family and friends around the world.
- Find new friends and communities; network with other people who share similar interests or ambitions.
- Join or promote worthwhile causes; raise awareness on important issues.
- Seek or offer emotional support during tough times.
- Find vital social connection if you live in a remote area, for example, or have limited independence, social anxiety, or are part of a marginalized group.
- Find an outlet for your creativity and self-expression.
- Discover (with care) sources of valuable information and learning.



Many of us benefit from social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Whatsapp and Instagram to find and connect with each other.

While each has its benefits, it's important to remember that social media can never be a replacement for real-world human connection.

Also, the constant alerts and notifications and need to be on social media platforms can affect your concentration and focus, disturb your sleep, and cause you irritation and negative thoughts.



Relationships & Your Wellbeing

Here are some ways you can manage your social media usage and ensure you get the best out of the platforms

Put your phone on silent at certain times of the day, such as when you're driving, in a meeting, spending time offline with friends, or playing with your kids.

Use an app to track how much time you spend on social media. Setting goals for how much you want to spend online will be helpful.

Keep your phone or tablet use out of the bedroom when its time to sleep. Turn devices off and leave them in another room or a distant table to charge overnight.

Turn off social media notifications. The constant buzzing, beeping, and drop-down bars on your phone alerting you to new messages can be hard to ignore. Turning off notifications can help you spend your time more effectively and focus.



Social Connection and social media



Your Partner



Communication:



Communicating with one another is at the heart of maintaining a strong, positive, and loving relationship between you and your partner.



It is important that both of you want to engage in enhancing your ability to interact and communicate in positive ways through your verbal, non-verbal (body language) and behaviors.



Remember that disagreements, conflict and miscommunication are common and to be expected in any type of relationship.



Take the time to stop, think, listen, and share your thoughts in an open, honest, non-hurtful and judgmental manner.



Your Partner



Communication:

Communication Skills

Be prepared to observe and listen.

Asking your partner questions about their feelings, their actions, and truly giving them the space, time, and focus to express themselves.

Pick the right time to communicate.

Moments of anger and hurt may lead to words or actions that your partner may have a difficult time forgetting and forgiving. Being able to stop, breathe, and withdraw until we are in control again is not easy. But you can practice this.

Observe and Encourage good behavior.

Acknowledge the good things about one another and the good things in our lives. Little actions can go a long way in showing one another that you care, love and respect one another

How?

- **10 minutes each**

Without: Responses - interruptions - Denials

- **1 on 1**

Listen

- **20 minutes a week**

Share: Thoughts - Feelings - Expectations

Stop...Breathe...Withdraw...Express

- Take a deep breath.
- Find a quiet space to think, calm down and be in control of yourself again.
- Set a time and place to communicate.
- Express to your partner how you were feeling and what made you feel that way

Text one another with positive messages or funny memes.

Take a few minutes to share what you are grateful for.



Your Partner



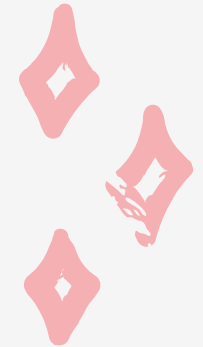
Communication:

What are your partners communication strengths?

What communication skills would you like to improve?

What communication skills would you like your partner to improve?

What communication skills do you think are your strengths?



Try writing down your answers during different times. Reflect how your answers change when you are communicating well with your partner vs. when you and your partner have an argument or are in a conflict.

Your Partner

Shared Responsibilities

What actions can help you manage your shared responsibilities?



Stop and take stock every month to see what is working and what isn't and adjust as needed.

Shared responsibilities can range from childcare to home duties to financial management.



**Who does what,
where, when,
and how?**



The starting point can be...

- Acknowledging the importance of sharing responsibilities for the benefit of your mental wellbeing.
- Valuing each other's contributions
- Understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses on different responsibilities

Your Partner

Finance

Financial conflict is one of the leading causes of partner conflicts in the UAE. Understanding your money-personality can be helpful. The big 5 money personality types according to Investopedia are...



Big Spenders

They are comfortable spending money, don't fear debt, and often take big risks when investing.



Debtors

Debtors generally spend more than they earn and are deeply in debt while not putting much thought into investing.



Savers

Savers are not concerned about following the latest trends, and they derive more satisfaction from reading the interest on a bank statement than from acquiring something new.



Shoppers

Shoppers often develop great emotional satisfaction from spending money. They can't resist spending, even if it's to buy items they don't need.



Investors

Investors are consciously aware of money. They understand their financial situations and try to put their money to work.

What actions can help you manage your finances?



- Jointly agree on how your money will be spent which includes a discussion on access and control of finances.
- Identify your expectations and come to an agreement on what is reasonable and feasible
- Talking openly about your financial situation



Your Partner

Finance

It is important to understand each others' views on money to avoid financial stress.

Answering these questions could be a good place to start...

Are you a saver, investor, or spender?

What are your views about debt?

Do you prefer joint or separate bank accounts?



Who do you prefer to manage the finances?

How do you prefer decisions on big purchases be made?

Take turns answering these questions. Comparing your answers could be a good place to start talking about finances and agreeing on a way forward.



Your Child

New baby

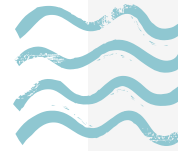
Parents are faced with a multitude of changes with the arrival of a new baby, Physical Emotional Social Financial Behavioral

What actions can help you manage ?

1 Be aligned with one another's feelings and needs even before pregnancy.

2 Communication, empathy and respect for one another and a deep commitment to problem solving together.

3 Having a strong social support system can facilitate your ability to adapt and adjust



Parents begin to experience the presence of a "new person" in the family during pregnancy.

Research now shows that these changes are happening within the brains of both parents.

For mothers, these changes lie deep within the limbic system "emotional brain."

After the baby is born these changes continue and both mother and father can experience changes in the frontal cortex "mental brain."

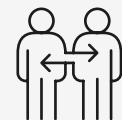
The increased neural activity within these regions support both parents in becoming more...



Responsive



Observant



Attuned

Your Child

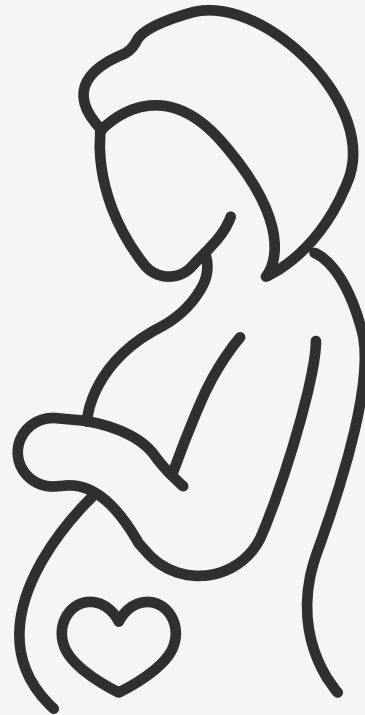
Mother's Mental Health

Mothers experience pregnancy, delivery, breastfeeding, and are typically the primary caregiver leading to major changes in her everyday life that can lead to mental health struggles.



The most important thing to remember is that this happens to many mothers, it is a common outcome and there are ways to overcome this challenging time.

Embrace a system and plan that works for you and get comfortable asking for help.



1 in 5

mothers may experience depression, post partum depression and or psychological distress after having a child.



SLEEP

Sleep deprivation is a key factor in emotional dysregulation. Find time to get the sleep you need. Work out a schedule with your support system that allows you to sleep in a little longer or take short naps during the day.



EAT

Poor nutrition can negatively impact your physical and mental well being. Prepare nutritious meals ahead of time and have healthy snacks within reach.



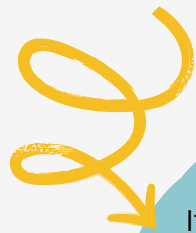
SOCIALIZE

Many mothers may limit their social time with others to focus on their family needs . The key is identifying what social support and relationships you need. You might not be hanging out with the same group as before and need to work on stronger relationships with friends who already have kids or find support within your extended families.

Your Child

Father's Mental Health

Fathers typically become concerned with increasing economic/financial costs, changes in the husband-wife relationship, more time and resource demands including the balance between work and life.



It is sometimes overlooked how having a child can result in emotional, psychological and social changes for fathers. It is important to identify the struggles fathers face to ensure they receive the support they need.

Being aware of your needs and your wellbeing as a father will support the wellbeing of your partner and children.



1 in 4

Males are likely to experience stress, anxiety and/or depression prior to and after the birth of a child.



Finances

Consult a financial planner. Talking to a financial planner can help you determine ways to handle the cost of having a baby.



Relationship

Talk to your partner. Talk about how your daily lives and relationship might change — for better and for worse — once the baby is born.



Balance

Consider what kind of father you want to be. Consider what aspects are important to you in your father child relationship and how you can balance your work/life responsibilities with being an available father.



Your Child

Older Children

Choose some of the questions that might go through your mind..



Am I a good parent?

Should I be working less and be at home more ?

Is my child happy?

Am I spending enough time with my children?

Are my children spending too much time with screens and digital games?

Are my children ashamed or embarrassed of me?

Are my children picking up my bad habits?

Are my children telling me the things that are bothering them?

Are my children acting out because they need my attention?



Your Child

Older Children

Asking yourself these questions is a sign that you are a caring and loving parent.

Children at different ages and with different personalities have different needs and getting to know your child is like getting to know any other person.

Talk to them



Understand your child's preferred communication style. Talk to them like a friend, tell them about your day, interesting information you heard, ask them questions they will feel comfortable answering.

Learn from them



Children are very inquisitive and observe the world with a different lens than we do. There is a lot we can learn if we make them feel heard and that they have something to offer no matter how old they are.

Quality over Quantity



You may not have the luxury of spending your whole day with your child, it's ok. An hour or two a day of your full attention and care is what a child needs to feel important and loved.

Check in



Help your child talk about their emotions and the experiences they face. If they are struggling at school or with friends, checking in on the good days and giving them a safe space to express will help them open up on the hard days.

Manage your expectations

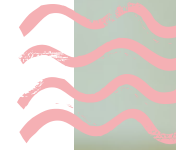


It is your child's right to live their life as their own. Your dreams and desires for what they can achieve might not be what is best for them. Communicate your expectations and why they are important to you and allow your child to express their concerns.

Be Kind



Kindness is essential to get you through the hard days. Being kind to yourself and your child when you are tired, exhausted, angry, frustrated will help you ease your reactions and act from a place of tenderness.



Your Family

Navigating your extended Family

Extended families can be a blessing in most circumstances. Whether they live near or far, they can be a source of social support..

You can reach out to them in a time of need

You can share your worst fears with them

They can step in when you need a break

They can offer economic support and shelter



Extended families typically include a variety of different people with different views and perspectives.

- They can be a source of enlightenment
- They can offer an opportunity to explore multiple avenues of problem solving
- They can provide your children with a safe space to share their feelings



Your Family

Navigating your extended Family

Society and culture dynamics are ever changing.

These changes are also reflected in our own definitions and practices surrounding our 'extended family.'



Deciding on how to navigate the relationships with your extended family will help define their role with you, your partner and your children.

How involved are they in the family decision making processes?

How frequently will they will meet with you and your children?

What languages will they converse in with your children?

What is their role in disciplining your children?

Your Family

Extended families can also be a source of stress and drain one's time, resources and good will.

Conflict is likely to occur in any gathering of multiple persons. Take into consideration the following recommendations when engaging with the extended family...

- Communicate with your partner, before, during and after extended family interactions to discuss any issues that may be of concern and how you will address them.
- Set boundaries. You and your spouse should agree on what topics/concerns are beyond the rights of the extended family to decide upon. If they try to interfere you and your spouse should support one another and agree to your own plan of action.

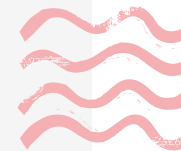
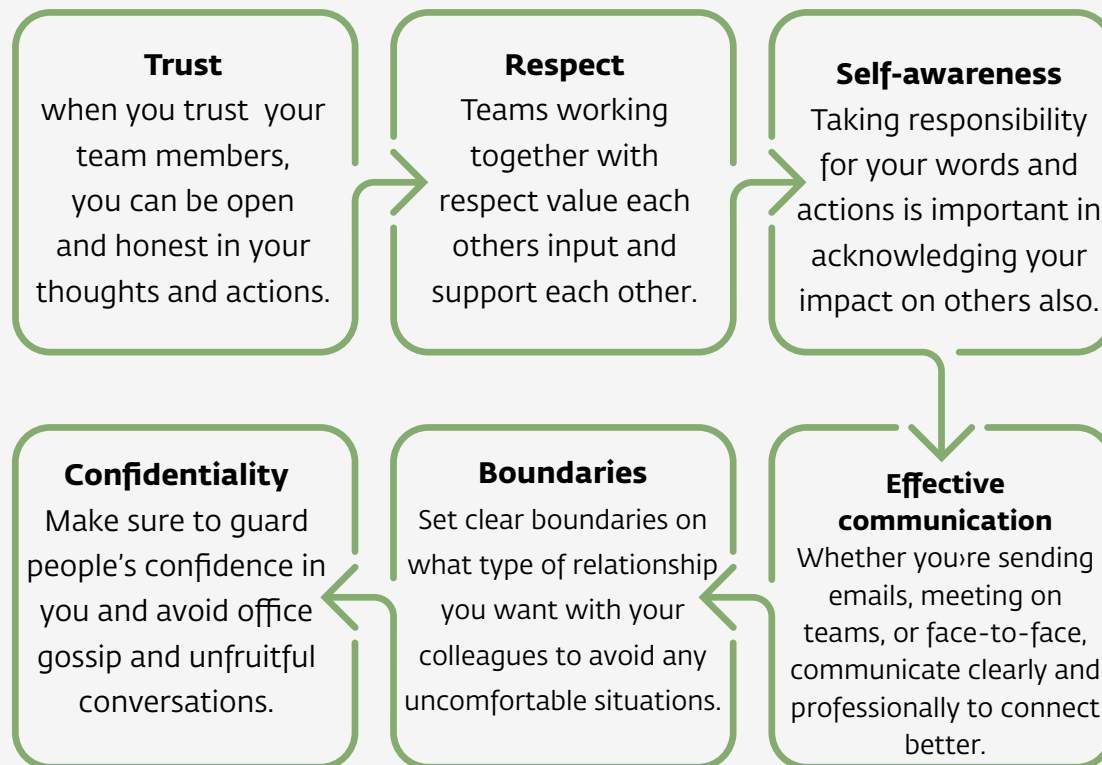
- Acknowledge family rituals. Understanding different family rituals and the parts you play is important. Whether it is how you greet one another or how you spend your religious holidays together, you should engage, be respectful and helpful. And enjoy!

- Be respectful. People can do things or say things that may be upsetting. You can disagree but remember to remain respectful. In difficult situations where no resolution is likely; try to withdraw and revisit the situation at a later time.
- Don't compare one side of the extended family with the other. Most of us will feel protective of our own family. Attacking one another is not useful. Provide constructive criticism on any problems that may arise and try to resolve together.

Your Colleagues

Social dynamics at work

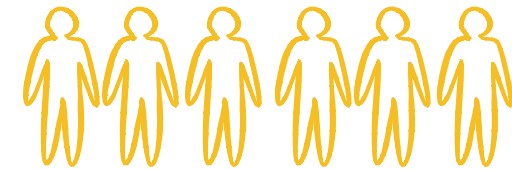
A healthy work relationship requires...



On average, people spend

2,000

Hours a year at work



Healthy relationships at work where you feel respected and supported, help promote a positive work culture that feels supportive and empowering.

This might not always be possible with multiple personalities and office dynamics. However, certain actions can help ensure that you maintain good relationships and avoid stressful or uncomfortable encounters.

Your Colleagues

Social dynamics at work

It is important to understand what you value most in workplace relationships. Answering these questions could be a good place to start..

What are your preferred communication methods with your colleagues?

What type of relationship do you prefer to have with your manager?

Are you comfortable discussing personal matters with your colleagues?

Do you enjoy making friends at work? Or do you prefer a strictly professional relationship?

What is a main concern for you in your workplace relationships?





**Engaged and resilient
community**

When do you need to seek Mental Health Support?

Mental Health vs Mental illness

Mental health

Your emotions, your thoughts and feelings, your ability to solve problems and overcome difficulties, your social connections, and your understanding of the world around you.

Mental illness

An illness that affects the way you think, feel, behave, or interact with others. There are many different mental illnesses, and they have different symptoms that impact people's lives in different ways.

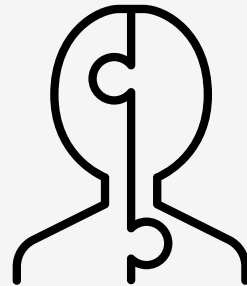


When do you need to seek Mental Health Support?

Mental illness symptoms

Common mental illnesses are...

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

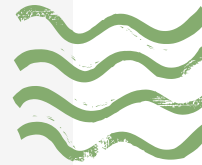


Identifying that you have a mental illness can only be done by a trained professional.

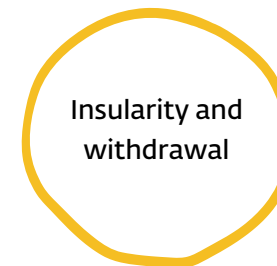
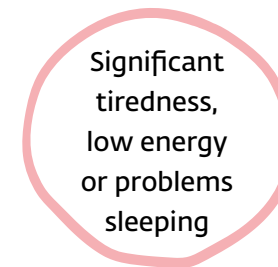
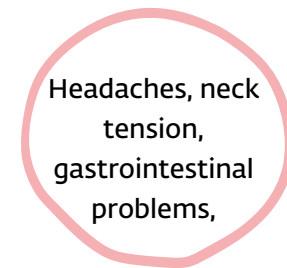
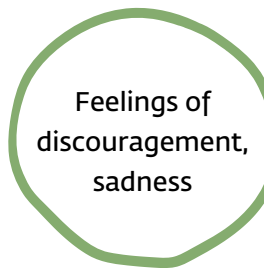
At one point or another in most people's lives they will need professional assistance for their mental health for a multitude of reasons. The same way you would seek out a professional for a physical problem, your psychological needs can be managed with the right support.

If you are struggling doing things that are a part of your routine, struggling with your sleep, your reactions and generally find your daily life to be increasingly difficult...

Please seek out professional help.



Some symptoms of a mental illness could be...



Where can you find mental health support in Abu Dhabi?

Primary Care centers	Your primary health care physician (GP, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine) is qualified to support you with your mental health needs.	Department of health list to primary care centers
ISTIJABA helpline	ISTIJABA operates as a direct communications channel with the Department of Health's Medical Operations Command Centre, to respond to patients' emergency requests promptly.	8001717
Family Services Call center	The Family services call center operated by the Family development foundation is a direct channel to answer any concerns relevant to families and guide you to relevant services provided by the foundation.	80033322
Private Psychiatric Clinics	Abu Dhabi has numerous clinics dedicated to Psychiatry, Psychology and Counseling with specialists from multiple backgrounds qualified to support you.	American Center for Psychiatry and Neurology British Neurology Psychiatry Center

Disclaimer

- This guide was developed to support with mental wellbeing needs that may arise in the everyday life of a parent.
- We acknowledge that for some, their struggles whether physical, social, emotional, financial, medical or for other reasons, may be outside of their control and require further assistance than this guide is offering.
- If you are experiencing severe difficulties as a parent or partner and you need support, we urge you to contact the relevant organizations that can assist you.
- See our resource page for more information.



Resources

- <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/Public-Health-Programs/Mental-Health>
- <https://www.adphc.gov.ae/-/media/Project/ADPHC/ADPHC/PDF/Mental-Health-booklet/Mental-En.pdf>
- <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/health-and-fitness/mental-health>
- <https://www.hw.gov.ae/ar/download/a-guide-to-happiness-and-wellbeing-program-in-the-workplace-1>
- <https://www.fahr.gov.ae/portal/ar/about-fahr/initiatives/life-employee-assistance-program.aspx>
- <https://teghwa.ae/ar/index.html>
- <https://maan.gov.ae/impact-makers/>
- https://hope.hw.gov.ae/index_ar.html
- <https://mentalhealth.ae/>
- www.lighthousearabia.com
- www.mindtales.me
- <https://www.psychcovid19oman.com>
- https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/best-mental-health-apps-4692902>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/best-mental-health-apps-4692902>
- <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/learn-more/perma-theory-well-being-and-perma-workshops>



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