
Mental Health and Wellness

Basic definitions

- Mental Health: Umbrella term for overall mental and emotional fitness or wellbeing
- Mental Wellness: Positive mental and emotional health. Flexible and able to tolerate stress and strain in work, school, and social relationships. Healthy relationships with self and others.
- Signs of good mental health include:
 - » You treat others well
 - » You like who you are
 - » You're flexible with schedule, plans, and managing stress
 - » Show gratitude
 - » Aware of your own emotions
 - » You have found some meaning in your life
 - » You value experience over material things
- Mental Illness- Functioning below expectations and significant distress that may be caused by biological, psychological, and/or social factors. Can be temporary or long term.

Things that support mental health and wellness (facilitator notes)

- Pull from your own fraternal and life experiences of things that have helped you maintain your own wellbeing during times of stress. Examples include calling a brother when feeling stressed, seeking professional help, taking time away from the stressor, exercise, not procrastinating, grabbing lunch or dinner with friends or family, watching a short clip on YouTube, etc.
- Building chapter communities that are supportive of one another, do not haze, and discourage substance/alcohol abuse. Those struggling to cope with stress are not going to be helped by partying and avoiding their problems through hazing or alcohol. These individuals may also engage in more high-risk behaviors when they are experiencing symptoms of a mental illness.

Positive approach to mental health and wellness

- Suggest the chapter discuss mental awareness, seek experts on their campus or in their community to present to the chapter or campus.
- Have activities that support mental wellness. These can often be framed as sober brotherhood events that bring the group together to support everyone's mental health. Includes brotherhood events, community service, philanthropy, and sober mixers.
- Use skills that were taught in bystander interventions earlier to help everyone in the chapter. You can intervene in a tough situation regardless of if it is at a party or with brothers in the chapter that just aren't doing well.
- Spend time with one another outside of official activities. Can be in other organizations, playing sports or games, or building traditions of doing some activity that is relaxing and fun.

What can we do as *individuals* to support others and what are the warning signs?

- Suicide risk factors
- Depression: Most people that are depressed are not suicidal, but most suicidal people are depressed
- Previous suicide attempt: 50% completed suicides had previous attempt(s)
- Recent disappointment or loss (failing an exam, breakup, not getting into a grad program, losing a scholarship, etc.)
- Social Isolation: Pulling away from friends, family, and brothers.
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Substance Abuse: 80% of college suicides (decrease inhibition, increases violence)
- Personality traits towards impulsivity

Warning Signs

- They talk about suicide, death, going on a trip or when they aren't around anymore.
- Acquire a method– bought a gun, rope, access to medication
- Preparing to go away or get their life in order
- Say goodbye to friends/family like it is the last time they will see them
- Giving away prized possessions
- Not future oriented or ambivalent towards future
- Sudden increase in energy after intense depression (typically implies that they have a plan, means, and intent).

What do I do to help a brother in need?

- STAY CALM... or they may clam up because you react strongly
- Take every threat or hint as real. Talk to them about it. Ask if they are thinking about harming themselves!
- Ask if they are having thoughts about hurting themselves or someone else? Do they have a plan, intent, and means (knife, rope, pills, gun, drugs, alcohol, heights, roof access)
- Listen to them first, ask what they need from you
- Talk to the person and instill hope for future
- Contact their family members
- Suggest they seek professional help
- Enlist help from other members, CAB members, Province President
- Take them to their first appointment at a counseling center or some form of help
- Take them to the ER
- Call 911

Discussion Question #1 (10 minutes)

What are you doing at the chapter level to talk about Mental Health?

- Are you starting to have these conversations with your members?
 - » When are times that this conversation should be held throughout the semester?
 - ▷ Beginning, midterms, start of Phi Kappa Education, before finals week.
 - ▷ Is there a chapter officer that provides information to others regarding mental or physical health (could be brotherhood chair or chaplain) and discusses resources which may be available?
- What were some of your chapter's biggest challenges to addressing mental health and mental illness on our campus?
- Are your internal judicial boards talking about how they will handle situations that may involve mental illness or substance abuse issues?
 - » Standards board needs to think about what actions they may be able to take to facilitate connecting someone into available services?
 - » Mandating that someone be evaluated by a mental health or substance abuse counselor
 - » Having the individual attend anger management
 - » Have the person organize a speaker on substance abuse/mental health for the chapter
 - » Other ideas?

Discussion Question #2 (5 minutes)

What are some of the resources available to you on campus/within the fraternity system?

- How does someone schedule an intake appointment at your counseling center?
- How can we use local supports, such as professors, CAB members and Alumni, and other supports to help promote mental health and awareness for mental illness?
- Who is readily available to come to the chapter when the chapter experiences a crisis?
 - » What are the types of crisis that our members may experience?