Mental health promotion, everybody’s business?

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The new public health

The Healthy Cities approach seeks to put health high on the political and social agenda of cities and to build a strong movement for public health at the local level. The concept is underpinned by the principles of the Health for All strategy and Local Agenda21.

Strong emphasis is given to equity, participatory governance and solidarity, intersectoral collaboration and action to address the determinants of health.
There is no health without mental health

- Mental health is
  - More than the absence of mental illness
  - Determined by socioeconomic and environmental factors
  - Linked to behaviour
  - Enhanced by effective public health interventions

- And… *Mental health is everybody’s business*… or is it??
Mental health promotion
3 areas of confusion:

- **Definitions: what is mental health?**
  - … and therefore what is mental health promotion

- **Who does mental health promotion?**
  - The mental health promotion that ‘we’ do
  - The mental health promotion that ‘others’ do

- **What constitutes macro-, meso-, micro-level action in mental health promotion?**
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. (WHO 2001)

- is .. a feature of the individual, influenced by individual, biological & psychological factors, social interactions, societal structures & cultural values (Lehtinen 2008)

- is the absense of mental disorders (Patel et al 2007)

- skills, attributes, behaviours, capacities, emotions or senses (MacDonald & O’Hara 1998)
...or

- For *citizens*, mental health is a resource which enables them to realise their intellectual and emotional potential and to find and fulfil their roles in social, school and working life.

- For *societies*, good mental health of citizens contributes to prosperity, solidarity and social justice. (European Green Paper 2005)

- Mental health and mental wellbeing are fundamental to the quality of life and productivity of individuals, families, communities and nations, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens (WHO Mental Health Declaration for Europe 2005 in Friedli 2009)
There is no succinct and universally agreed answer to this question (MacDonald 2006)
The determinants of mental health

- **Biology / personality**
  - Age, sex, physical health

- **Psychological / behavioural**
  - Behaviours; self-esteem; resilience; coping skills

- **Environmental**
  - **Socio-cultural**: education, social change, gender, ethnicity, violence, public policy, discrimination & stigma
  - **Natural**: climate, seasons
  - **Built**: housing, design, transport etc

- **Individual factors and experiences**
  - emotions; self-esteem; coping skills; perceived meaningfulness of life; physical health

- **Social interactions**
  - personal, family sphere; different settings

- **Societal structures and resources**
  - societal, organisational, employment policies; housing, economic resources

- **Cultural values**
  - equity, human rights; stigma of mental illness; tolerance
What is mental health promotion?

...an umbrella term that covers a variety of strategies aimed at having a positive effect on mental health (WHO 2001)

Promotion of mental health & prevention of mental ill health address individual, family, community and social determinants of mental health (European Green Paper 2005)

Aims to protect, support and sustain emotional and social well-being … (WHO Europe 2008)
The scope and outcomes of mental health promotion activities are potentially wide and difficult to grasp.

- Interventions with primary goal to improve mental health of individuals & communities;

- Interventions mainly intended to achieve something else but enhance mental health as a side-benefit (Herrman et al 2005)
Mental health promotion works by

- Strengthening individuals (micro level):
  - increasing resilience, promotion of self-esteem, life and coping skills, parenting skills
Mental health promotion works by:

- Strengthening communities (meso level):
  - increasing social inclusion, improving neighbourhood environments, service development, in settings

- Reducing structural barriers to mental health (micro level):
  - by reducing discrimination & inequalities, access to education, meaningful employment, housing, support for vulnerable people

(HEA 1998; NSF 1999 in Tilford 2006)
Health promotion action means

- Build healthy public policy
- Create supportive environments
- Strengthen community actions
- Develop personal skills
- Reorient health services

- … health promotion demands coordinated action by all concerned: governments, health, social & economic sectors, NGOs, local authorities, industry, media

The prerequisites and prospects for health cannot be ensured by the health sector alone

(Addis Ababa Charter 1986)
Or scrap all that and say...

That mental health promotion is about ensuring that people survive

.... And therefore activities to promote mental health should be outside the scope of mental health
Prerequisites for health are:

- Peace
- Shelter
- Education
- Food
- Income
- A stable eco-system
- Sustainable resources
- Social justice, and equity

(Ottawa Charter 1986)
In the UK: the Foresight Report 2008

Mental Capital and Wellbeing:
Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Mental capital and well-being

Whilst it is important for Government to address problems that affect the mental development of specific groups, such as learning difficulties and mental disorders, policies and choices also need to nurture the mental capital and wellbeing in the wider population, so that everyone can flourish throughout their lives.
Mental capital is defined as:

“the totality of an individual’s cognitive and emotional resources, including their cognitive capability, flexibility and efficiency of learning, emotional intelligence (e.g. empathy and social cognition), and resilience in the face of stress.

The extent of an individual’s resources reflects his/her basic endowment (genes and early biological programming), and their experiences and education, which take place throughout the lifecourse.” (Kirkwood et al 2008)
Mental well-being is:

- A dynamic state in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community.

- It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.
Five ways to mental wellbeing - the wellbeing equivalent of “five fruit and vegetables a day”… for individual action:

1. Connect… With the people around you.
2. Be active… Go for a walk or run. Step outside. It makes you feel good.
5. Give … Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer. Join a group. Look out, as well as in.
MRC Lifelong Health & Wellbeing Programme

- Mental capital, mental health and wellbeing
- Understanding the biological, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors, including work, that impact on mental capacity and mental wellbeing in later life.

Collaborative teams will be truly multi-disciplinary and will involve strategic partnerships with other sectors such as practitioners, policy makers, industry and the public.
Dimensions of Wellbeing / Quality of Life

II

Mental Health

+ 

Illness
Constructing a model to guide investment in older people’s mental capital, mental health and wellbeing
Key elements of future mental health promotion

- Major emphasis on policy development and evaluation
- Health is equal partner amongst many players
- It is evidence based and theory driven
- It is based on the principles of the Ottawa Charter but...
  - recognises the need for local differences
Mental health promotion is everybody’s business