



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada

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I'm going to go and talk to some people that I think can help me

Canada 

Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health. We assess the safety of drugs and many consumer products, help improve the safety of food, and provide information to Canadians to help them make healthy decisions. We provide health services to First Nations people and to Inuit communities. We work with the provinces to ensure our health care system serves the needs of Canadians.

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The four directions: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual are all necessary to mental wellness for individuals, families, and communities.

Although the concept is described in many different forms and ways across diverse communities, it is commonly believed that wellness must be understood from a "whole person" perspective.

Wellness is a balance of one's spirit, heart/emotions, mind, and physical being.

The balance of these things gives people purpose, hope, belonging, and meaning.

This booklet was developed with the guidance of the Alberta Region Mental Health and Addictions Elders' Advisory Group, a group of 21 Elders representing Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 in Alberta.



My name is Jamie.
My traditional name is
Lone Walker Child.

I haven't been feeling like myself lately.

Usually I'd go hunting
with my Uncle when he asks,
but today I just don't feel like it.
I don't even want to go see
my friends.

I'm hurting
inside and I'm kind of
embarrassed to talk
about it.

I tried to ignore it, but it won't go away.

So, I'm going
to go and talk to some people
that I think can help me.

I'm afraid if I don't do something it will get worse.

Trusted family and friends, community leaders,
and Elders are culturally competent and culturally
safe resources available to anyone.

Your local Health Centre also has
resources, programs, and can link you to
health professionals who can help.

I talked to a really nice worker at the Health Centre about how I was feeling, and she told me it happens to lots of people.

She said...

...you might be having a mental health problem.

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health.

How we think, act and feel in our minds shows the state of our mental health, just like how we move and feel in our bodies shows the state of our physical health.

Our minds can get hurt just like our bodies, especially when tough things happen in life like losing a job or losing a loved one.

Painful experiences can increase your chances of having a mental health problem, just like working in a hazardous job can increase your chances of getting a physical injury.

Because we can't see a mental health problem in the way we can see a sprained ankle, it makes it hard to talk about and sometimes hard to understand.

Many people feel ashamed when they are hurting inside, but mental health problems affect so many of us either directly or indirectly.

Talking to the health worker about how our minds and bodies are alike got me thinking about something an Elder told me, so I went to find one.

Signs & symptoms of a mental health problem

- Unexpected changes in lifestyle
- Changes in appetite, sleep patterns, or personality
- Loss of interest in things usually enjoyed like friends, hobbies, spiritual or cultural activities, sports
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Unpleasant feelings in the body, such as nausea or pains
- Depressed, withdrawn, or irritable mood

If someone you know shows any of these signs or symptoms, talk to them and listen without judgment.

Did you know?

Some people are born with a higher risk of experiencing mental health problems, just like some people are born with allergies or hearing problems.

Our mental health is part of our whole health.

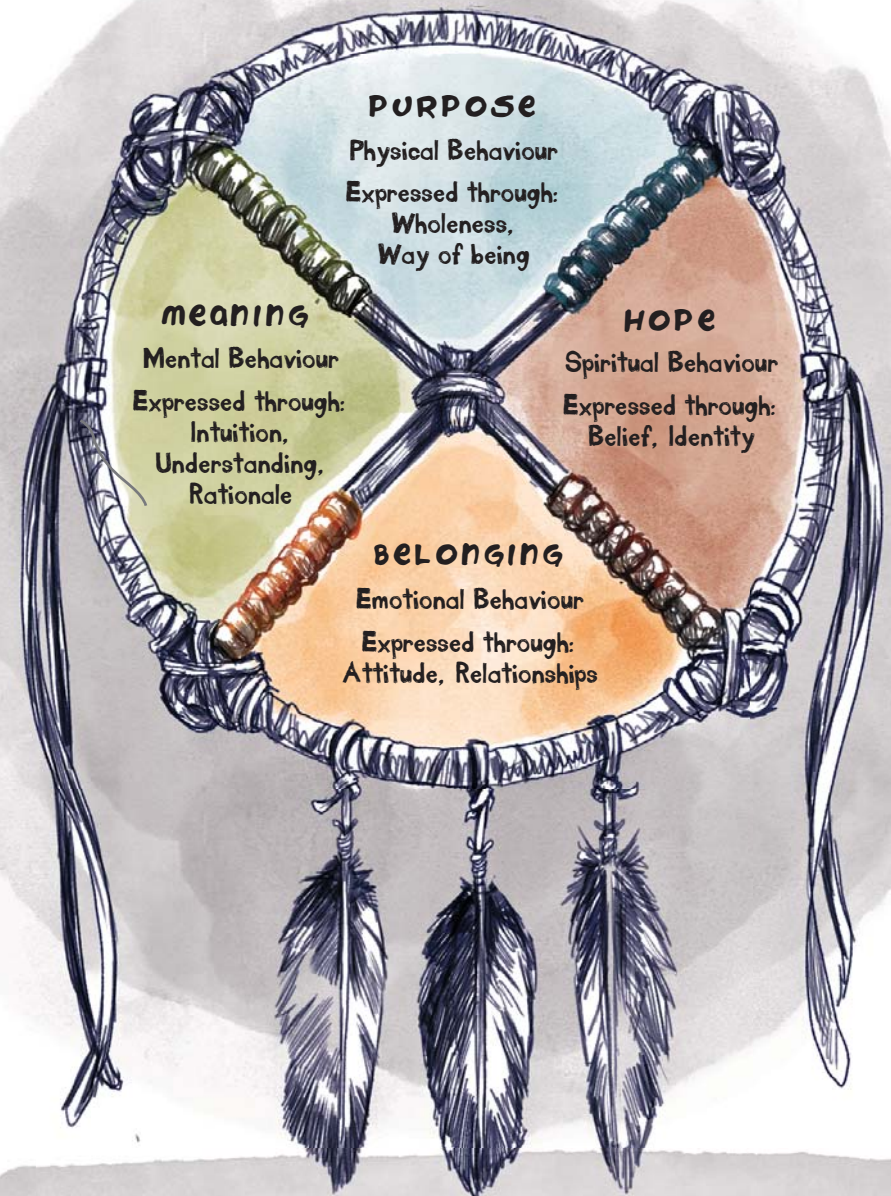
As First Nations, we believe that the whole individual must be healthy in order to be well.

When a part of us is hurting our body, mind, emotion or spirit we become unbalanced and feel unwell.

There are times in life when you will need to ask for help to return to balance.

I'm very proud that you had the courage to talk about this.

It's not an easy thing to do but it is so important.



The four directions—the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual—are all necessary to mental wellness for the individual, families, and communities. Although the concept is described in many different forms and ways across communities, it is commonly believed that wellness must be understood from a “whole person” perspective. Wellness is a balance of one’s spirit, heart/emotions, mind, and physical being. The balance of these things gives people purpose, hope, belonging, and meaning.

**This holistic wellness model is based on the medicine wheel.
Your trusted Elder may teach a different model.**

In our family,
we didn't always talk about our
feelings or the things that
hurt us inside.

Then, we saw how
keeping pain inside can hurt
someone so much that they hurt
other people or themselves.

We learned
to talk about the past
and our feelings, how to ask
for help and how to help
each other.



First Nations face hardships from the past and present that affect all parts of whole health. If you or your family are affected by these or other negative impacts, contact an Elder, a trusted community leader, your doctor, or your community Health Centre.

These supports can be found in your own community and can link you to help.

Jamie learned how
residential schools
and colonization have
impacted all aspects of
whole health among
First Nations.

Here are some examples:

PHYSICAL

First Nations experience higher rates of chronic and contagious illness than non-First Nations in Canada, and research suggests a connection between mental wellness and physical illness.

MENTAL

Rates of suicidal thoughts among First Nation youth are higher when one or more parent and/or grandparent attended Indian Residential School.

SPIRITUAL

Many individuals, families, and communities face challenges to their mental wellness stemming from historical and social issues such as oppression, colonization, and the ongoing legacy of the Indian Residential Schools.

EMOTIONAL

15% of Aboriginal women reported having experienced spousal violence compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women surveyed. First Nations continue to be exposed to violence and racism.

Communities and families can work together to emphasize prevention and promote culture to help support individuals.

I'm glad I talked to some of the people I trust about how I was feeling.

I learned some ways I can take care of my whole health and help my friends and family take care of theirs too!

To help myself stay balanced, I will:

MENTAL

- Show love, kindness and respect for others
- Recognize how to avoid being affected by the unhealthy behaviours and actions of others
- Recognize and acknowledge the positive things about others
- Teach people who see me as a role model through positive action and making choices that are right for me

EMOTIONAL

- Acknowledge how I feel emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically
- Talk about how I feel clearly and openly
- Always seek new knowledge
- Try to make myself a better person every day
- Reach out to people in my community


PHYSICAL

- Exercise every day
- Eat healthy, traditional foods, and drink lots of water
- Take my medications correctly

SPIRITUAL

- Nurture my spirit: I will pray, reflect, seek traditional culture and language and engage with Elders if it is right for me, and for my spirit
- Express my gender and sexuality in healthy ways
- Stay connected to people in my community





We can help each other achieve balance and maintain whole health



Through a unique native way of being and doing and taking care of one's physical body as the "home" of one's spirit.



Through a connection to beliefs, values, and identity.

Through relationships, having an attitude of living life fully, and having connections to family and community.

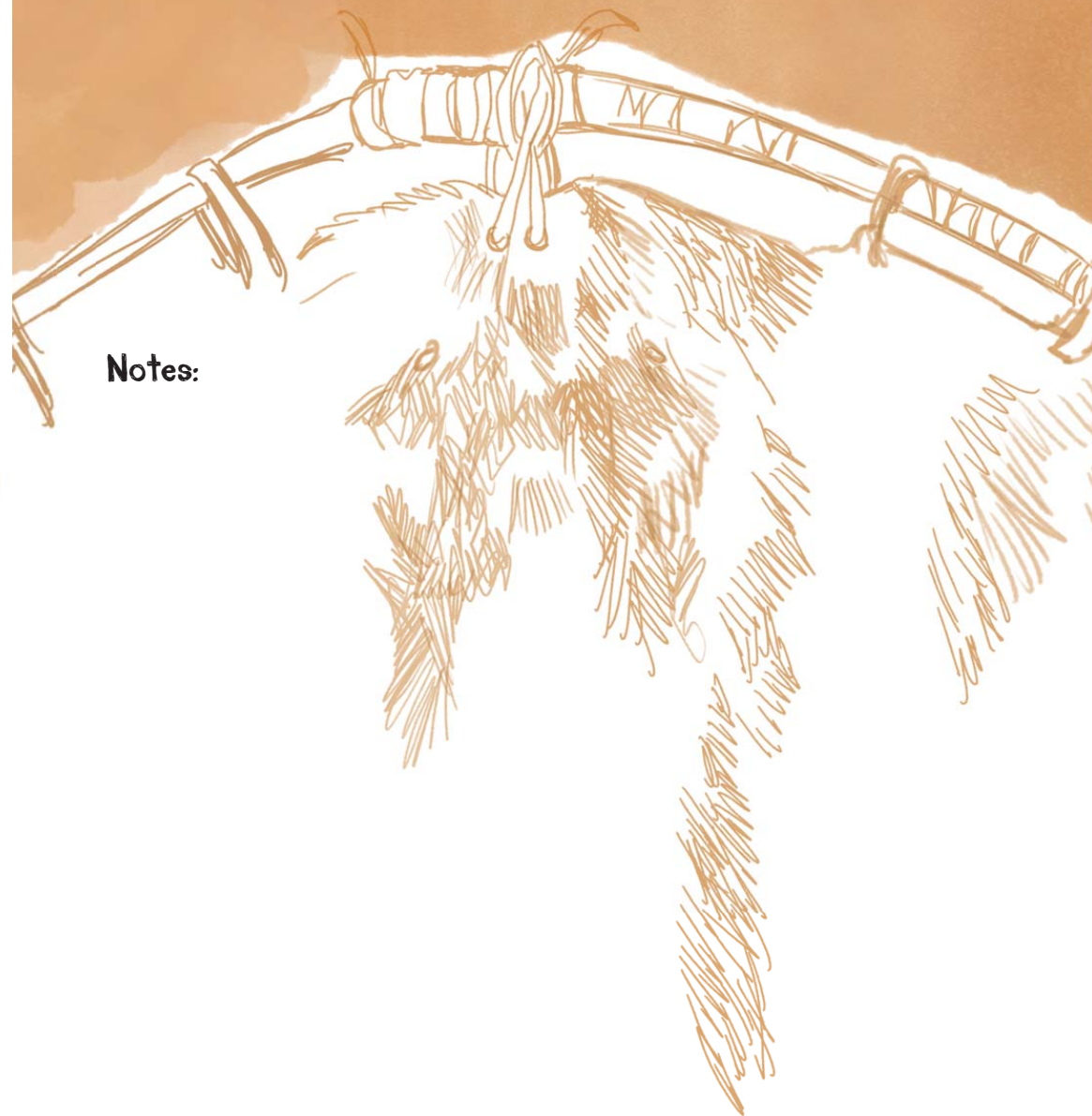


Through an appreciation for both rational thoughts and feelings, and the understanding that is made when thoughts and feelings are in balance.



By understanding and living whole health, we can appreciate as individuals, families, and communities how important mental wellness is and support those experiencing mental health problems.

If you feel you need help achieving or maintaining your balance, talk to someone about it. Visit your community Health Centre or Nursing Station, or speak with a trusted Elder, family member or friend.



Notes:



Notes:

Sources and Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association

<http://www.cmha.ca/>

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(2008). Alberta Mental Health Board, 2nd Edition.

Statistics Canada. Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian Provinces, 2009.

Juristat, Catalogue No. 85-002, 2011.

The First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line provides culturally competent, telephone crisis intervention counselling support. You can access counselling in English, French and, upon request, in Cree, Ojibway, or Inuktitut, 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling **1-855-242-3310**.

The National Indian Residential School (IRS) Crisis Line provides support to former students, their families, and anyone impacted by IRS. You can access emotional and crisis referral services 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling **1-866-925-4419**.

Community Contacts

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
1-855-242-3310