

Newsletter

East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center

302 South Birch, Urbana Illinois 61801

Telephone (217) 344 - 8455

Volume 24 No. 10

May, 2007

Mental Health Sharing Information with the Goal of Prevention

WHY DO WE TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

Can mental illness be prevented? I honestly do not know, but mental health is a concern for at least two reasons:

As refugees, asylees, and even immigrants, we are more likely to be in the high-risk group for having mental health concerns because of the many shocking life experiences we have undergone. War, evacuation, the sudden and drastic changes in life style, and the many adjustments that need to be made in a new life situation. For both adults and children, these types of experiences may cause severe stress and in the long run they can use up our emotional and physical resources. Generally we are not at risk to develop a specific disorder [illness], but we are more likely to have one of a wide range of conditions including depression, anger management problems, anxiety, alcohol or drug abuse, and even physical illness....



Life in the United States is very different from life in most of our home countries. The fast moving pace, the demand for following the clock, children who seem to get disobedient, are all causes for more stress and tension. For these reasons we feel that the sharing of information on mental health is important. The more we know the better chance we have in recognizing a potential problem and maybe prevent it from happening.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH?

Good mental health involves feeling comfortable about oneself, having satisfying relationships with others, and dealing with life's demands in a way that is appropriate to one's age and situation. Good mental health is related to good physical health. It means being free from major nervous system disorders. It involves having the ability to get along with other people, having the skills for handling crises or major problems, and having a sense of personal control.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT MENTAL/EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES?

A person with mental health problems is often unable (but this is not always the case) to function as expected of him/herself or by concerned and caring others. The problems could also last for a long time.

When we use the term disability, we wish to express something different from the common responses to stress or the problems of daily life--different from the occasional feeling of unhappiness. The term "mental/emotional disability" includes a wide range of mental emotional problems that are serious. Serious enough that they interfere with the person's life and ability to function at work, school, and in relationships with others. A person with these problems is NOT able to "carry on" in his/her daily life.

THE QUESTION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

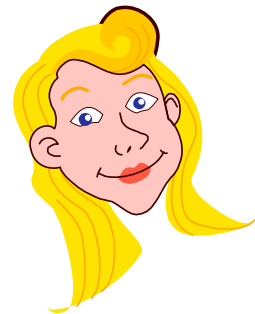
As mental/emotional problems are developing, there is rarely a one-to-one relationship between a specific cause and a specific disorder. There is always a complicated relationship among a number of factors. For example, we know that stressful life events often come before the beginning of severe problems. From scientific studies, we know that a great sadness and sense of loss (i.e., when a loved one dies) may cause extended serious depression in some people. Also, these studies show that emotional problems often lead to the use of alcohol and drugs as an "escape".

Emotional pain can also be the cause of physical and emotional problems of many kinds. It is hoped that the more we learn and know about the causes and effects of mental health problems, the better prepared we are to deal with them and maybe prevent them happening.

Characteristics of People with Good Mental Health

1. They feel comfortable with themselves:

- They are not overcome by their own emotions (i.e., their fears, anger, love, jealousy, guilty, or worries).
- They accept life's disappointments as a normal part of life.
- They have a tolerant, relaxed attitude toward themselves, as well as others. They can laugh at themselves.
- They do not overrate or underrate their abilities.
- They can accept the imperfect things about themselves.
- They have self-respect.
- They get satisfaction from the simple everyday pleasures.



2. They feel right about other people:

- They are able to give love and to consider the interests of others.
- They have satisfying and lasting relationships with family and friends.
- They expect to like and trust others, and assume that others will like and trust them, too.
- They respect differences in people.
- They can feel part of a group.

- They feel a sense of responsibility to their neighbors and other people.
- 3. They are able to meet the demands of life:
 - They deal with their problems as the problems arise.
 - They accept their responsibilities.
 - They adjust to the environment as needed.
 - They plan ahead without fearing the future.
 - They welcome new experiences and new ideas.
 - They make use of their natural abilities.
 - They set goals for themselves that are possible to achieve.
 - They are able to think for themselves and make their own decisions.
 - They put their best efforts into what they do and get satisfaction out of doing it. (Source: The report of the National Mental Health Association Commission; Prevention of Mental-Emotional Disabilities)

Parenting Tips

Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten: Enjoy the sounds of language. Do you remember rhymes [different words that have similar sounds] as a child? They often could get you laughing. Well now is the time to share that pleasure with your child.



Read rhymes to your child. Invite your son/daughter to say his/her favorite rhymes with you. Soon they will be able to do them alone. Read simple poems with your child and encourage him/her to complete the poem with the correct rhyming word.

Play with rhyming sounds. Use an object found around the house and encourage you child to say a word that rhymes with the object. For example: hat/cat or dock/clock. Accept nonsense (i.e., meaningless made up) words that rhyme as well. You are just having fun making up rhymes.

Help your child match letters to objects and/or pictures. Pick an object or picture (For example a banana) and have your child name the object to hear the beginning sound of the word. Ask your son or daughter to name the alphabet letter that matches the beginning sound. Write that letter down and then have your child find another object or picture of the object that has that beginning letter. Make it fun.

Good Books for four/five year olds:

<p>Barnyard Banter Green Eggs and Ham Jamberry My Friend the Doctor My Very First Mother Goose Show Me Your Smile! A visit to the Dentist Silly Sally There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar)</p>	<p>by</p>	<p>Denise Fleming Dr. Seuss Bruce Degen Joanna Cole Iona Opie Christine Ricci Audrey Wood Simms Taback (Source: U-Way</p>
--	-----------	--

For Your Information

United Way Campaign Time: It is that time of year again United Way Campaign time. For newcomers to the United States, United Way is an organization that runs a yearly campaign, often at your place of work, to collect charitable donations. United Way then allocates (i.e., gives) those donations to various charitable programs. Some of you, or your family, may have received help from a United Way organization .

A person can make a general donation to United Way, which is allocated among charities or you can designate your donation (i.e., pick a specific charity) by writing in the charity's name on the donation form. Designated donations just go to the agency you selected and aren't shared with other agencies.

ECIRMAC is one of those charities that you may designate on the United Way pledge card. In fact, last year almost three percent of our budget (a little over \$4,000) came from donations to United Way that were designated for this agency alone. If though you aren't comfortable picking a specific charity remember that United Way will give any undesignated (i.e., you didn't pick a specific agency) pledges to various charitable organizations within the county. As an organization that is receives program funding from United Way these undesignated as well as designated funds were and are very helpful and important to this agency. Thank you for thinking of us.



Local News

Condolences: Our deepest sympathy to the family of *Marina Yefimova*. Mrs. Yefimova, the wife of Igor Shmukler and mother of Semen Shmukler, died May 11, 2007 after a long illness.

Our deepest sympathy to the family of *Lun-Shin Wei*. Dr. Wei, the husband of Mrs. Tam Wei, died May 15, 2007 after a short illness.

New Arrivals: Welcome *Esther Taryougar*, *Genever Judule*, and *Jowell Logan*. Mrs. Taryougar and her daughters arrived April 11, 2007 from Ghana. Mrs. Taryougar is the mother of Toweh and Bernice Kpor.

Welcome *Joseph Sirleaf*. Joseph, a cousin of Edith Sayon, arrived March 8, 2007, from Ghana.

Welcome *Mr. Toan Phung*, *Mrs Huong Bui* and their children *Dinh* (age 19), *Binh* (age 17), and *Vi Phung* (age 14). The family are relatives of Mr. Viet Bui and Sue Ann Nguyen and they relocated from California.

Welcome *Mr. Tung Minh Pham* and *Mrs. Minh Thi Nguyen*. Mr. Tung and Mrs Minh arrived May 7, 2007 from Vietnam and they join their daughter, Thanh Ha Pham, son-in-law, Liem Thanh To, and grandson, Richard (Duy) To.