Mental Wellbeing Guide:
Social Health

Explore the importance of connecting with others for our mental and emotional well-being.

UNB | Student Affairs & Services

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SOCIAL HEALTH

What is social health?

Social health refers to our interactions with others and our meaningful relationships. Our social connections influence our mental and physical well-being. Sociologists have discovered that both the quality and number of our social relationships significantly affect our health over time.

What makes social health important?

Being valued and appreciated for who you are is a basic human need. And not just for who you are on the outside, but also acceptance of your feelings and thoughts. When this need isn't met, we can experience significant problems with our mood, thoughts and behavior.

This encompasses your experiences in a social group, but also how you feel in other environments you inhabit: where you live, study, work and learn. When we do feel valued and accepted by others, the other challenges in our life are easier.

But, it can sometimes be hard to feel valued. Our own worries about what others might think of us, not knowing where to go or how to make friends, or experiences of discrimination can all keep us isolated and hurting.

TIPS

- **Participate**: One of the best ways to make connections is to join social, religious, or hobby-based groups that interest you. This helps you find people who are into the same things as you and can help you feel comfortable in a setting familiar to you.

- **Deal with doubts**: To manage social anxiety or fears of judgment, one effective strategy is to practice mindfulness and cognitive restructuring. Mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing and focusing on the present moment, can help calm your mind and reduce the intensity of anxiety during social interactions. Cognitive restructuring involves identifying and challenging negative thoughts about yourself and social situations. For example, if you often think people are judging you harshly, you might work on questioning this belief and replacing it with more realistic and balanced thoughts. You can learn more about this in the Mental Health section of this guide.

- **Quality over quantity in relationships**: Focusing on developing a few deep and meaningful relationships rather than maintaining numerous superficial connections can be more beneficial for creating a strong sense of belonging.

Summary

What is Social Health?
- Ability to interact with others and build meaningful relationships
- Adapting well to social settings
- Social connections influence mental and physical well-being, and lifespan
- Quality and quantity of social relationships significantly affect health

What Makes Social Health Important?
- Being valued and accepted for who you are is a basic human need
- Lack of acceptance can cause mood, thought, and behavior problems
- Social health affects experiences in various environments (home, work, school)
- Feeling valued helps tackle life's challenges
- Worries, discrimination, and difficulties in forming connections can hinder social health

Tips
- Participate: Join social or hobby-based groups to make connections
- Deal with doubts: Practice mindfulness and cognitive restructuring to manage social anxiety and fears of judgment
- Quality over quantity: Focus on developing a few deep, meaningful relationships over numerous superficial ones

Additional resources

UNB Wellness Hub