

# Your mental health

Directorate:  
Counselling  
and Career  
Development  
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**Define tomorrow.**

**UNISA**



university  
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# Defining Mental Health

- Mental health is a state of well-being that allows someone to be productive, have fulfilling relationships, cope with difficult circumstances, and adapt to change.(Kellogg ,2008).
- It's about how **YOU** feel about yourself, how happy you are, how much **YOU** believe you can overcome challenges in your life and whether **YOU** feel able to interact with other people.
- **Mental Health is physical too:** You may get headaches, dizziness, heart palpitations, fatigue, upset stomach, sweating, shaking, restless legs, etc.
- You may never have been diagnosed with mental illness, but this won't mean that you are mentally healthy.
- Your daily thoughts (positive and negative) contribute to your mental health status.
- It's okay to feel a lot of different things about something at the end of the day. You are only human,- feeling different is normal too.

**Keep your thoughts positive because  
your thoughts become  
YOUR WORDS.**

**Keep your words positive because  
your words become  
YOUR BEHAVIOUR**

**Keep your behaviour positive because  
your behaviour becomes  
YOUR HABITS**

**Keep your habits positive because  
your habits become  
YOUR VALUES**

**Keep your values positive because  
your values become  
YOUR DESTINY**

**~ Mahatma Gandhi**

# Causes of mental health challenges

The following factors may contribute to mental health challenges:

- **Biological factors:** Microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi and microscopic parasites), cell cultures, human endoparasites and components from microorganisms that can cause damage to health in humans.
  - Examples; genetic influences, brain chemistry, hormone levels, nutrition and gender.
- **Psychological factors:** Elements of your personality that limit or enhance the ways that you think.
  - Examples; social support, loneliness, social disruption, bereavement, work environment, social status, and social integration.
- **Environmental factors:** Factors in your environment and how you relate to your environment.
  - Examples; occupational hazards, climate change, exposure to hazardous substances in air, water, soil, and food.

# Understanding Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that involves a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. It is different from the mood fluctuations that people regularly experience as a part of life.

## **Symptoms of depression:**

- a depressed mood
- reduced interest or pleasure in activities, once enjoyed
- Poor concentration and attention on a task, impaired memory.
- Reduced confidence and self-esteem
- Feelings of guilt and unworthiness.
- Bleak and pessimistic views of the future
- Ideas or acts of self-destruction or suicide
- Changes in appetite
- Unintentional weight loss or gain
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Agitation, restlessness, and pacing up and down
- Slowed movement and speech

# Understanding Anxiety

**Anxiety** is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Types of anxiety include agoraphobia, general anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and specific phobias.

## **Symptoms include:**

- feeling nervous, restless or tense.
- Hypervigilance, irritability, or restlessness.
- Lack of concentration, racing thoughts, or unwanted thoughts.
- Fatigue or sweating.
- Excessive worry, or having difficulty controlling worry.
- Sweating.
- Fear of impending doom.
- Insomnia, nausea.
- Palpitations, or trembling

# Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- **PTSD** is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a **traumatic event** such as a **natural disaster**, a **serious accident**, a **terrorist act**, **war/combat**, **rape** or other personal assault.
- Any traumatic event can cause PTSD.
- Anyone who has experienced trauma may suffer from PTSD.
- PTSD usually appears **three months** after the trauma, but sometimes it may come on months or **even years later**.

## Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

- **Intrusive symptoms:** Memories of the traumatic event.
- **Flashbacks:** Feeling as if the trauma is happening all over again, nightmares.
- **Avoidance symptoms:** Avoiding a situation that may remind you of the traumatic event.
- **Hyper-arousal symptoms:** Insomnia, difficulty sleeping, trouble concentrating.
- **Guilt:** Trauma includes loss and many people can't cope with the guilt that they caused the incident or that they should have somehow stopped the trauma from happening.

# Understanding Schizophrenia

**Schizophrenia** is a chronic, severe mental disorder that affects the way a person thinks, acts, expresses emotions, perceives reality, and relates to others.

Though schizophrenia isn't as common as other major mental illnesses, it can be the most chronic and disabling.

- People with schizophrenia often have problems doing well in society, at work, at school, and in relationships.
- They might feel frightened and withdrawn and could appear to have lost touch with reality.
- This lifelong disease can't be cured but can be controlled with proper treatment.

## **Symptoms of schizophrenia**

- Social isolation, disorganized behavior, aggression, agitation, compulsive behavior.
- Thought disorder, delusion, amnesia, slowness in activity, or false belief of superiority.
- Hallucination, paranoid, hearing voices, depression, fear, persecutory delusion.
- Circumstantial speech, incoherent speech, speech disorder.
- Fatigue, impaired motor coordination, lack of emotional response, or memory loss.

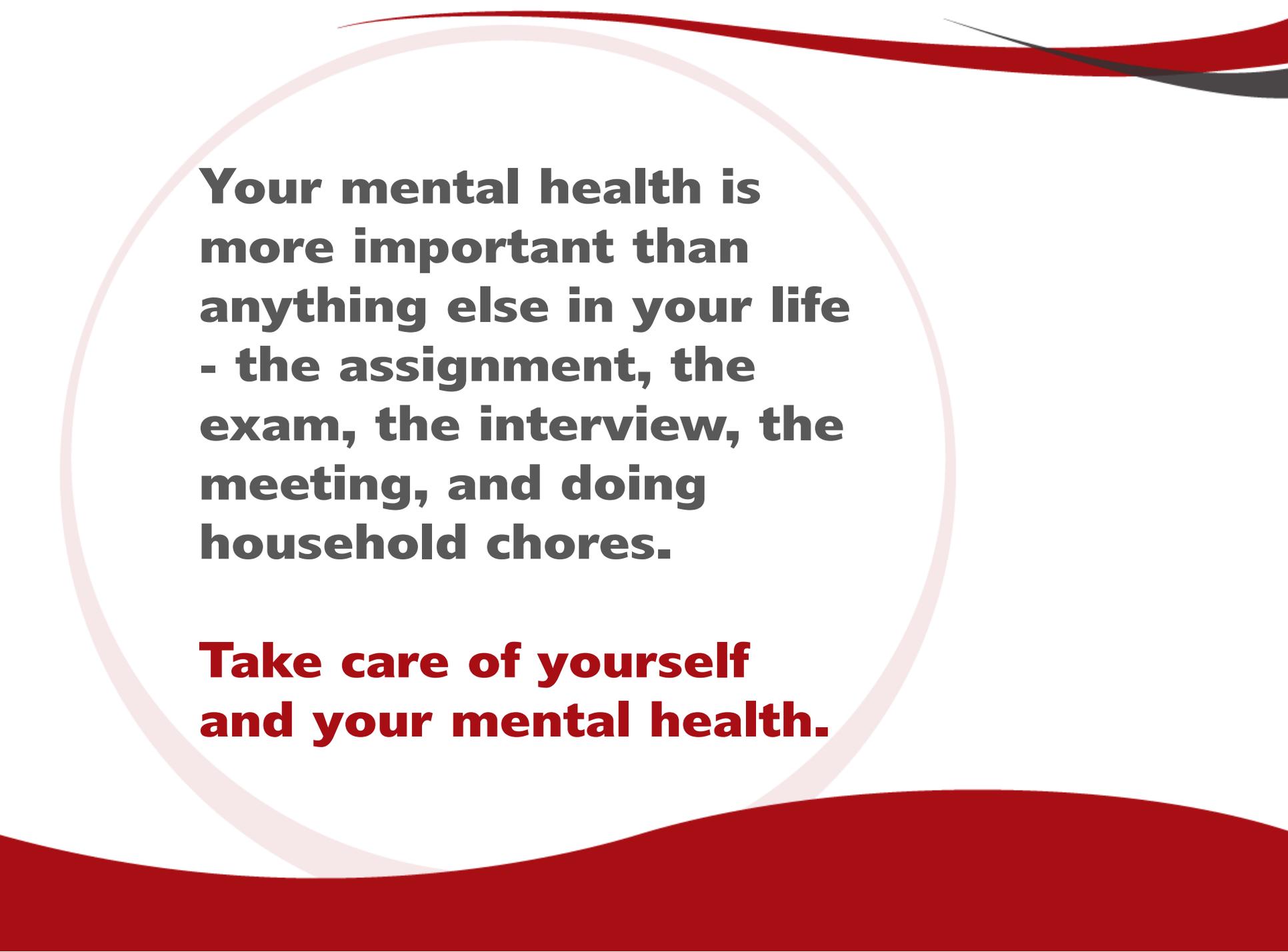
# Common concerns during lockdown (COVID-19)

- Fear that a loved one may get infected by the Corona virus and pass away.
- Fear of being retrenched or unemployed as many companies have shut down.
- Fear of not being able to access educational resources online as a rural area resident.
- Loneliness, as many are used to social life e.g. Clubbing, going to church, outings.



# Counselling services

- Unisa: [counselling@unisa.ac.za](mailto:counselling@unisa.ac.za)
- Gender-based violence: **0800 428 428** or dial: **\*120\*7867#** (free for mobile)
- South African Police Service: **08600 10111**
- National Crisis Line: **0861 322 322**
- Child Line: **0800 055 555**
- Person with Disabilities: **SMS 'help' to 31531**
- AIDS Helpline: **0800 012 322**
- Suicide Helpline: **0800 567 567 / 0800 456 789**
- Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit: **0800 150 150**
- National Human Trafficking Helpline: **0800 222 777**
- SASSA Call Center: **0800 60 10 11**



**Your mental health is more important than anything else in your life - the assignment, the exam, the interview, the meeting, and doing household chores.**

**Take care of yourself and your mental health.**

# Further resources

- Unisa Covid-19 resources and messages: [https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Coronavirus-\(COVID%E2%80%9319\)-update](https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Coronavirus-(COVID%E2%80%9319)-update)
- Emergency Hotline: 0800 029 999
- WhatsApp Support Line: 0600 123 456
- COVID-19 Corona Virus South African Resource Portal: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>
- The *SA Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)* offers online resources related to your mental health and COVID-19. Learn more about managing stress and anxiety as well as living with a mental illness on their website at <http://www.sadag.org/>.
- The Psychological Society of South Africa General Public Information Resource contains useful links related to COVID-19 and working from home: <http://psytalk.psyssa.com/general-public/>.
- Find information about reporting and receiving assistance related to gender-based violence here: <http://gbv.org.za/>.

# Contact us

We are available by e-mail:

- Send an e-mail to [counselling@unisa.ac.za](mailto:counselling@unisa.ac.za) should you need to discuss any needs you may have in terms of further support.
- Contact Counselling and Career Development at a [regional centre closest to you](#).

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