

Mental illness vs mental wellness

Words: Tanya Curtis

MENTAL ILLNESS IS TYPICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE WHO HAVE A DIAGNOSED CLINICAL DISORDER; THOSE WHO HAVE A LABEL AND WHO HAVE BECOME ANOTHER STATISTIC. BUT IS THERE BETTER TERMINOLOGY? AND HENCE, BETTER UNDERSTANDING?

"Mental illness" is without doubt a much-needed terminology in our current society. It is with the symptoms and diagnosis of mental illness that people may begin to seek, accept and implement much needed healing and support. But is mental illness limited solely to those with a formal diagnosis? Is this terminology supporting the growth of all, or does the term 'mental illness' limit and thus hinder potential healing and development for all?

What if we changed the word "illness" to "wellness"? Rather than wait for mental illness, we may ask 'Does that person live mental wellness?'. What if we used a different indicator (ie. mental wellness) to assess when to seek and/or offer healing and support? What if mental wellness became our new marker of 'Will healing and support be beneficial here?'.
 THE QUESTIONS WE COULD ASK INCLUDE:

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1. What is our standard as a human race as to what qualifies 'mental wellness'?
2. Who truly has an understanding and acceptance of what mental wellness really is?
3. Who is living true mental wellness?

Mental wellness, in truth, is far more than the absence of a mental illness diagnosis.

If one can say they are reasonably consistent in producing thoughts of love and joy throughout their every day, in living in a way that embraces equality for all others, in offering a sound mind and body, in living with a harmless approach to day-to-day living towards self and others, and in appreciating oneself and others then one could truly say they are in a state of mental wellness. However the question remains as to what percentage of our human race are living with true mental wellness? It's worth pondering.

If we were to adopt this as our foundational understanding and approach to the practice and study of mental health, we would further expand the true advancement of humanity as whole. We would thus be in consideration of the 'more' that is taking place in the lives of many and in life itself.



The questions remain - are we ready to actually see how many people are truly living mental wellness? Or more importantly, how many people are NOT living their true state of mental wellness? If we are to advance as a human race, our approach to mental illness and mental health needs to expand to embrace mental wellness.

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