

MHP-Handbook - Handbooks for promoting mental health

In the MHP-Handbook project (2010-2013), partners from Ireland, Germany, Finland, Estonia, Austria, Poland and Greece produced 3 handbooks for promoting mental health and wellbeing. These handbooks relate to 3 settings:

- Schools
- Workplaces
- Older People's Residences

Who can use the handbooks?

They are aimed at e.g. teachers and educators; managers and health and safety staff; nurses and carers. All materials are in the handbooks and more tools are available through the European Network for Mental Health Promotion Network website¹.

What is Mental Health Promotion?

Mental health promotion:

- Focuses on enhancing wellbeing rather than on illness
- Addresses the population as a whole, in the context of everyday life
- Acts on the determinants of health rather than on outcomes
- Acts on protective factors, rather than only risk factors
- Uses strategies such as communication, education, policy development, organisational change, community development and local activities
- Acknowledges and reinforces the competences of the population
- Involves the health and social fields as well as medical services

Mental health promotion *"aims to promote positive mental health by increasing psychological wellbeing, competence and resilience, and by creating supporting living conditions and environments"*²

Why should you use the handbooks?

The issue of mental health is increasingly important in society. Psychological problems and mental illness are more prevalent across much of Europe and there is an emerging realisation that we must promote good mental health and wellbeing, as well as improve mental health services.

Good mental health and wellbeing is a function of the settings and environments that we interact with, the way in which we behave and the supports that are available to us. These settings include the schools that we attend, the workplaces we work in and the residences that we live in.

Many people have difficulty understanding how an environment can promote mental wellbeing. These Mental Health Promotion Handbooks address that gap in knowledge. They provide users in the schools, workplace and older people's settings with a set of validated tools to promote mental health, as well as providing methods to implement actions to promote mental wellbeing.

¹ www.mentalhealthpromotion.net

² WHO (2004) Prevention of mental disorders. WHO, Geneva.
www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/prevention_of_mental_disorders_sr.pdf

Why older people's setting?

Good mental health and wellbeing in later life benefits not only older people themselves but all of us. Promoting good mental health in older people is ensuring them to lead active, enjoyable and healthy lives and helping to value the contributions that older people have to society. A healthy, high quality life also minimises the financial costs of mental illness in the older population. Depression, anxiety and suicide are all serious problems which are particularly prevalent among older people. Ageing itself does not cause mental health problems, but particular issues associated with growing older can be uniquely challenging. This handbook aims at dealing with this challenge and promoting quality of life and wellbeing of older people and their carers in residential care and home care settings.

Mental health promotion in the older people's residential setting influences the workplace of professionals in a positive way and helps carers to fulfil their challenging work. This handbook provides professionals and carers in the older people's residential setting with a practical and effective set of tools for taking action to improve the wellbeing of older people. It contains numerous beneficial techniques that help prevent problems from arising in the first instance and for promoting mental health. This unique resource allows professionals and carers to identify and address the expression of mental health problems. The proposed measures are easy to integrate in the routines of daily work. The measures follow the principles of health promotion, such as empowerment, participation and promoting positive health.

There are three key areas related to the promotion of mental health of older people in the handbook:

- **Key area 1:** Lifestyle choice, physical activity, and exercise
- **Key area 2:** Relationships, participation, and meaningful activities
- **Key area 3:** Early detection of mental health problems, support for caregivers and housing conditions

These key areas are addressed in the following subtopics:

1. Healthy lifestyles and healthy behaviour
2. Physical health and exercise
3. Socialising and meaningful activities
4. Engagement in society
5. Learning and studying
6. Art and creativity
7. Early detection and interventions
8. Supporting caregivers
9. Housing

Link to the following topics:

Topic 2: Physical Health and Exercise
Topic 3: Socialising and Meaningful Activities
Topic 4: Engagement in Society
Topic 5: Learning and Studying

4.5.1 Description

A worksheet based on the participative activities outlined in Figure 5 (in topic 4 "Engagement in Society"), has been drafted to help map the activities of older people.

Learning objectives:

- to analyse existing and missing participative activities
- to promote new ideas about participative activities

Example of an exercise

4.5 Exercise 5: Mapping Participative Activities

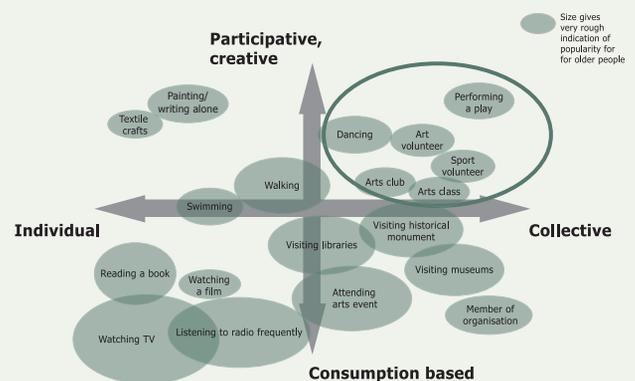


Figure 5: Example from topic 4 "Engagement in Society"

Source: Adapted from Jamie Cowling (2005) Mapping Culture and Civil Renewal

GUIDELINE: First, fill out the worksheet based on your knowledge. Second, compare your results with the solution sheet for the learning outcome and reflect about the output: *Are there any differences? Why? How can I integrate them into my daily work?*