

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 the schools?

Educational settings provide an excellent opportunity for delivering activities and initiatives which promote positive mental health. Pupils spend more than six hours per day in school, totalling more than 180 days per year. The World Health Organisation emphasises the importance of the school as a valuable location for socialisation and health promotion activities. Schools play an important role in:

- mental health promotion
- the prevention of mental health problems
- the support of distressed pupils.

The handbook for schools provides a practical and effective set of tools for young people in primary, secondary and tertiary level schools. The direct target groups for the handbook are teachers, head teachers, school psychologists.

The handbook aims to support changes in individual behaviour that will support and promote mental health. The users of the handbook will learn how to implement interventions that are designed to improve the wellbeing of students.

The three key areas in the handbook are:

- Basic in Mental Health Promotion
- Topics, Methods and Tools for Mental Health Promotion
- Exercises for Mental Health Promotion on School Setting

Each of these has a number of subtopics, e.g. area 2 covers:

- Introduction: Key Areas/Topics for MHP Interventions in the School
- Enhancing Resilience – Individual Skills
- Building Coping Skills (Stress, Change and Challenge) – Individual Skills
- Empowering Decision-Making, Problem Solving and Help-Seeking – Individual Skills
- Handling Emotions – Individual Skills
- Building Skills for Conflict Resolution – Individual Skills
- Handling Peer Pressure – Social Skills
- Healthy Lifestyle – Individual Skills
- Building Partnership with Parents – Social Skills
- Classroom Management – Social Skills
- Guidelines For Handling (cyber) Bullying and Harassment.

Managing an exercise

