



Developing Wellness It's Up to You!

The idea of wellness developed as part of a move away from the usual medical way of looking at health care where 'illness' is the main focus, to a more holistic way of looking at health that promotes wellbeing and 'prevention' rather than 'cure'. This approach sees each and every one of us as responsible for developing and promoting our own wellness by finding balance in our lives. This applies to both our physical and our mental health.

While many of us expect to be cured or to recover from physical illness, the idea of recovery in the area of mental health has only recently been recognised. While it is not commonly known, the fact that people who have experienced mental ill health can and do recover, is now well established.

Most of us put some time and effort into trying to maintain our physical health by eating healthy foods and exercising. However, we don't tend to put the same effort into maintaining our mental health and we are inclined to take it for granted until something goes wrong.

Our general approach to our mental wellness can be compared to a busy road that takes us through life's twists and turns. Sometimes the road is smooth and straight and, at other times, it is rough and full of hairpin bends. When life throws up challenges we do our best to deal with them but, over time, small cracks appear in our mental wellness just like on the surface of a busy road. If we notice the cracks, we may work to fill them in by looking after ourselves better and developing a good road maintenance plan that we use on an ongoing basis, or we may choose not to look at them, to avoid them, or to apply surface level filling and carry on regardless. If we don't put sufficient time and effort into maintaining our road properly at this stage, and sticking to our maintenance plan when more challenges come and the road gets busier, the constant traffic makes the cracks bigger and any surface level filling we have put in place gets worn away. As the cracks in our mental wellness, just like the road, get bigger, life's challenges become more difficult to tackle and overcome. We end up twisting and turning to avoid the cracks, or spending time on surface level filling, and life in general becomes more difficult as our resources are stretched trying to get on with things on a day-by-day basis as we navigate the cracks in our mental wellbeing. If life then throws up a series of challenges, or even one big challenge, bigger cracks and potholes can develop and this can leave us with nowhere to go as the damage done makes the road too difficult to navigate and we end up breaking down.



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The choice is ours. We can develop a good road maintenance plan – a wellness plan - and stick to it so that we can monitor our mental health and prevent the development of cracks and be able to deal with them efficiently and effectively when they do appear. Or we can carry on ignoring the cracks or applying surface level filling, allowing them to develop and ultimately prevent us from getting on with our journey through life.

Each of us is responsible for our own life journey and the choices we make along the way. It's up to us to look after our own mental wellbeing and to recruit the support we need to help us to do this. One of the most positive and beneficial choices you can make in your life is to take a pro-active approach to mental wellbeing and we hope that the Wellness Workshop and this Wellness Workbook will encourage and support you in doing this.



