

Unit I: Basic Mental Health Concepts and Terminology

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual can:

- Realise their own potential.
- Cope with the normal stresses of life.
- Work productively.
- Contribute to their community.

It is not just the absence of mental illness, but includes emotional, psychological and social well-being.

Key Terminology

Term	Meaning
Mental Health	A state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being
Mental Illness	Medical conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior
Well-being	A positive state that includes good mental, emotional and physical health
Distress	Temporary emotional discomfort or stress due to life challenges
Resilience	The ability to recover from stress or adversity
Psychosocial	A combination of psychological and social factors
Trauma	A response to deeply distressing or disturbing events
Stigma	Negative attitudes or discrimination toward people with mental illness

Mental Health in Different Cultures

Cultural beliefs influence how people understand mental health.

Some cultures may describe emotional suffering using physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, stomach aches).

In other cultures, mental health may be linked to spirituality or family honor.

It's important to respect these views and avoid judgment.

What Is Mental Illness?

Mental illness includes conditions like:

- Depression: persistent sadness, loss of interest.
- Anxiety Disorders: excessive fear or worry.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): lasting distress after a traumatic event.
- Psychosis: loss of contact with reality (e.g., hearing voices).

These conditions can be mild, moderate or severe; and recovery is possible with the right support.

You are here to support, listen and guide; but only mental health professionals can make diagnoses.

Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Mental Health	Mental Illness
Social/Emotional Well-being. Celebrated. Addressed.	Mental Well-being. Stigmatised. Kept secret.

- Everyone has mental health, just like physical health.
- Mental illness is not a weakness or a choice.
- The words associated with mental health struggles are thrown around and used out of context way too often.
- People can live full lives with mental illness if they receive support and understanding.

Why Is This Important for You as a Lay Advisor?

As someone supporting migrants or refugees, understanding basic mental health concepts helps you:

- Recognise signs of emotional distress.
 - Communicate without stigma.
 - Support the individuals and refer them to the professional support when needed.
- ➡ Don't try to solve problems; leave it to the professionals.