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Mental health for all

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La santé mentale pour tous

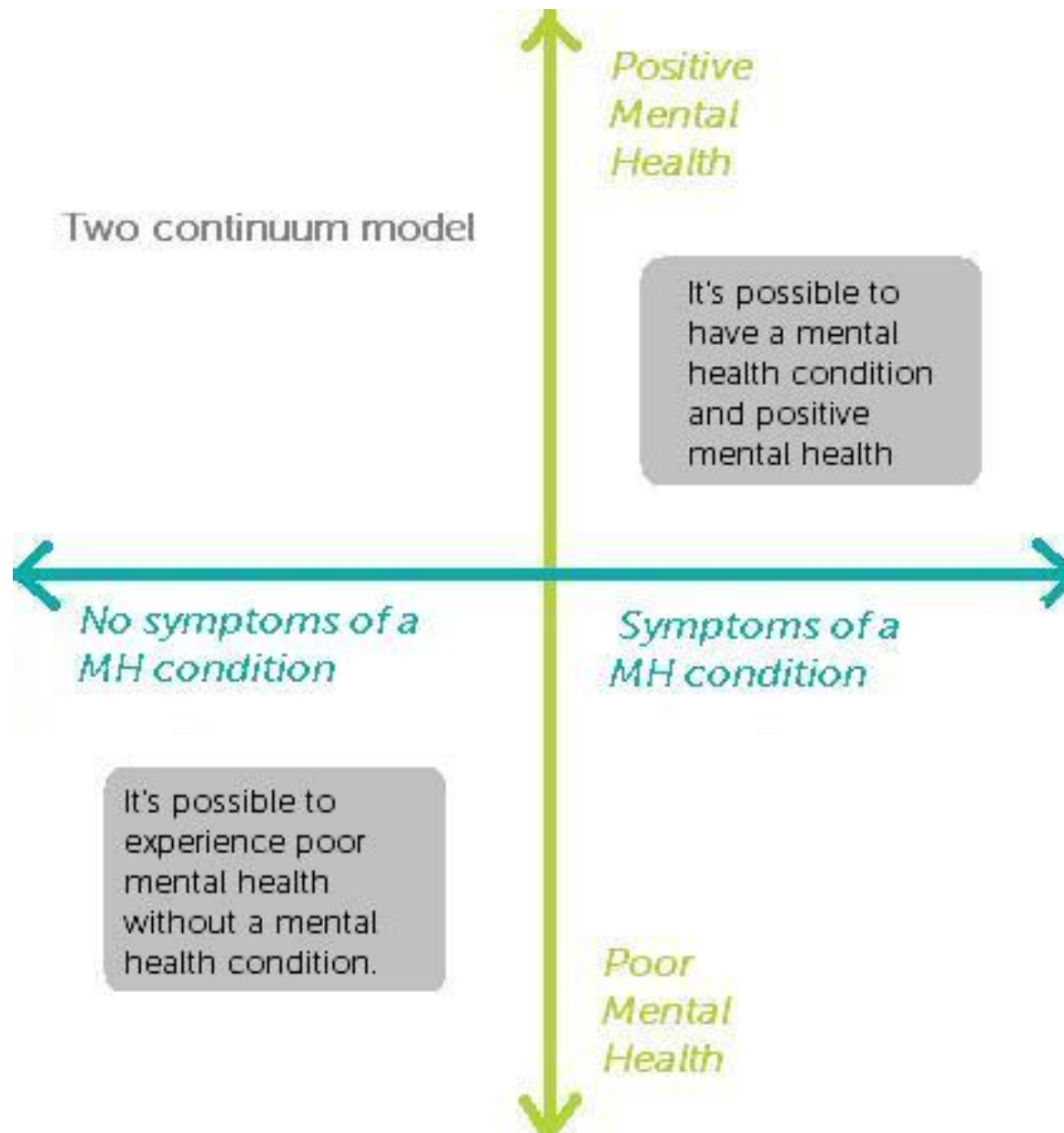
Advancing Equity in Mental Health within the South Asian Community

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
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Defining Mental Health

- More than absence of a mental health condition
- Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual...
 - Realizes his/her own abilities
 - Can cope with normal life stress
 - Can work productively
 - Can make a contribution to his/her community



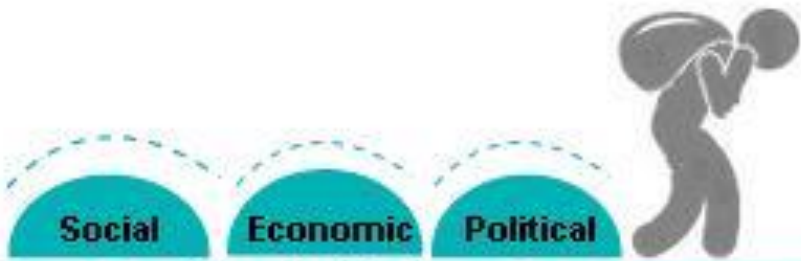
Social Determinants of Health

- Socio-economic conditions shape our lives

Three are especially significant for mental health:

1. Discrimination and violence
2. Social exclusion
3. Poverty or access to economic resources

Source: Helen Keheler and Rebecca Armstrong. (2006) [Evidence-based mental health promotion resource](#).
Melbourne: Victorian Government Department of Human Services.



Marginalization



Defining Equity

Inequity is...

- The uneven distribution of power/resources in society

Equity is...

- A way to understand and respond to marginalization
- An understanding that different populations need different actions to achieve similar outcomes

Intersectionality

- Different experiences of marginalization intersect

Question:

What different factors **intersect** to shape day to day life for...?

- An immigrant, seventy-year-old Punjabi woman with anxiety living in a run-down apartment in Scarborough



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Challenges for South Asian Older Adult Immigrants

- Lack of English/French language skills
- Transportation
- Child care responsibilities
- Lack of access to the Internet
- Social determinants
- Exclusion from the Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) Programs



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Equity & Mental Health: Relationships

1. Equity impacts on mental health
2. Mental health impacts on equity
3. Intersectionality matters



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1. Equity impacts on mental health

Due to the **social determinants of health**, populations that experience inequities face greater risk of **poor mental health** and some **mental health conditions**

Examples...

- LGBT individuals
- Women
- Individuals with low-income
- Immigrants/refugees

Lowest-income Canadians 3-4 times more likely to say MH is fair to **poor** (Statistics Canada, 2002)

2. Mental health impacts on equity

People with lived experience face discrimination,
stigma and social exclusion

- Extensive discrimination in...
 - housing
 - employment
 - mental health and social services
 - educational opportunities
 - the justice system

24% of
Canadians
surveyed are
afraid of people
with MH
conditions

(Salvation Army, 2010)

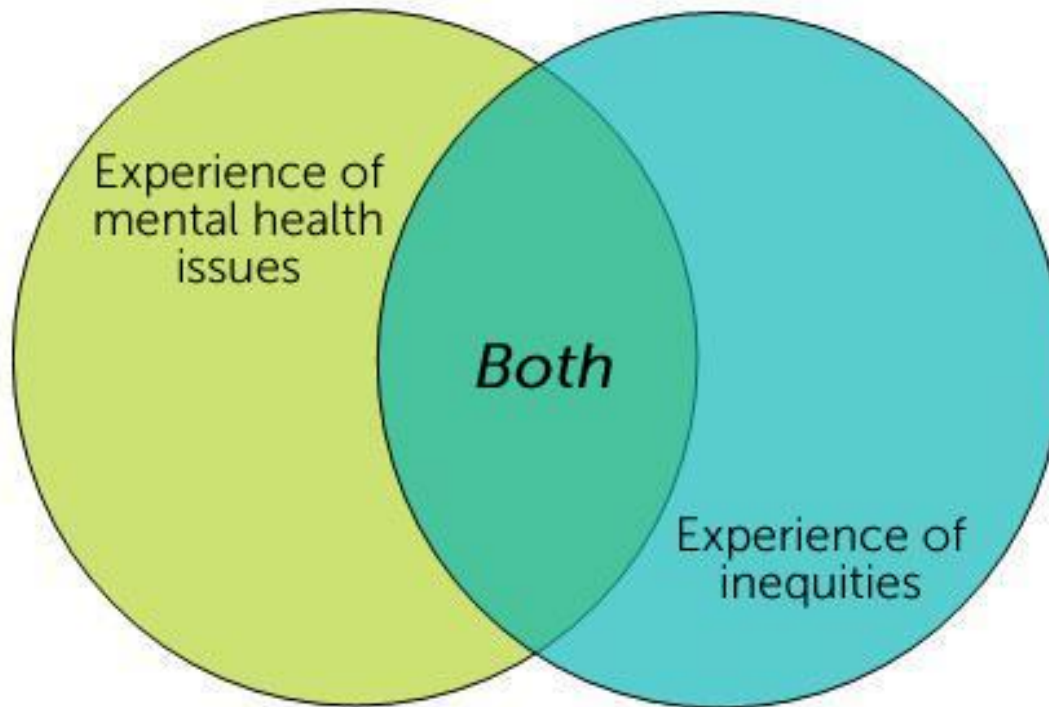
3. Intersectionality matters

People who experience intersecting mental health issues and marginalization face added inequities

- Immigrant, refugee and ethno-racial groups with MH conditions
- Some groups excluded from provincial health insurance
- Individuals who identify as bisexual, living with MH conditions

Who is impacted?

3 population clusters emerge:



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South Asians' Mental Health

In Canada:

- 1 in 5 will experience a MH issue in a given year
- 1 in 3 will experience a MH issue in their lifetime

South Asians:

- In Toronto, 28% live in poverty
- 50% arrived in Canada from 1990 to 2006
- 1/3 of Tamil Sri Lankans reported traumatic experiences
- Clear link between MH, migration and poverty

- However, only 1.5% of South Asians self-reported moderate to high mental health distress → stigma



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Mental Health and Lifestyle

- Depression, loneliness and isolation
- Increased work loads, multiple jobs, stress
- Unhealthy eating
 - Fast foods
 - Low-cost foods
 - Traditional cooking is often high in carbohydrates, oil, salt and sugar
- Not enough physical activity



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South Asians' Mental Health

- Only 1 in 10 Tamil Sri Lankan refugees with PTSD received treatment of any kind
- Chronic conditions affect MH (i.e. hypertension, CVD, diabetes)
- *Concerns of women experiencing depression*
 - Family and relationship issues
 - Culture clash
 - Socioeconomic factors
 - Discrimination



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South Asian Immigrants

Access to Services

- Some have access to primary care
- **Less likely to:**
 - receive treatment
 - consult with a specialist
 - take prescription meds for MH issues
 - abuse/depend on drugs or alcohol
 - smoke cigarettes
 - report abuse and discrimination



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Health Service Challenges

- Lack of a person-centred approach
- Lack of cultural competency and anti-oppression training for direct service providers
- Lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services and resources



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Action Strategies

1. Expand the evidence-base for equity issues in mental health
2. Foster meaningful participation of PWLE and marginalized populations
3. Focus on the person, not the diagnosis
 - Be flexible as needs vary
 - Communicate clearly
 - Challenge stigma, discrimination and exclusion
 - Welcome service animals and support persons
 - Address social determinants of health

Action Strategies

4. Increase knowledge translation between key stakeholders
5. A coordinated systems-level response to address inequity
 - Involving policy, planning and program delivery
6. Develop cross-sectoral community partnerships for health promotion

Resources and Services

York Region Social Services Network

- Services delivered directly to the community at their places of worship or meeting place.
- Linguistically diverse services (i.e. Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Punjabi and English)

CMHA Branches

- Housing and employment programs
- Case management, court support, etc.

Programs for Older Adults

South Asian Adult Day Program

- For older adults who are cognitively impaired and/or frail.

Mental Health Awareness and Support Drop-In Centers

- Provide culturally and linguistically diverse MH programs and resources

Seniors Hub at Armadale Community Centre

- Wellness programs such as yoga, chi-gong, mild mobility exercises, bridge, sewing

Questions?

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