

Webinar 3: Opening Doors - Stories of Migration and Mental Health

Opening Doors Peer Facilitators

Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto

Sheela Subramanian

Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous

Webinar Goal

Through stories, enhance understanding of the:

- Opening Doors initiative
- Complex relationship between migration & mental health
- Value of engaging people with lived experience



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

What is Mental Health?

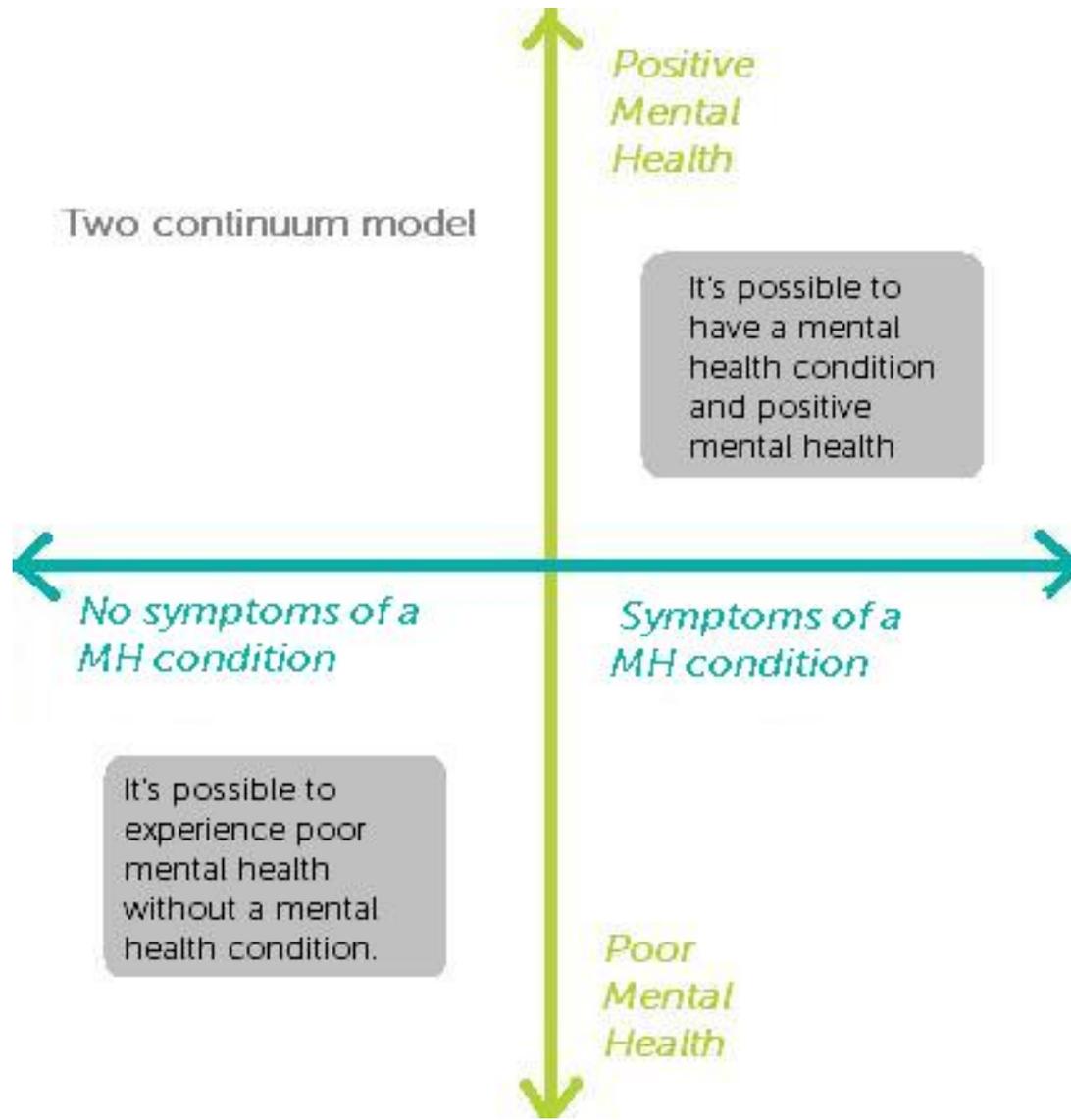
Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006) The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada 2006. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous



Two continuum model

*Positive
Mental
Health*

It's possible to have a mental health condition and positive mental health

*No symptoms of a
MH condition*

*Symptoms of a
MH condition*

It's possible to experience poor mental health without a mental health condition.

*Poor
Mental
Health*



Canadian Mental Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

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.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

Income
Disability
Health services
Early life experiences
Employment and working conditions
Sexual orientation
Housing
Education
Aboriginal status
Food insecurity
Gender
Social exclusion
Gender identity
Race



About Opening Doors

- Started in 2010 with goal of promoting mental health, equity & diversity
- Public education program funded by Immigration, Refugees Citizenship Canada
- Provincial mandate
- Engage peer facilitators with lived experience
- Audience is service delivery organizations in settlement, mental health



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

Why aren't we using a webcam and real names today?

- Reality of stigma & discrimination
- Personal stories will be shared
- Just one part of our lives – we are not **defined** by just these stories
- A comfort agreement is not possible



What do you do as an Opening Doors Peer Facilitator?

- Training, support and guidance
- Facilitate tailored workshops
- Promote dialogue



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

Why should we include peers in our work?

- Focus on people, not just numbers
- Understand the diversity behind the numbers
- Lived experience is a form of knowledge & evidence
- Challenge stigma



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

What should we keep in mind about lived experience?

- Just one part of our stories and lives
- Please don't generalize or make assumptions
- There may be similarities, but everyone's experience is unique



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

**Tell us a bit about your
experience.**

How and when did you
come to Ontario?



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous

What were the main challenges that you faced when you first arrived?



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous

Culture shock

Language

Finding community

Fitting in

Homesick

Isolation

Racism

Financial difficulties

Access barriers

Age Education

Finding a job

Accent



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

**How did you cope with
these challenges?**



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous

Maya

- Staying positive
- Learn language
- Finding community

Jane

- Holistic support at CHC
- Youth group/ socializing and building community
- Inclusive and accepting faith community
- Community work
- Art

Sujatha

- Focusing on kids' needs
- (Re)education
- Finding a community-based job
- Meeting other peers
- Socializing



Opening Doors raises awareness about racism and mental health discrimination.

Why is this important?

- We must acknowledge that discrimination exists
- Negative effects on mental health, wellbeing and communities
- Mental health stigma intersects with racism



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

**How was your mental
health impacted through
settlement?**

How did your mental health
impact on settlement?



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

The SDOHs impacted
negatively on my mental
health

discrimination

Low self-esteem

Silent, negative glances

Depression

First time I was aware of my race

Wasn't
sleeping well

Trigger past trauma



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

What does recovery look like for you?



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous

Not necessarily symptom-free

Resilience

Gardening

Empowerment

A journey

Family and friends

Internal resources/ external supports

Regaining hope



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

What do you want service providers to know?

- Avoid making assumptions about what people have experienced
- Recognize that identities intersect
- Validate experiences of discrimination
- Address the social determinants of health
- Offer holistic supports when possible
- Focus on empathy not sympathy



Questions?

For more information, contact:

Sheela Subramanian, Policy Analyst

ssubramanian@ontario.cmha.ca

(416) 977-5580 x4157



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

How was the webinar?

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/migrationstories>



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
La santé mentale pour tous