

Summer School 2005 ~ August 15-18th

*Mental Health Promotion
Identity, Culture and Power*



Glossary of Terms

Agency or self-determination is the ability of individuals and communities to live lives that they have reason to value. It may be roughly equated to mental well-being. Agency includes the ability of people to authentically express themselves through consciously chosen identities. This includes chosen forms of cultural expression that are supported by access to mental health capacities e.g., economic resources, social structures, and decision-making institutions.

Agency terrain refers to the dynamic interaction of elements that influence an individual's or community's ability to exercise agency – i.e. be self-determining. The *internal agency terrain* refers to the more subjective elements of agency such as consciousness, identity and culture. The internal agency terrain is conceptualised as the internal world that people carry from one locale to another. The ways in which these elements combine begins to shape the internal agency terrain and therefore the agency capacities of the individual. The phrase *external agency terrain* refers to the more outwardly orientated, material elements and relational aspects of agency. These include: physical and other economic resources (such as housing and income), social structures, discourses, social networks and community cohesiveness and strategic partnerships that one may have access to. The interaction of elements in both terrains is important in shaping agency or mental well-being.

Adult Education is the practice of teaching and educating adults. This can be done in the workplace, through continuing education courses and in the community. Adult education takes into account the knowledge and experience that adults already have that

can either help them learn new information or hinder this learning. Adult education also takes into account the fact that individuals learn in a variety of ways. Therefore, education materials must be presented in various formats and modalities.

Advocacy refers to the actions that professionals and lay people take on behalf of others to influence the decision and actions of communities, agencies, professionals and governments.

Best Practices are techniques, methodologies or strategies that have proven to be effective. Best practice can relate to any area of mental health promotion including policy, programming and research. Best practices can be used as a guide and a baseline.

Capacity refers to a community or individuals internal and external strengths and resources to deal with day to day living, crisis, change and development.

Capacity Building is the process of identifying strengths with the community and forming partnerships, which enhance these strengths. Capacity building ensures the participation of the community in policy development, programming and health promotion initiatives. By focusing on the strengths of the community as opposed to deficits, the positive results of mental health promotion initiatives can be sustained.

Community can be broadly referred to as a set of people who share a particular characteristic – e.g., geographic location, ethnicity, age or housing conditions. A key part of community is ‘community as action’ or people acting together – this is influential in determining community capacity for agency or self-determination.

Community Capacity: is a process as well as an outcome; it is complex, multi-dimensional and ecological (operating at individual, group, organizational, community and policy levels), dynamic and context specific. Capacity exists in a dynamic state and develops in stages of readiness that must be taken into account in selecting capacity-enhancing interventions.

Community Development is the process of building communities on a local level by developing the non-profit sector, building social ties, building the economy, decreasing stigma and social isolation, and strengthening community capacity.

Colonization refers to the process of European capitalist expansion from around the 15th Century onwards, ideologically underpinned and justified by assumptions of racial, religious, cultural and technical superiority. Many practices of colonialism continue today – for example, the continued dominance of Western knowledge systems over Aboriginal knowledge systems within the fields of science, medicine and education. Today’s opportunities for mental wellbeing and self-determination of Canada’s aboriginal peoples are therefore, historically and socially situated within specific sets of power-culture dynamics of colonialism.

Coping: refers to the cognitive and physical skills and resources available to and used by individuals to help them deal with the problems, stress and strains of daily living, or life events causing stress.

De-colonization refers to the process of claiming back that which was lost as a result of colonization. Particularly for indigenous peoples mental health promotion could be viewed as a decolonizing practice that involves re-naming and re-claiming cultural space and access to mental health capacities or determinants that enable the assertion of cultural identities and related aspirations in ways that support cultural integrity.

Culture refers to attitudes, behaviors and beliefs shared by a social group. Culture can be developed within any community, e.g., ethnic, sexual identity, gender, work or age group. Culture influences identity and is influenced by it.

Determinations of Health are the range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that impact upon the health of individuals and/ or populations. Determinants of health include income and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, employment/working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, coping skills, health services, gender and culture.

Empowerment or increased agency occurs when individuals or communities actively take power. For the mental health promotion practitioner, empowerment practice consists of facilitating people's participation in a variety of activities that increase their individual and collective community capacities to change health determining conditions.

Equity recognizes the value of differences. It also recognizes that everyone benefits equally from being offered the same opportunities. Inequity occurs when there are different opportunities for individuals or communities, e.g., unequal access to nutrition, health care or adequate housing. The idea of equity calls for different approaches to diverse populations when providing the same approach will result in different results for different communities.

Evaluation refers to the gathering, analysis and reporting of data about a program. Evaluation is used to inform future practices.

Facilitation is leadership that promotes communication amongst a group of people. Successful facilitation includes encouraging relationships between group members, developing a sense of cohesiveness in a group, encouraging participation, modeling behaviors, focusing discussion and summarizing information that has been obtained.

Globalization can be understood as a multi-faceted and sped-up process of change, which transcends and interconnects people and places across national boundaries. It can

be viewed as having two key aspects – economic and cultural. Economic globalisation refers to the increasing flow of capital, goods and labour across national boundaries. Cultural globalisation refers to the globalisation of perception and consciousness, the transmission of cultural symbols and systems and the actual movement of peoples across national borders. The global shifts in power, consciousness and democratic space continually occurring as a result of these processes significantly influence mental health contexts and the ability of communities to shape their own destinies.

Health is a form of homeostasis. It is a balance and equilibrium of an individual's mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

Health Promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. Health promotion includes media campaigns, education, training, research, and community development. Health promotion is a group effort and requires coordination of national, provincial and local governments, industry, service providers, voluntary organizations and community members. Health promotion looks at well-being not just healthy-lifestyles.

Holistic refers to taking a person or a community as a whole rather than just looking at components. Holistic health does not focus on disease and deficits but instead on all of the components, which make up an individual or community. The focus is on increasing the overall health and well-being of an individual, not just focusing on one disease, diagnosis or issue.

Identity refers to our thoughts and feeling about ourselves, who we are, our sense of belonging and relationships with others. This includes information about physical, psychological, social attributes and identification with cultural groups and communities. An individual self-identity can be influenced by and influences beliefs, habits, attitudes and ideas. People have both a self-identity and group identities. Identity is a key aspect of agency and mental well-being.

Individual Capacity helps an individual to deal with stress, trauma and negative life events. Individual capacity includes characteristics such as optimism, temperament, and physical and intellectual characteristics. Biological factors such as disease and genetics can influence individual capacity. Favorable individual or community capacity helps to deal with stress, trauma and negative life events.

Intersectoral Collaboration is a recognized partnership between different sectors or between parts of different sectors of society. This collaboration has been formed to take action on an issue to achieve a common goal in a way that is more effective, efficient or sustainable than might be achieved by the health sector acting alone.

Internal Resources: knowledge and skills including character strengths and strategies a person draws from within, such as belief in an optimistic future, faith, patience, valuing individual differences, insight and planning skills.

Mental Health is a balance between the four aspects of human nature- physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. It is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.

Mental Health Disparities refers to the inequities in states of mental health and well-being experienced by various population groups largely as a result of inequitable access to mental health capacities such as adequate income, housing, social support and supportive public policies etc. Key dimensions of inequity are economic and cultural power - experiences of mental well-being differ according to factors such as ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and ability. The degree of mental health disparities experienced by any one community relative to other will influence its capacity for agency.

Mental Health Promoting Practices refers to a range of activities intended to increase agency – i.e., individual and/or community control over well-being. It can for example encompass therapeutic activities that focus on an individual's capacities rather than deficits, and aim to de-pathologize and contextualize people's narratives within broader social systems, and more generally draw on anti-oppressive practices. MHPP may also encompass broader community action and public policy advocacy activities aimed at acting on the structural determinants of mental well-being.

Participatory Research is a form of research where the community or subjects of the research are included in the design, process and evaluation of the research. That is, members of the community are key stakeholders in the research from start to finish. This form of research puts control back into the hands of the community, uses expertise from individuals who have experiential knowledge and brings information and knowledge gathered through research directly back into the community.

Policy is a guide to action regarding specific issues that sets out specific guidelines and expectations. Policies set out what is expectable and often have implied values and belief systems.

Population Health Promotion approaches strive to improve the health of an entire population. A population can be either large or small by definition and can include communities, cultural groups, countries and/or cities. Health is seen as the function of individual capacities, environmental supports, and equity in the distribution of environmental supports. Particularly influential on mental well-being are environmental supports such as underlying social, economic and cultural determinants of mental health. A population health promotion approach has a holistic view of health.

Power and its functions are an implicit part of the empowerment of self-determination process. Power can be thought of as operating at the individual, group and institutional levels. The individual level corresponds to the personal exercise of power or 'power within'. The group level of power refers to the collective exercise of power by a group, or 'power with'. The institutional level of power largely refers to the ability to enforce

particular behaviours or influence ways of thinking – ‘power over’. This may be achieved either through legislation, ability to shape discourse such as policy debate for example or access to a substantial resource base.

‘Power-culture’ refers to the dynamics between different forms of power and culture that are activated within situations or contexts. Different power experiences (such as personal, group and institutional) are brought into dynamic interaction with different cultural systems (such ethnicity, gender, class), resulting in varying forms of agency or self-determination relations. Power-culture dynamics and associated opportunities self-determination, will vary from situation to situation.

Professionalism refers to the recognized possession of a particular formalized knowledge base as a requirement for occupational re-numeration. This is often supported by membership within some sort of formal professional organization which often requires commitment to a specified value base and adherence within one’s practice to a code of ethics. Recognized professionals commonly engaged in mental health promoting work include psychologists, social workers, nurses, doctors, and psychiatrists.

Program a planned set of activities used to accomplish predetermined objectives. When logic models inform programs, they are easy to evaluate and can inform future practices.

Reflective contract refers to the relationship a practitioner establishes with the individual / community / organization they are working with in which they systematically give up an initial claim to authority and begins to negotiate a shared understanding. The practitioner and those they are working with are each viewed as bringing valuable, but partial knowledge to the interaction. Through engaging in dialogues for shared authority around particular forms of knowledge is earned, not guaranteed. Social status is therefore de-coupled from professional authority.

Reflexivity Good mental health promotion practice requires a “systematised reflexivity or a self-critical attitude about how one’s own perceptions, cultural identities, professional roles and power locations affect one’s practice (research, policy, practice). This means reflecting and making more conscious how you operationalize these within your practice.

Research at its root is an inquiry for knowledge.

Resilience is the capacity of the individual or community to resist or “bounce back” in spite of significant stress or adversity. This ability changes and develops over time, involves the development of protective resources, and allows individuals or communities to maintain health and well being. Resilience is underpinned and shaped by connectedness to others and supportive environments.

Role Interference occurs when there is a conflict between the timing and needs of, for example, work in respect to the needs of one’s children (for example, while I’m at a

meeting, I feel I really want to be at my child's soccer practice). *Work to family interference* refers to situations where the feeling is that work is pressing in on or 'interfering' with family. Although not used in the summer-school presentation, there is also *family to work interference*.

Role Overload comes about when the total demands of employment plus the total demands of family amount to too many demands in terms of time and energy. In brief, it arises out of the on-going feeling that "I simply have too much to do."

Self-awareness is an awareness of one's individuality. Self-awareness includes understanding one's own beliefs, thoughts, motivations, biases and limitations and recognizing how they affect others. This includes having the ability knowing one's strengths and limitations, and being able to take of oneself in a number of diverse situations.

Self-determination - see agency.

Social cohesion refers to the non-material resources of communities such as networks, norms and trust that enable members of communities to be in relationship with each other. Shared values and norms are those that permit co-operation with each other and therefore enhance the agency of members within that community. Social cohesion is an important aspect of community capacity.

Spirituality can be thought of as the sacred relationship with the creative force that has called us into being. It may involve acknowledging the interconnectedness between all life sources, the practice of caring for the soul and an ethic of caring for others.

Spiritual Health is the ability to develop one's spiritual nature to its fullest potential, including the ability to discover and articulate one's basic purpose in life, to learn how to experience love, joy, peace and fulfillment and how to help ourselves and others achieve their fullest potential.

Strategic Planning is a plan that is purpose oriented and broad. Each component should link to the purposes of the group and involve all partners.

Subject position refers to the meaning people attribute to their experiences and the subsequent modes of subjectivity, or perspectives they adopt among those available. It is a key aspect of identity. People's experiences occur within, and are influenced by signifying practices (what people say and do). People may be "active subjects who take up positions from which (they) can exercise power within a particular social practice or (they) are subjected to the definition of others. However the extent to which people are free to adopt particular subject positions or identities is circumscribed by social power relations.

Sustainable Development is development that meets the current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Support refers the ability of the community, population and/or government to provide social, political, and systemic moral and psychological aid or courage.

Transformative use of power refers to those who have more power, using it in ways that increase the power of those who possess less so as to enable such individuals and communities to exercise greater agency within their lives, thereby having a greater role in determining their own futures. An important part of the practitioners' role in mental health promotion work is the use of professional and cultural power in this transformative sense, therefore contributing to conditions that enable increased mental well-being / self-determination.

Well Being is a state of health, happiness and balance. From a population viewpoint, it is the standard of living, i.e., the access to goods and services as well as freedom, happiness, environmental health and innovation.

Wellness is a balance of physical, mental and spiritual health.

Work-Family Conflict is a form of role conflict wherein participation in one's employment role (or family role) is made stressful, fatiguing, and difficult due to activity in one's family role (or employment) role. This role conflict can lead to two types of strain in performing expected roles – one is *interference* and the other is *overload*.

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