

## Mental Health: A Primer

*This text was written by [Becca Switzer](#) as part of the online webinar for the [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Special Interest Group \(EDI SIG\)](#) during Mental Health Awareness Week on 8 October 2024.*



**Mental health is closely linked to our physical well-being.** In many cases, with advancements in new technologies, the line between “neuroscience” and “psychoscience,” or the distinction between “mental” and “physical” health, has been blurred or even erased.

**It is crucial to seek a professional diagnosis before one's quality of life is compromised or before one begins to feel too deficient to contribute to society.** After all, many neurodivergent individuals are highly creative, engaging, and thoughtful, and have contributed immensely to human experiences through fun, comfort, and creativity.

**Diagnosing mental health conditions is complex.** Some mental or brain issues are caused by a lack of certain chemicals, or an excess of others. By balancing these chemicals, individuals can often cope more effectively with discomforts that may otherwise prevent them from functioning efficiently in daily life. Other mental health issues require behavioural changes, guided by professionals who can assist individuals with modification strategies and coping mechanisms.

Many well-known mental health conditions are genetic (e.g., schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder). Other issues, such as poor manners, frequent use of vulgar language, or low self-esteem, are not entirely genetic, and their causes are unclear, though they are recognised as mental health concerns (e.g., Tourette’s syndrome and depression). Certain conditions, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other issues that affect the biochemical or physical structures of the brain, can be diagnosed with modern tools like MRIs. Others, such as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), require an established pattern of behaviour that must be observed over time by a mental health professional. **The causes of mental health conditions are varied, and some are more extensively studied and understood than others. Like other ailments, each individual presents differently, and no treatment is identical or guaranteed to be effective.** Many mental health professionals inform their patients that their condition has no “cure,” and the aim is management and improving quality of life.

Taking medication to help settle one’s thoughts and behaviours, or engaging in psychotherapy to understand one’s difficulties, does not – and should not – render one a disabled or “abnormal” person. In fact, sometimes these differences lead to greater success in specific areas. Being the same as everyone else is boring: **embrace and celebrate diversity, and support your colleagues in the exchange of knowledge as they navigate their mental health journeys.**