

PIE's for Carers (Supporters) Handbook

Creating a supportive space for people with a mental health need and their supporters.

Otherwise called a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE).

Session 1

Understanding mental health challenges

This handbook contains:

- The information covered in the sessions.
- Space for you to note down anything you would like to remember or think about later.
- Some additional information that you can look at afterwards if you want to find out more.

Session 1 – Understanding mental health challenges

In this session we will:

- Introduce the concepts mental health and wellbeing.
- Discuss how to recognise psychological distress and our reaction to it.
- Explore how we can understand why people behave in the way they do.
- Think about how the experience of mental health issues can affect behaviour.

The World Health Organisation say:

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Mental Health

The Mental Health Foundation says:

Being mentally healthy doesn't just mean that you don't have a mental health problem.

Some people call mental health 'emotional health' or 'well-being' and it's just as important as good physical health.

Mind Says:

Mental health problems can affect the way you think, feel and behave.

The NHS says:

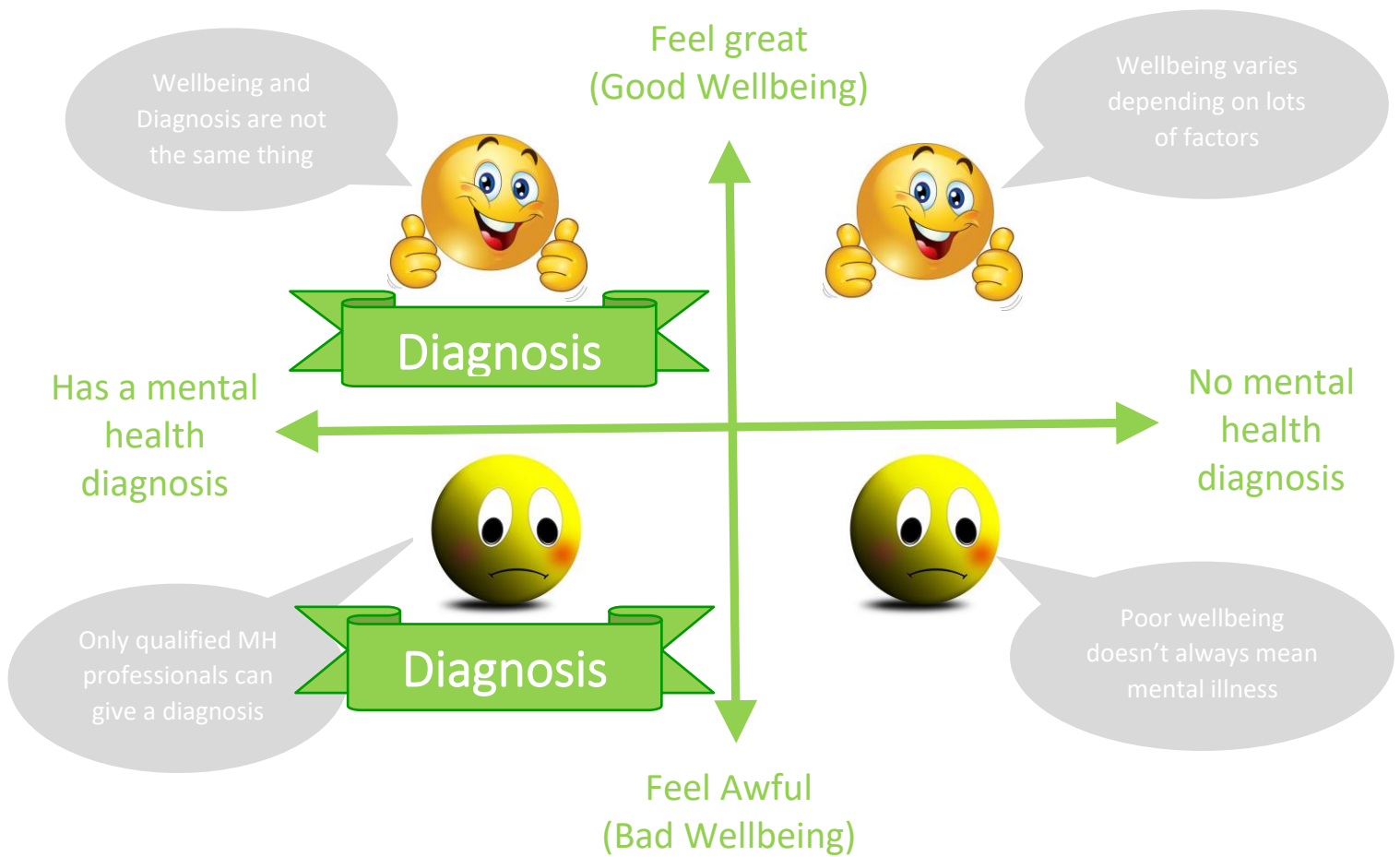
Mental illness refers to a diagnosable condition that significantly interferes with an individual's cognitive, emotional or social abilities

Mental Health Issues

The Mental Health Foundation says:

Mental health problems range from the worries we all experience as part of everyday life to serious long-term conditions. The majority of people who experience mental health problems can get over them or learn to live with them, especially if they get help early on.

Mental Health Diagnosis vs Wellbeing Matrix



People who have been given a mental health diagnosis can have good wellbeing. Some of the things that can help maintain this are:

- Managing their mood using coping strategies
- Accessing support from friends, family and groups
- Accessing treatment like talking therapies and medication.

Notes:

Signs that someone is in distress and offering help

Beware Assumptions

People usually do things for a reason, but it is not always possible to know what the reason is.

Be Curious

If you are concerned about someone's behaviour, try to find out more about what's going on (if it's safe to do so). Be aware of changes and respond to them.

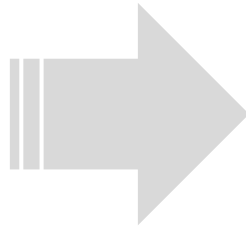
Green means LOW risk so sensitively offer help.

Orange suggests higher levels of distress so be more cautious. Still offer help but be vigilant of any change.

Red could mean HIGH risk so contact a professional immediately e.g. an allocated worker, the crisis team or the police.

Offer help	Offer help with curiosity and caution	Seek help from professionals
The person is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawn• Less sociable than normal• Snappy or irritable• Upset• Tearful• Change in presentation• Anxious or "on edge"	The person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is behaving unusually or repetitively• Cannot sit still• Cannot maintain eye contact• Gives bizarre responses• Makes accusations• Says "I wish I was dead" (or similar)	The person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentions immediate thoughts of harming self or others• Has made plans to or shows intent to cause harm

**Psychological
Awareness**



**Understanding
Behaviour**

We all make sense of other people's behaviour by trying to get inside their head and work out why they are acting in a certain way.

We could call this **Everyday Psychology**.



Theory of mind

This is the understanding that other people have a mind and their own needs and wants which impact on how they act.

Emotional Intelligence/ empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

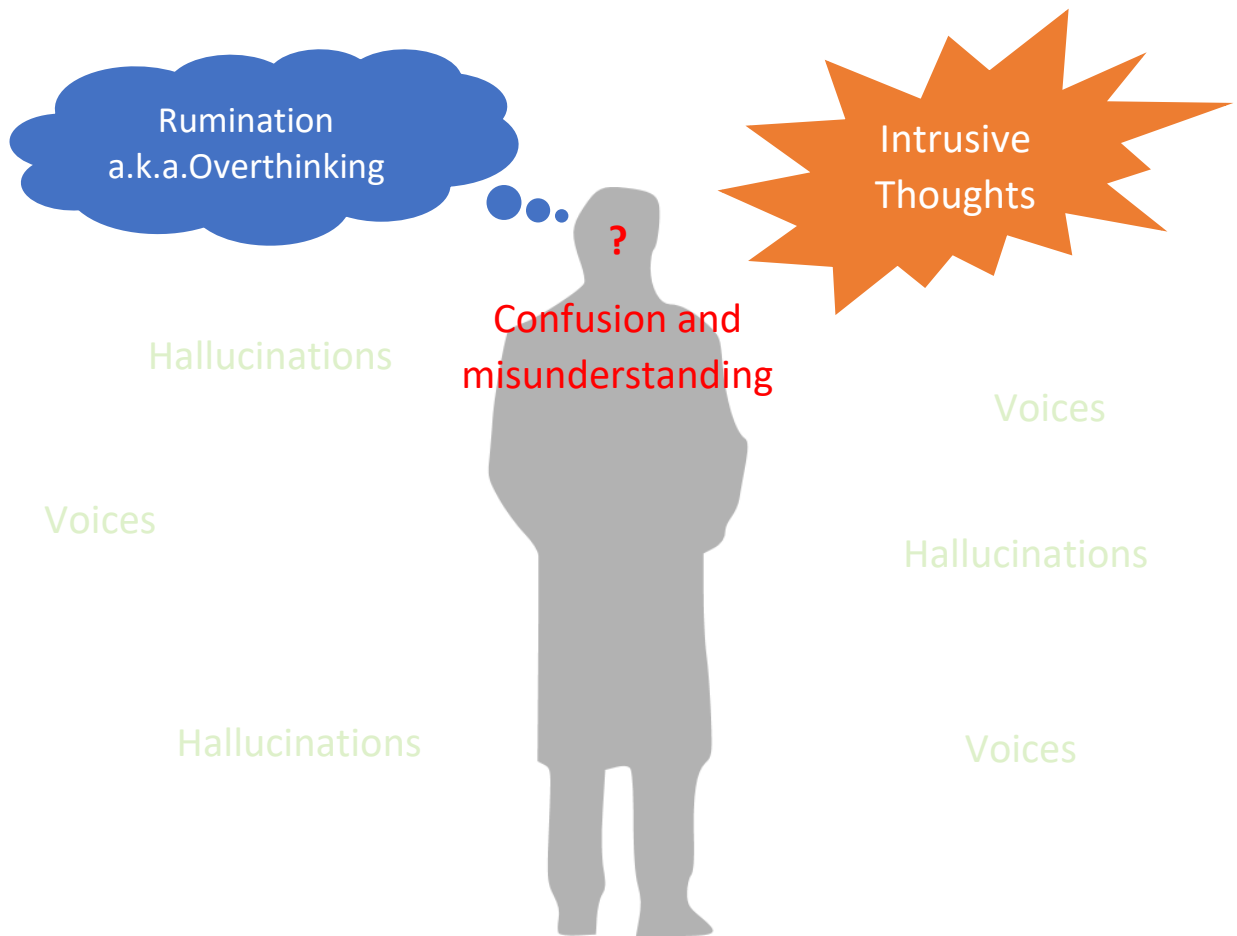
Intuition

We sometimes get a feeling about why someone is acting in certain way. This is not a conscious understanding but more a sense.

We will explore some other psychological models later and in other sessions...

Internal world experience

Some people who have mental health needs experience things that others are not aware of. These experiences can be overwhelming and can reduce that person's awareness of what is going on around them.



Intrusive Thoughts flash into your mind without your control. Examples a lot of us experience are wondering if we locked the front door or turned the gas off before leaving the house. For people with mental health needs, these can be overwhelming and difficult to resolve.

Rumination is repetitively going over a thought. We all do this from time to time but, for some people with mental health needs, this can be distressing and last a long time.

Confusion and misunderstanding is something we all experience but for people with mental health needs it can be more common and quite distressing. The ability to pick up on social cues or follow conversations can be reduced leaving people feeling vulnerable and disconnected.

Hallucinations and voices are sights or sounds (or even sensations) that no-one else experiences.

Hearing Voices These short videos, by Open Minded Online, show compassionate approaches to voice hearing and are worth watching if these affect the person you support.
<https://openmindedonline.com/portfolio/engaging-with-voices-videos/>

The Internal World vs the External World



We all have limit to how much we can process or cope with at once.

For some people who are experiencing mental health difficulties, the amount that is going on inside their head is overwhelming so trying to focus on anything outside can be really challenging.

Scenario

Imagine you are on a handsfree telephone call or thinking through a complex problem and you are unable to stop (it can be tricky to imagine this, remember the hearing voices experience if that's easier).

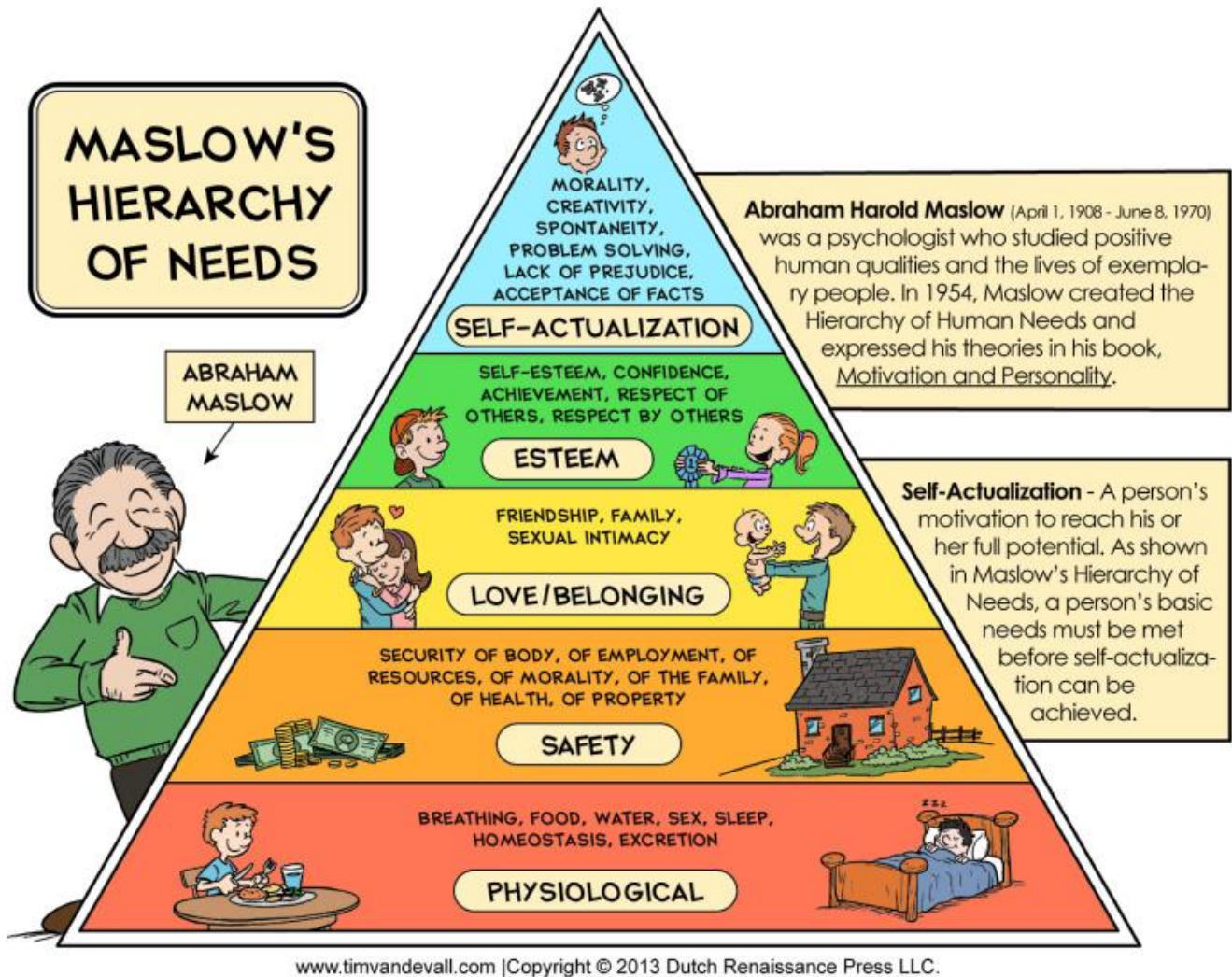
Also, no-one around you knows that you are busy with this task and you can't tell them.

How would you cope doing some of these everyday tasks?

- Doing the shopping in an unfamiliar shop
- Going to a gathering or party with people you don't know
- Going to work

Space for notes:

Meeting the right needs first...



By a hierarchy of needs, Maslow means that we cannot focus on any level of need until the needs in the levels below have been met.

For example, if am starving and have no access to food and water, I must deal with that before I will be worried about having a safe place to stay.

We all meet these needs in different ways, for example:

- “Home” means different things for different people
- We all find love and belonging in different ways.

Some people who have mental health needs may feel unsafe even if we think they have a stable home and secured income. They may not feel ready to think about relationships or self-esteem building even if we think they are ready.

It may be helpful to use the next page to think about how this hierarchy relates to the person you care for.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Self Actualisation
 Personal growth & development by following one's own passions & interests. Self expression, lack of prejudice, search for meaning of life & achieving potential



Esteem
 Self-esteem, feelings of achievement, strength and confidence, able to cope by oneself, respect of and from others



Belongingness & Love
 Feel part of family/friendship group, giving and receiving affection, sense of connection



Safety
 Feeling safe and secure, stability, health etc



Physiological
 Food, water, air, warmth etc

What I currently do to support my wellbeing...	What I will start doing to improve this area for me?	When I make this positive change I will feel...