

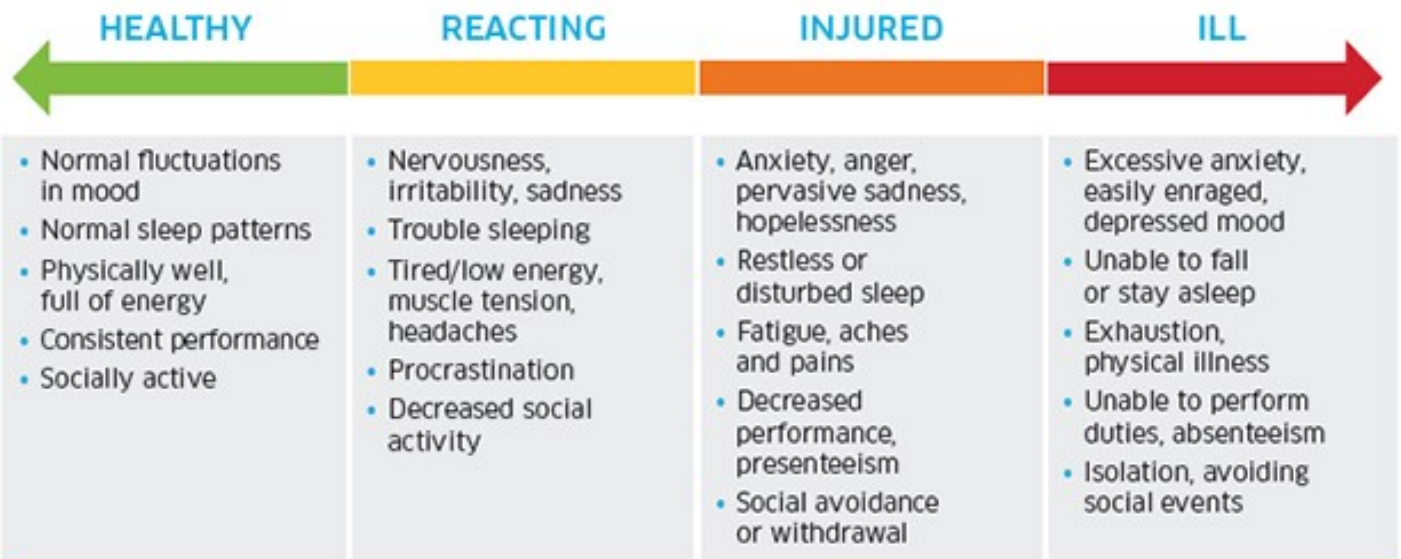
# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Emotional health is an important part of your life. It is a skill that can be practiced and learned. With positive emotional health you can be aware of your emotions, positive and negative, and manage them appropriately. Positive emotional health does not mean you are happy all the time.

Emotional health can also affect your physical health. Research shows a link between an upbeat mental state and physical signs of good health. These include lower blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, and a healthier weight

There are many ways to improve or maintain good emotional health:

- **Be aware of your emotions and reactions.** Notice what in your life makes you sad, frustrated, or angry. Try to address or change those things.
- **Manage stress.** Try to change situations causing you stress. Learn relaxation methods to cope with stress. These could include deep breathing, meditation, and exercise.
- **Strive for balance.** Find a healthy balance between work and play and between activity and rest. Make time for things you enjoy. Focus on positive things in your life.
- **Take care of your physical health.** Your physical health can affect your emotional health. Exercise regularly, eat healthy meals, and get enough sleep. Don't abuse drugs or alcohol.
- **Connect with others.** We are social creatures. We need positive connections with other people. Make a lunch date, join a group, and say hi to strangers.
- **Stay positive.** Focus on the good things in your life. Forgive yourself for making mistakes, and forgive others. Spend time with healthy, positive people.
- **Check in with yourself regularly.** When considering our emotional health it is important to be honest with ourselves and act on the emotions we are experiencing. Placing ourselves on the continuum below can be an easy way to check in and see what actions we can take to improve our well-being.



## Actions to Take at Each Phase of the Continuum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on task at hand</li> <li>• Break problems into manageable chunks</li> <li>• Identify and nurture support systems</li> <li>• Maintain healthy lifestyle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize limits</li> <li>• Get adequate rest, food, and exercise</li> <li>• Engage in healthy coping strategies</li> <li>• Identify and minimize stressors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and understand own signs of distress</li> <li>• Talk with someone</li> <li>• Seek help</li> <li>• Seek social support instead of withdrawing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek consultation as needed</li> <li>• Follow health care provider recommendations</li> <li>• Regain physical and mental health</li> </ul>
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## How can I discuss this topic with my children? Here are some ideas and tips:

1. **Bringing it up:** If you're feeling a little unsure about how to bring up the topic with your kids, try to find a conversation starter from everyday life. A movie that features a character with emotional well-being concerns that has had a positive experience could make for good entry points.
2. **Finding the words:** Use age-appropriate language when discussing this topic with your child. Find a frame of reference they can relate to, such as finding an example of someone who is sick or feeling very sad. It may be helpful to find ways to explain that emotional health is no different from an illness in the body such as cancer. By making comparisons, children will be able to better understand what they or a family member are experiencing.
3. **Tailor it to their age:** There is no age too young to start the conversation. Step into their shoes and experiences to better understand how to approach the conversation in a way that would be most beneficial to them.
4. **Remind your children that there is no such thing as a stupid question.** It is important to listen to them without judgement and to refrain from telling them how to feel.

# ACTIVITIES TO HELP CHILDREN MANAGE EMOTIONS

**Plastic Egg Faces:** Draw a variety of faces on plastic Easter eggs with the eyes on the top half and the mouth on the bottom half. Teach your children about different emotions as they have fun interchanging the parts to make all sorts of different faces.

**Calm down Yoga:** When your child becomes overly agitated or has copious amounts of energy, putting on a yoga video (they can be found on YouTube) can help them regulate their energy and emotions.

**Paint it out:** Not only does painting give the brain something to focus on other than the stressor, but participating in visual arts has been linked to resilience to stress in general.

**Ball Play:** Toss a ball around, and when someone catches it, they tell each other things that make them sad, scared, excited and happy.

**Block Play:** Help a child release anger by building a wooden block wall or tower and then allowing the child to throw a ball to knock them down.

**Destruction Play:** Another anger-releasing exercise, give the child an old book or magazines and allow them to rip pages out, crumple them and throw them away.

**Sensory Play:** Playing with play dough, sand and shave cream are some ways that can help kids feel relaxed and in control.

**Take a walk or hike:** Being outside and breathing in the fresh air can help clear your mind and help you feel stronger.