**What Is Mental and Emotional Health?**

**Guide to Reading**

- **Building Vocabulary**
  As you read this lesson, write down each new highlighted term and its definition.
  - mental and emotional health (p. 145)
  - personality (p. 146)
  - empathy (p. 147)
  - resilience (p. 147)

- **Focusing on the Main Ideas**
  In this lesson, you will be able to
  - identify the signs of mental and emotional health.
  - explain the three most important influences on your personality.
  - describe resilience and how it affects mental and emotional health.
  - demonstrate communication skills by showing empathy to others through active listening.

- **Reading Strategy**
  **Predicting**
  Skim the headings, photos, and captions in this lesson. Write down three pieces of information you think will be covered in this lesson.

- **Quick Write**
  Think about a time when you felt disappointed. Write down how you dealt with your feelings.

- **Understanding Mental and Emotional Health**
  Annie has three best friends. They spend hours Instant Messaging each other. She likes most of her classes at school, and her favorite subject is Spanish. She loves animals and wants to be a veterinarian. Annie often cracks jokes with her friends. Sometimes, though, she feels mad at the world and tapes a “Keep Out!” sign to her bedroom door. Like every teen, Annie has her ups and downs. She feels sad sometimes, but the feeling doesn’t usually last. Annie knows that having these feelings is a normal part of being a teenager.

  - Enjoying the company of others is a sign of mental and emotional health. How can you tell that these teens like being with each other?
Mental/emotional health is a part of the health triangle. Are all sides of your own health triangle equally strong?

Annie shows many signs of mental and emotional health, the ability to handle the stresses and changes of everyday life in a reasonable way. She gets along well with others, has a positive outlook on the future, and a strong interest in school. Problems don’t get her down for long. Having good mental and emotional health is an important part of overall health. Figure 5.1 shows the health triangle you learned about in Chapter 1.

Where Mental and Emotional Health Begins

James rarely gets enough rest and has a poor diet. His physical needs are not being met, which makes it hard for him to be mentally and emotionally healthy. Meeting physical needs means getting enough food, water, rest, shelter, and a sense of safety.

Your social needs also influence your mental and emotional health. These include the need to give and receive love, to feel recognized, and to feel connected to people you trust. It is easier to deal with problems when you feel connected to others. Think of a time when you talked a problem over with a friend. You probably felt better afterward.

**Reading Check** Define What is mental and emotional health?
Accepting Who You Are

Accepting yourself is a key part of mental and emotional health. How do you accept yourself? First, you need to recognize your strengths and work on improving your weaknesses. That may be difficult for you to do right now, since you may not know yourself very well yet. If you're like most teens, you'll learn a lot in the next few years about your personality, which is a combination of your feelings, likes, dislikes, attitudes, abilities, and habits.

Influences on Your Personality

There is no one else exactly like you; your personality is unique. Many factors shape your personality. Three of the most important are heredity, environment, and behavior.

Heredity

The passing of biological traits from parents to children is called heredity. The genes you receive from your parents control your eye color, skin color, and hair color. You may also have inherited some personality traits, such as being outgoing. You have no control over what traits you received from your parents. However, heredity is just one factor that shapes your personality.

Environment

Your environment is your family and friends, your neighborhood, your school, and even the climate where you live. These play a big role in shaping your personality. For example, the people in Emily's family have a good sense of humor. They joke around a lot. Because of this, Emily learned how to be funny, and her friends enjoy her humor. Her personality might have turned out differently if she was raised in a different family.

Behavior

Your behavior is how you act. It's a big part of your personality. Of the three influences on personality, you have the most control over your behavior. Each day, you face choices about how to respond to events and people in your life. The actions you choose to take show how you feel about yourself or others. Your choices reflect your core ethical values and can help you improve your mental and emotional health. You can choose behaviors that develop qualities or skills that are important to you.

Reading Check

Identify What are the three main influences on your personality?
Signs of Mental and Emotional Health

Mental and emotional health often changes over time. Take Juan Carlos, for example. As a child, he moved from Mexico to the United States. Since he could not speak English, he felt different from his classmates and teachers for a long time. He also got poor grades. Over time, though, he learned to speak English, made friends, and began to do well in school. As these skills improved, so did Juan's mental and emotional health.

Like Juan Carlos, you can work to improve your mental and emotional health. When these inner qualities are strong, your outer life often shows it. Your relationships and activities give you more satisfaction. Here are some ways to build strong mental and emotional health:

- Have a good attitude and a positive outlook.
- Recognize your strengths and work on your weaknesses.
- Set realistic goals.
- Act responsibly.
- Be able to relax and have fun alone or in a group.
- Be aware of your feelings and express them in healthy ways.
- Practice empathy. Empathy involves identifying with and sharing another person's feelings.
- Accept constructive feedback and the messages people give you about yourself, without getting angry.

How to Build Resilience

Think about a rubber band. You can stretch it, but it almost always snaps back into shape. That's what being resilient is like. Resilience is the ability to recover from problems or loss. Resilience is an important part of mental and emotional health. It allows you to face challenges and move past them in a healthful way. When you get pulled out of shape by a problem or crisis, you bounce back. You recover and are healthy again. Most resilient teens believe that they can do something about their problems. They show persistence, flexibility, and strong self-confidence.
How can you be more resilient in response to life’s ups and downs? Start by making positive choices for yourself. Strengthen your refusal skills. You will be better able to resist negative peer pressure. Take part in school activities that you feel can make a difference for you or others. Think carefully about situations, activities, and relationships in your life. Which ones help you feel more confident and in control? Resilient people often have strong relationships with family and friends. They may get extra support from good role models and a positive school climate.

**Reading Check** Define What is resilience?

- Resilient teens focus on activities that help them feel more confident and in control. How might this activity help build this teen’s confidence?

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**Lesson 1 Review**

**After You Read**

*Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.*

**What I Learned**

1. **Vocabulary** What is personality?

2. **List** What are three ways to build mental and emotional health?

3. **Name** What is one environmental influence on your personality?

4. **Identify** What are two social needs that influence mental/emotional health?

5. **Explain** What are three ways a person might build resilience?

**Thinking Critically**

6. **Evaluate** Why do you think that showing empathy is a sign of mental/emotional health?

7. **Infer** Why might your mental/emotional health suffer if you don’t practice healthful eating?

**Applying Health Skills**

8. **Analyzing Influences** What do you think has had the most influence on your personality: your heredity, environment, or behavior? Explain your answer.