

dual factor model of mental health

Typically when we think about mental health we think about a continuum from being unwell at one end to being healthy at the other.



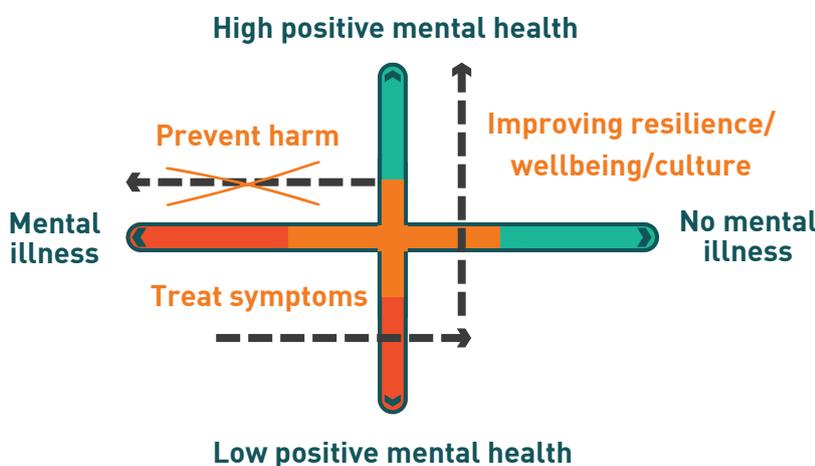
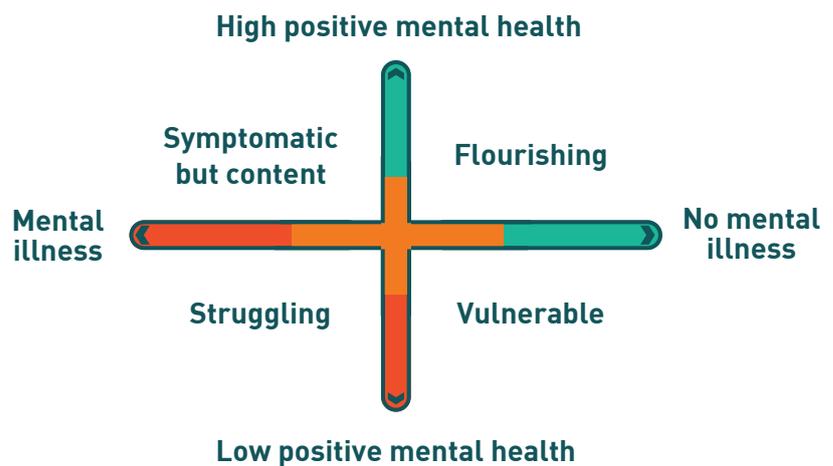
This positions being unwell as the opposite of wellbeing. While this makes logical sense, the reality is that it's possible to have a mental illness and still have high levels of wellbeing. The dual factor model of mental health helps to explain how this can happen.

Imagine a single continuum for mental illness where you have many severe symptoms of a mental illness at one end and no symptoms mental illness at the other. Then a perpendicular continuum for positive mental health or wellbeing where you do a lot to improve wellbeing at one end and none of that at the other. This includes looking after your physical health, having good social support, having things in life that are meaningful, doing things you enjoy, being able to cope with day to day stressors.

This allows for a bit more nuance in how you view mental health versus mental illness.

For example, you can have a mental illness and still do a lot for mental health (gym, work, socialise, travel, parent, etc.).

And, similarly, you can do absolutely nothing for your mental health but not actually have a mental illness.



This model helps to understand the role of the workplace where there is a responsibility to prevent mental illnesses at work by managing psychosocial hazards. Workplaces also need to have systems of supporting workers to access support (e.g. EAP) and create workplace culture that supports and encourages wellbeing.