



mental health **MIND MATTERS**

Family Guide

SCIENCE MUSEUM OF VIRGINIA
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OVERVIEW

Good mental health is an important aspect of everyone's life. Like physical illnesses, mental illnesses are not a choice or a personal flaw but are medical conditions that require care. Misunderstanding of mental illnesses often leads to lack of treatment, which makes mental health a personal, social and economic issue. The *Mental Health: Mind Matters* exhibition raises awareness of mental health and helps us to see that mental illnesses are real, common and treatable.

Mental Health: Mind Matters features a mix of experiences suitable for young children, older students, and adults.

Check out the "Questions to Discuss" on the back page of this guide for help in including young children in discussions.



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EXHIBIT EXPERIENCES

Interactives components near the exhibition entrance feature definitions and descriptions of mental illnesses, and examine the history of treatments for mental illnesses.

- Play a quiz show to test your knowledge about common misperceptions about mental illnesses and mental health.
- Peer into mini-dioramas depicting how attitudes toward people with mental illnesses have varied over time.
- Watch animations that explore theories about the biological basis for depression and psychosis.

Empathy-building experiences throughout the exhibition help visitors understand what some people who live with mental illnesses may experience. Some of these exhibit experiences are best suited for ages 8 and older.

- Listen to the thoughts of a father who is living with depression and the reactions of his wife and son.
- Hear from people—in their own words—about how mental illnesses affect their lives.
- Try noise-distorting headphones to experience the difficulties some people with symptoms of psychosis may experience if they are unable to filter out some of the sounds in their environment.

Several exhibits explore the healthy expressions of emotions.

- Play an emotion recognition game that invites you to act out an emotion using only facial expressions. You will discover that it is a challenging task, and it is even more challenging for other visitors to interpret.
- Discover how artistic activities like painting, dancing, and writing can help us identify and express our emotions, and strengthen our mental health.
- Join other visitors in *Are You Afraid?*, an immersive game that puts you in a dark forest to confront scary creatures, using only their eyes as indicators. When approached, the eyes disappear and familiar forest animals are revealed, demonstrating that while facing our fears is difficult, the skills it requires can be practiced and honed.
- Move your body to the beat and learn about the connection between physical activity and mental health.
- Write down your worries and shred them in the Worry Shredder.

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Mental Health: Mind Matters was produced for North America by the Science Museum of Minnesota in collaboration with Heureka, The Finnish Science Centre.