



**WORLD
MENTAL
HEALTH
DAY 2020**
Mental Health for All
Greater Investment - Greater Access



SOCIAL COMPETENCE

#WorldMentalHealthDay
#MentalHealthForAll



آغا خان یونیورسٹی

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Having positive social interactions is an innate human need. Social competence is the ability that helps us fulfil it.

Social competence refers to a wide array of capabilities that enable us to get along well with others and respond to social situations adaptively.

These capabilities enable us to develop high quality relationships and reduce the likelihood of receiving negative treatment from others. Our social competence may vary in different settings and with different people.

How we perform in front of a large crowd does not predict our capacity to form and enjoy close personal bonds.

KEY FACETS OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Prosocial skills - being friendly, warm, empathetic, cooperative, helpful.

Self-regulatory skills - inhibiting inconsiderate, impulsive, agitated, immature or aggressive behaviour.

Executive skills - planning, problem-solving, decision-making, taking appropriate action to achieve social goals and resolve conflicts.

Communication skills - showing interest and paying attention, initiating and maintaining conversations, negotiation skills, clear and assertive expression of thoughts and emotion.

Social awareness skills - understanding contextual demands or complex situations, perceiving subtle or nonverbal social cues, having insight into others' feelings and motivations.

ROLE OF PERSONALITY FACTORS

Among the big five personality traits, **Extraversion** and **Agreeableness** are most directly related with social interactions. While extraverts find it easy to talk, be among people, engage in social contact and get attention, agreeable people are considered more cooperative, pleasant and caring.

Extraverts are more concerned with social impact, while agreeable people attempt to maintain positive relationships.

Check your emotional intelligence and other social skills

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DEVELOPING SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Cultivate a positive sense of self:

A clear understanding of personal characteristics, values and motivations, and feeling good about them is essential for feeling confident in social interactions. Having a low self-esteem makes us feel self-conscious and increases sensitivity to criticism or perceived rejection.

Practice self-regulation:

Be aware of your triggers and emotional reactions. Check the thoughts that provoke you. Practice relaxation, mindfulness and meditation to have a greater control on your thoughts as well as on your physical and emotional reactions. Try to take time and a deep breath before reacting.

Develop better communication skills:

Be better prepared to listen and to express. Give signals that you are willing to engage. Smile and find topics to start conversation, e.g. commenting on the ongoing situation. Pay attention and show genuine interest. Give and receive compliments gracefully. When you don't agree, express without creating conflict or making it personal. Humour often helps.

Adopt social values:

Being responsible, flexible, fair and kind are social values that foster positive social environment. However, don't confuse being non-assertive with being cooperative or caring; one is the inability to express thoughts and feelings and the other is being concerned about the wellbeing of others.

Build cultural competence:

Acquire knowledge of, respect for and ability to interact effectively and comfortably with people of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Be mindful of your stereotypes and the way you create impressions about people. Explore various cultures, their beliefs and values without judging them.

Work on your emotional intelligence:

See if you can pick the other person's emotion, read between the lines and note the implicit aspects of a social situation. One of the main features of emotional intelligence is the ability to take the other person's perspective during discussion and especially during disagreement.

Mental Health Day Thoughts



"Mental health Day is a reminder to increase access and inclusion for those fighting silent battles on the mental health

front. With a constant pressure to adapt to the changed circumstances this year, it is even more necessary to build healthy social connections and create caring communities where no one gets missed. While large scale accessible programs for mental health remain a priority, being compassionate and supporting each other is a basic investment all of us can make to promote wellness around us."

-Provost, Carl Amrhein

Refine your executive functions:

Set clear social goals, assess your current situation and make realistic plans accordingly. Make rational rather than emotional decisions; engage in problem-solving and conflict resolution through healthy ways.

Find your niche:

People react differently to the demands of different social situations. Find a niche area where you feel more comfortable. Joining a group, playing team sports, or volunteering for social activities may help. Try to build upon initial contact with those you like being around. Keep an open mind, be a good sport, and a lively companion, and if they are not interested, move on.

Counselling Services and Wellness Office

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