

# BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Provided by the American Mental Health Counselors Association

In observance of National Mental Health Counseling Week, we propose the following as some of the basic characteristics of good mental health.

First, good mental health includes the concept of **courage**, which means being willing to take action in the face of perceived danger. The wise use of courage implies a distinction between struggling to go beyond fear and behaving fool heartedly. *"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."* The Diary of Anais Nin, volume 3, 1939-1944.

Next, **integrity** is also a basic characteristic of good mental health and involves the concept of matching words and deeds. Are the actions you take consistent with what you truly believe? Others may not agree with your beliefs or behaviors, but good mental health requires being true to yourself by following your words with consistent activities. *"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."* Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882).

Third, another basic characteristic of good mental health is the characteristic of **tenacity**. Tenacity means that an individual is able to focus on a selected task without allowing distractions or procrastination to interrupt or delay. With tenacity, the satisfaction of accomplishment becomes a frequent experience. *"Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal. My strength lies solely in my tenacity."* Louis Pasteur (1822 - 1895).

Another characteristic of good mental health is being an **inspiration** to others. Those whose attitude reflects a positive outlook on life becomes a role model with influence expanding like the ripples from a stone dropped in a pond. *"The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him."* -Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Another important quality of good mental health is **awareness**. With awareness comes the capacity for change. *"Your paradigm is so intrinsic to your mental process that you are hardly aware of its existence, until you try to communicate with someone with a different paradigm."* -Donella Meadows.