



Good mental health is an important aspect of everyone's life. Like physical illness, mental illness is not a 'choice' or a personal flaw but a medical condition that requires care. In 2014, the National Institute of Mental Health reported that there were an estimated 43.6 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with a mental illness in the previous year—18.1% of all U.S. adults. Yet misunderstanding of mental illness often leads to lack of treatment and needless suffering. That makes mental health a personal issue, a social issue, and an economic issue.

Much as the traveling exhibition *Race: Are we so different?* created a safe place for conversations around race and racism, *Mental Health: Mind Matters* will create a safe space for important conversations about mental illnesses. Misconceptions and stigma lead to prejudice and discrimination. This exhibition and related programming can help make it OK to talk about mental health. Mental illness touches all of our lives in some way, making *Mental Health* an important resource.

“ Without mental health there can be no true physical health ”

— Dr. Brock Chisholm in 1954; a psychiatrist, the first Director-General of the World Health Organization, and a champion of the notion that physical and mental health were inextricably related to one another

The Science Museum of Minnesota, in partnership with Heureka: The Finnish Science Centre, and advised by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, has modified Heureka's award-winning mental health exhibition for presentation in St. Paul followed by a North American tour. We anticipate that the exhibition and related programming will reach more than 400,000 visitors in Minnesota and more than 2 million visitors by the completion of its tour. The Science Museum is excited to bring this important exhibition to North America and to contribute to the vitally important national conversation about mental health.



EXHIBIT SUMMARY

***Mental Health: Mind Matters* has four key themes.**

Interactives near the entrance help illustrate that mental health is part of our overall health, and that mental illnesses are similar to other illnesses: they are common, they can happen to anyone, and they are treatable. Visitors can peer into toy theater sets depicting how attitudes toward people with mental illnesses have varied over time, and see how treatments for mental illnesses have changed dramatically and continue to evolve. A quiz show tests visitors' knowledge of common misperceptions about mental illnesses, and touch-screen interactives let visitors explore the symptoms, causes, and treatments for some common mental illnesses.



Empathy-building experiences throughout the exhibition help visitors understand what some people who live with mental illnesses may experience, fostering respect, acceptance and reinforcing the fact that mental illnesses are real. Try to answer some simple questions while hearing voices. Listen in on a typical evening in the household of a family in which the father is dealing with depression. Hear from people—in their own words—about how mental illness affects their lives. Put on headphones that simulate what it's like to not be able to filter out some of the sounds around you. Play games designed to improve attention, concentration and short-term memory which are similar to the exercises some people with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia may do as part of their therapy.



The third theme of the exhibition explores how identifying and expressing emotions helps us better understand ourselves and others. Visitors guess the emotions displayed on their fellow visitors' faces; match their own body language with oversized masks; and discover how artistic activities like painting, dancing, and writing can help us identify and express our emotions and strengthen our mental health. Dance like popcorn! Paint with water and watch your artwork disappear as it dries. Or, write down and shred your worries in the Worry Shredder.



The final theme of the exhibition is about the importance of asking for help, and being supportive of those who do. A resource center highlights the many different types of health care professionals that can offer help for mental health concerns, and interactives challenge us to think about how to use more supportive language when talking about mental illnesses.