Do you have a brain?
Do you have a brain?
Then you have mental health!
Just like any other organ in your body...

Your brain can experience variations in wellness.
We ALL have mental health

Misperceptions, fears of social consequences, discomfort associated with talking about these issues with others, and discrimination all tend to keep people silent.
We ALL have mental health

On January 16, 2013, President Barack Obama directed the DHHS and the U.S. Department of Education to launch a national conversation on mental health to reduce the shame and secrecy associated with mental illness.
What is mental health?

**Mental Health** is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Affects:
- How you feel
- How you act
- How you handle stress
- How you relate to others
- How you make choices
What is mental illness?

Mental health problems can affect your thinking, mood, and behavior. Some can occur for a short time, and some occur over an on-going time period. These are real and diagnosable health conditions that affect and are affected by functioning of the brain.
Types of mental health problems

- Anxiety Disorders
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Substance Use Disorders
- Mood Disorders
- Personality Disorders
- Psychotic Disorders
Mental Health Depends On...

*Overall Health*—overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional wellbeing.

*Home*—a stable and safe place to live.
Mental Health Depends On...

**Purpose**—meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors and the independence, income, and resources to participate in society.

**Community**—relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.
Why Talk About It?

When we promote mental health, we help people improve their health and well-being, have positive self-esteem, and to be valued and contributing members of their communities. Mental health promotion also helps build resiliency in people, helping them cope better during life’s challenges.

Home/Purpose/Community – largely transient for young researchers!
Why Talk About It @ CFA?

Why should the community care? It's not only because trainees are suffering; it's also because intellectual health is linked with psychological health. Most of us are at our most productive when we're well adjusted—when we feel respected, valued, and confident in our potential. Unfortunately, that describes a rather small fraction of the science-trainee population.
Hi - please raise your hand if you sought out mental health care in #gradschool. Let's continue to normalize this, please! I would not be finishing my PhD right now if not for the mental health care I've been lucky to have access through at my universities.
#gradlife #phdchat
Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education

Teresa M Evans¹, Lindsay Bira², Jazmin Beltran Gastelum³, L Todd Weiss⁴ & Nathan L Vanderford⁴,⁵

With mental illness a growing concern within graduate education, data from a new survey should prompt both academia and policy makers to consider intervention strategies.

Evaluation questions included:

- My advisor ...
  - Provides mentorship
  - Provides ample support
  - Has a positive emotional impact
  - My mentor is an asset to my career
  - I feel valued by the mentor

- My work-life balance is
  - Healthy / Unhealthy
Nearly half of PhD students suffer with depression during their PhD. We need to make positive changes at universities to deal with this. Some top tips for working towards your own improved mentalhealth and wellbeing below! #UniMentalHealthDay #PhD #phdlife
Behavioral Health Equity

Racial and ethnic minorities **bear a greater burden from unmet mental health needs.**

Lack of **cultural understanding** by health care providers may contribute to underdiagnosis and/or misdiagnosis of mental illness in people from racially/ethnically diverse populations.
Despite Demand for Counselors of Color, CAMHS Chief Says Agency Unable to Hire More Staff

The office that houses Harvard's Counseling and Mental Health Services. Photo: Soumyaa Mazumder

By Angela N. Fu, Crimson Staff Writer
May 9, 2018
Behavioral Health Equity

The rejection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, pansexual (LGBTQ+) youth by their families, or by their peers and community, can **have profound and long-term impacts**, including depression, use of illegal drugs, and suicidal behavior.
WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE WORKPLACE SEXISM MORE LIKELY TO STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH
I wish university mental health weeks were more about providing mandatory training to supervisors and academics on how to manage and help their students through difficult times and less about getting people to do yoga.
Mentors need awareness

Stigma can stop people from self-identifying because they are afraid of how they may be perceived and treated.

- Mental health problems are at times revealed in the workplace during a crisis.  
- Open communication and informed attitudes are the best tools any mentor can have.
Harvard Mental Health Services Works to Reduce Student Wait Times

UHS Photo: Megan M. Ross
**Some Ways to Help Manage Your Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Seek Medical Advice**
Speak to a medical professional about how you are feeling. This may lead to intervention such as medication or counselling to help you manage your mental health.

**Talk to Your Supervisor**
It is not always possible, but if you can approach your supervisor, discuss your mental health concerns with them. Other options include discussions to reduce workload temporarily and taking time out.

**Talk to Your Peers/Postdocs**
It is highly likely that people around you have also experienced the stressful nature of a PhD. Reach out, if you feel able. Remember, postdocs have survived their PhD so may have some useful tips/coping strategies.

**Take Some Time Out**
Taking a break can actually improve efficiency when you return to work. If you cannot justify taking a couple of weeks off, take a series of long weekends to get some time away.

**Focus on You**
It is a proven fact that lack of sleep can add to feelings of stress. Exercise can also work to alleviate stress. It may feel like you don't have time, but going for a walk at lunchtime (for example) may help.

**Create Manageable Chunks**
If everything is overwhelming, try to breakdown your research into manageable tasks. It may help to do this in consultation with your supervisor. When writing, consider starting with figures first.
What can we do?

- Pay attention to language – awareness of the words we use that contribute to stigmatizing mental issues
- Rethink “sick days” – the mental health day is real
- Tap the Wellness Resources – acupuncture, exercise such as walking, bicycling, swimming, tennis, and anything that will keep you moving.
- Get help early. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will bounce back.
- Don't be afraid to tell your fellow students or colleagues, especially those close to you.
- Talk to your advisor and let them know what is going on.
- Have more discussions - a start to removing stigma.
- Talk about your feelings. - It's a release valve. You will be stronger for it.
- Educate faculty who encourage unhealthy work habits

Basic human understanding and compassion
MENTAL HEALTH

Wellness IS... 
- Important
- Something everyone has
- Intrinsically linked to (and probably inseparable from) physical health
- On a continuum
- Worth making time for
- Part of being human
- Something we need to look after
- Positive & Negative
- Changeable
- Complex
- Real

Illness ISN'T...
- A sign of weakness
- Shameful
- All in your mind
- Always something negative
- Something you decide to have
- Something to think about only when it feels broken
- An interchangeable term with mental illness
- Feeling good all the time
- Something you can snap out of
- Fixed
- Fake news