



Jacqueline Nixon (front row, second from left), stands with women helping to build her home during a Habitat for Humanity Women's Build Saturday, May 31, in Pontiac. More than 160 from General Motors, GMAC Mortgage and GMAC Financial Services women volunteered time to help work on the build site.

GM, GMAC women build Habitat for Humanity house

One-hundred sixty women from General Motors, GMAC Financial Services and GMAC Mortgage volunteered their time on Saturday, May 31, to build a Habitat house alongside resident Jacqueline Nixon as part of Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Program. The Habitat build is at 203 Rockwell Street in Pontiac, in an area where four other Habitat homes have been built.

Jacqueline and her son currently rent a home in a neighborhood she has seen go from bad to worse. She shares her neighborhood with drug dealers and gangs and looks forward to a better life for her family in her new house.

"I'm so grateful for all of your help and support," she told the volunteers.

In addition to providing volunteers, General Motors and GMAC are sponsoring the Habitat house.

Volunteers will also landscape and clean up several Habitat lots in the area. GMAC Mortgage is donating \$100 to



Nancy Mahoney of Farmington Hills gathers debris May 31.

Habitat for Humanity of Oakland County for each female employee who volunteered at the Build.

"GMAC Mortgage has a lot of female employees who are active members of the community and women are a big part of the volunteerism spirit in the company," said Carol Johnson, community relations, GMAC Mortgage.

Women Build is a program

of Habitat for Humanity International, a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating poverty housing.

Women volunteers come together from all walks of life to swing hammers and raise roofs, actively participating in the solution for poverty housing - one family and one house at a time.

Since 1991, women crews have built more than 450 Habitat houses throughout the United States.

GMAC Mortgage Corp. is among the nation's top ten residential mortgage servicers and originators.

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Founded by Millard Fuller, along with his wife, Linda,

Habitat for Humanity International and its affiliates in more than 3,000 communities in 87 nations have built and sold more than 125,000 homes to partner families with no-profit, zero-interest mortgages. www.habitat.org.

There's much more to mental health than the absence of illness

Several years ago after spending many years studying and applying what I learned about psychopathology in the field of mental health, I was asked to consult with a company called Psychodynamic Research, Inc.

They were developing a special battery of interviews and tests to assess upper level management positions that were being considered for high-level promotions in a large newspaper company. They were



Leonard J. McCulloch

looking for indications of mental health, not mental illness. When I asked, "Well, just what is mental health?", the other researchers answered, "Well, it's the absence of mental illness."

More recently one of my readers pointed out that the articles in "Our Mental Health" column are very helpful in learning about the many different variations mental illness can take. He had read the papers on depression and anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and so forth.

He said, "If your column was to have an article on 'mental health,' what would you write about?"

Without thinking, I answered, "I'd only be able to say it's the absence of mental illness."

However, after reflecting and researching I came to the conclusion that there is much more to it.

After all, physical health is more than the absence of disease and injury. It requires maintenance and safe-keeping through good living and prevention.

So too with mental health. It requires good mental hygiene, psychological mindfulness, and prevention strategies.

EXPERT OPINIONS

Dr. Sigmund Freud was the first to be asked to define mental health. His answer was "To

do well in the world of work and love."

Dr. Carl Menninger, founder and director of the Menninger Institute, a premier mental health center in Topeka, Kansas, has written the following criteria in defining mental health:

- The ability to deal constructively with reality
- The capacity to adapt to change
- The capacity to find more satisfaction in giving than receiving
- The capacity to relate to other people in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness
- The capacity to direct one's basic drives and energies into constructive outlets
- The capacity to love.

Furthermore, experts at John Hopkins Medical School of Psychiatry point out the following mental health "ingredients":

- Reduce stress with techniques such as meditation and exercise
- Challenge your mind by learning new skills and maintaining old ones
- Cultivate satisfying relationships.

Guided by the belief that what happens to us in our early, formative years determines how mentally healthy or not we will be as adults, books are coming out with titles such as "Infant and Toddler Mental Health".

And institutions such as the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute in Farmington Hills promote caretaking/childrearing classes for new parents, which cover all the major areas of early psychological-life development.

RESILIENCE

In my readings I am finding that the concept of "resilience" is being talked about more frequently in the mental health field, at conferences and workshops, and in newsletters.

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, tragedy, and other significant sources of stress such as relationship problems, health crises, and

problems in the work place. Resilience means, "bouncing back from difficult experiences."

Developing resilience is a personal journey. We are all vulnerable to trauma, which can scar us.

A healthy ability to endure and overcome and learn from tragedy builds resilience - and scar tissue is said to be the strongest type: physically and emotionally.

The American Psychological Association offers a nice brochure (see resources below), which spells out many steps one can take to build resilience.

Some of them are:

- Make connections with people and assist others in their time of need
- Avoid seeing a crisis as an insurmountable problem
- Accept change as a part of living
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery
- Nurture a positive view of yourself
- Take care of yourself physically - a healthy body can only enhance the health of the mind and leave you primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

To sum up, I think that old Dr. Freud (with some modification) originally hit the nail on the head in his concise definition of mental health.

But we can add to his conclusion by considering what others since him have said. For now, the position will be taken that mental health means:

"To have stability in the world of love, work, spirituality, and with resiliency to enjoy the journey."

Resources: The APA Help Center on-line at www.helping.org; The Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute in Farmington Hills, (248) 851-3380.

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