

# The Mental Health Spectrum

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## What is the mental health spectrum?

The mental health spectrum is a way you can view mental health as a continuum which ranges from what thriving to struggling looks like for you. It ranges from different points for different people because wellness is subjective and different for everyone. For some people, wellness might involve living with mental health challenges but being equipped with skills and strategies to cope and live a fulfilling life.

## Why is viewing mental health as a spectrum useful?

The mental health spectrum enables us to look beyond the black and white categories of mental wellness and mental illness to recognise that we can be struggling irrespective of whether we have a diagnosed mental health condition. It also recognises that mental health is fluid and can fluctuate across time depending on what's happening in our lives and the supports we have.



## What the mental health spectrum looks like for me

I personally live with mental health conditions but have noticed that the way that I experience them fluctuates on a day-to-day, sometimes hourly, basis. For me, I sometimes find the fluctuation in the way I feel, think and behave, in itself, is a sign I may need to connect with people in my support network.

## Thriving

- Maintaining work and keeping up with my studies
- Looking after myself (cooking meals, cleaning)
- Not feeling overwhelmed by thoughts and emotions
- Going out and spending time with friends and family
- Engaging in activities that fill up my cup (such as the self-care strategies on the MYM app)

## Coping

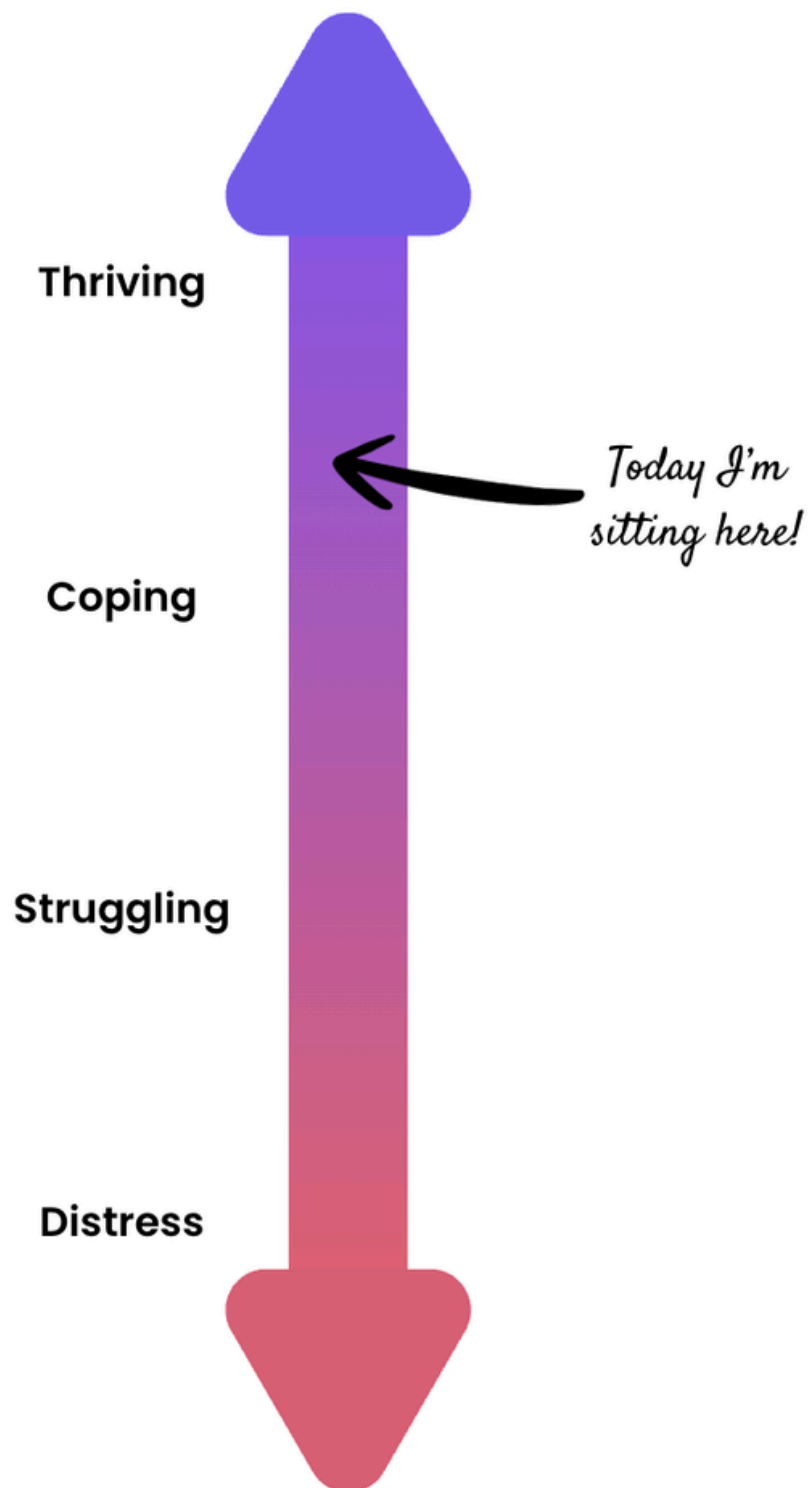
- Not paying attention at work and in class
- Eating takeout or frozen meals most days
- Noticing uncomfortable thoughts and feelings

## Struggling

- Calling in sick to work and not coming to class
- Losing appetite and eating less
- Feeling overwhelmed by thoughts and feelings

## Distress

- Time off work and dropping classes
- Feeling consumed by thoughts and feelings
- Completely isolating myself from those around me



This is an example of my mental health spectrum, but everyone's spectrum will look different, with different indicators and behaviours at various stages.

## **How can I use my mental health spectrum for myself and my care?**

Understanding your mental health as something that can have different impacts on you and change over time can enable you to:

- Identify what you can do in your daily life to maintain your mental wellbeing or improve your mental health (see the self-care tips on the Minding Your Mind app for more ideas)
- Recognise early warning signs that you may need further support
- Identify what strategies and supports help or don't help
- Feel more in control of your ability to improve your mental health or cope with existing mental health difficulties
- Explain your experience to others and advocate for your care

When I start recognising early warning signs that I may need more support, I like to go to a lake near my house to bring myself back into that thriving zone. I hope that learning more about the mental health spectrum has been useful in understanding that mental wellness and mental health challenges look different for everyone!

Bye bye for now!

- Tara

