

Towards Flourishing: A Mental Health Promotion Strategy Used to Address Maternal Mental Health

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/towardsflourishing/index.html>

What is Towards Flourishing?

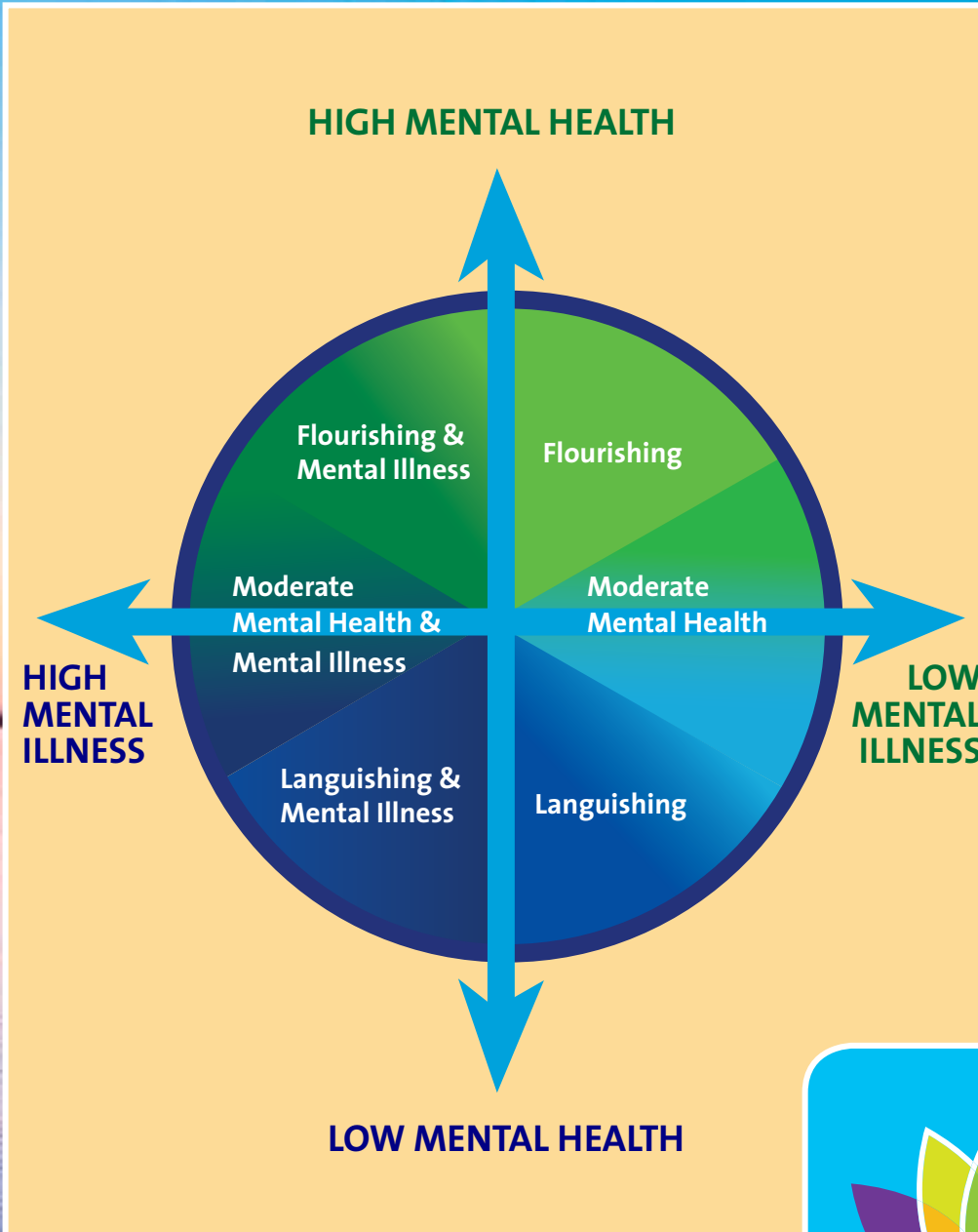
- The Towards Flourishing (TF) project is a new initiative aimed at promoting mental well-being among women and their families.
- TF is a four year participatory research project that is currently funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Project timeline completion – Jan 2015.
- TF is a multi-level approach to mental health promotion and practice embedded within the public health system.
- The TF strategy focuses on promoting positive mental health; as well as preventing mental distress and illness.

Why do we need the Towards Flourishing approach?

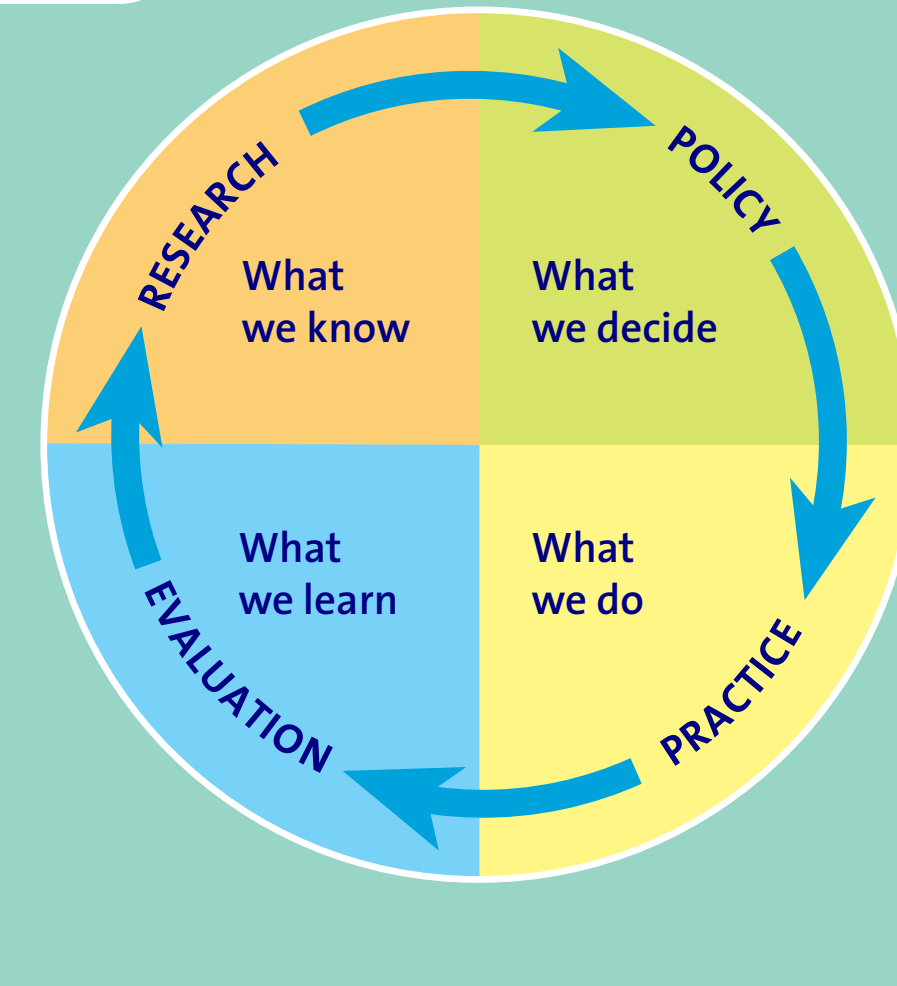
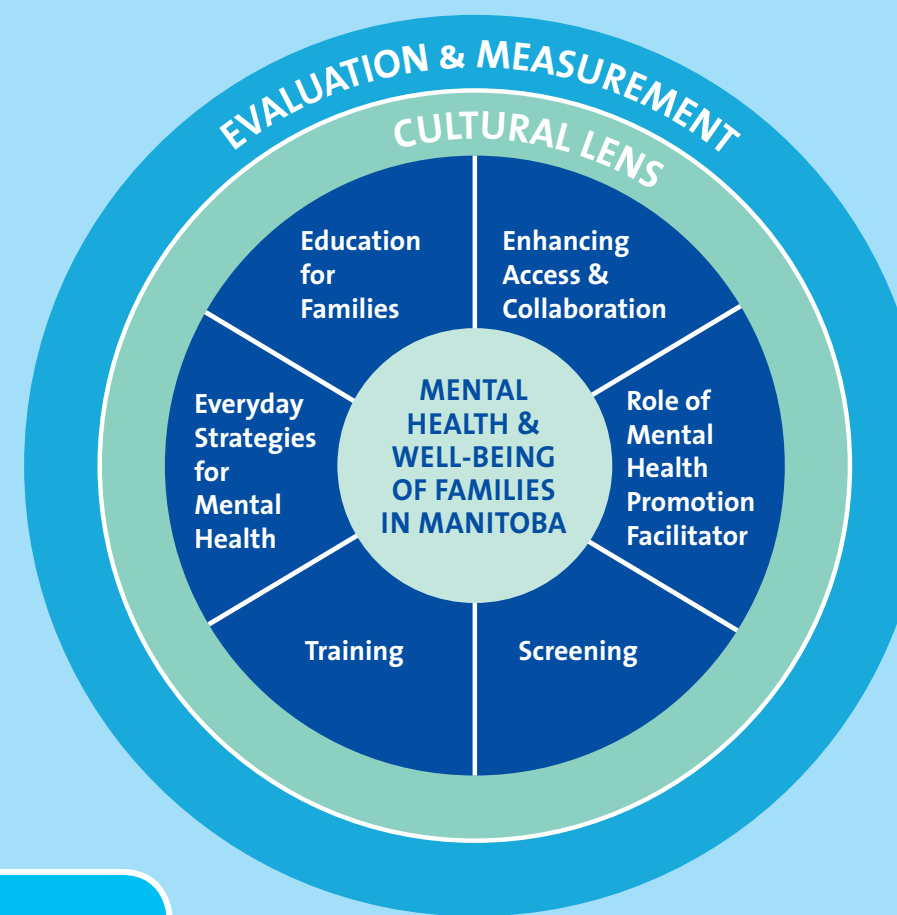
- Emotional distress in the perinatal period has been deemed a *public health concern* because it is highly prevalent.
- Studies suggest that 11% to 14% of women experience some degree of post-natal depression or anxiety.
- Less frequent, but of significant concern is the risk of suicide, infanticide, or psychosis during the postpartum period.
- Maternal mental health problems are shown to adversely affect child development.
- We all need to have positive mental health.

Who does the Towards Flourishing Strategy target?

- An existing public health home visiting program called Families First was targeted to embed the TF Strategy within.
- Three pilot sites within Winnipeg helped provide the design for established sites.
- Eighteen sites through Manitoba that participate with the Families First program were established, covering about 3/4 of the province.
- The mothers and families, or service users of Families First within these established sites receive the TF Strategy.
- Mental health professionals called Mental Health Promotion Facilitators are utilized to collaborate with Families First, to support their delivery of the strategy.



Towards Flourishing Mental Health Promotion Strategy



How is Towards Flourishing being offered?

- The dual continuum model designed by Corey Keyes offers the foundation for the TF approach. This model by Keyes (2002) stresses that mental health is a complex state and not merely the absence of mental illness symptoms.
- A multi-level approach of the Mental Health Promotion Strategy is offered.
- Up-skilling of the existing public health workforce is achieved through education, training, and consultation.
- Mothers and their families are offered mental health education. Simple, everyday strategies aimed at promoting well-being are taught by the home visitor.
- Maternal mental health measurement tools are administered to new mothers. If concerns arise, the mental health promotion facilitator is consulted by the public health team.
- Additional services and resources are offered for mothers whose mental health needs are beyond the scope of the home visiting services.

When do we use Towards Flourishing?

- The mental health promotion strategy of Towards Flourishing is being offered for any family receiving Families First.
- Research is being gathered from families during the postpartum period of 6 weeks to one year.
- The education and simple strategies used are designed to offer significant results within populations.
- It is possible to adapt this strategy to other populations in the future.

When will results be known?

- A step-wedge research design is being utilized.
- At regular intervals, the mental health of mothers receiving Towards Flourishing is measured.
- Upon completion of the project, we will be able to offer scientific results that will demonstrate whether the TF strategy made a difference in the well-being of participants.
- Early findings from the pilot sites suggest there were many benefits from the strategy. Women acknowledged the benefit of being provided an opportunity to discuss their mental health with the Families first home visitor that they have developed a relationship with.

References

Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: from languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 43, 207-22.
Public Health Agency of Canada (2006) *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada*. Ottawa, Ontario: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Acknowledgement

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