



We all have two “**healths**” (a word that the computer doesn’t comprehend but I hope that you will by the end of this article) that determine how well we will live out our lives. The first one we are most conscious of is our **physical** health that we’ll call **PH** for the purpose of this article. The second is our **mental** health, to be known as **MH**. We all have and need

both in order to live our lives.

Let’s start with the one we are most conscious of, our physical health or PH. We don’t give this health much thought unless something goes wrong. For example: You scrape your knee as a kid and the associated pain tells you to watch out for that action and take better care of yourself. Your parents may tell you to “be more careful” and you may start to pay more attention to your PH.

Around the teenage years, with hormones raging, some may start to pay more attention to the PH as they begin to exercise and work out in order to attract the opposite sex. Protein shakes and perhaps even steroids may come into play. Some of these muscle building steroids can have an effect on your MH (mental health) as well.

While the anabolic steroids may help build up PH muscle mass, they may also effect the MH with increased aggressiveness, depression, self-harm and even suicide.

An occurrence with one will usually result in an occurrence with the other.

For example: As a very young child I fell through the center of the inner tube I was floating on into water over my head. My PH was in serious jeopardy until my father rescued me after having swallowed what seemed to be copious amounts of water. To this day, I do not enjoy swimming even though I forced myself to learn how. My PH had a lingering effect on my MH.

While we give our MH little thought, it has a major influence on how we will live out our lives. It begins by being influenced (or controlled) by the genes we are born with. These we have no direct control over, but if we are consciously aware of the behaviour they are responsible for we may be able to modify it. For example: There was a classmate in my primary school class who stuttered. It seemed that everyone in his family did the same thing. He didn’t like to talk because of this disability, but today with help I believe this can be overcome or at

least lessened. I don't know what his home life was like but his school experience was not a happy one as many classmates would imitate and tease him. That could "scar" his MH for life. As we pass through childhood we develop what are called Early Life Decisions or **ELDs**. These are instances in our childhood that influence our adult decision making. While we all have these, very often we are not aware of them. For example: I was born during the war years where you were rationed with what you could buy. One of the rationed items was candy that when the coupon became valid my father would bring home in a little brown paper bag. One day he brought home a little brown paper bag and put it on the top shelf. Now, I knew that had to be candy and so while my parents were out working on their "victory" garden, I climbed up on the counter, opened the cupboard door and actually climbed up the shelves to the top. With no free hands to climb down with it I opened the bag and my mouth and filled my mouth with their whole year's supply of pepper.

I came off the top shelf and hit the floor without making a sound. From this you now know how to shut up a crying kid – fill his mouth with pepper! While I have no recollection of this occurrence, I do know that to this day I hate pepper and couldn't eat anything with pepper in it until my father told me this story. Today, I can eat food with limited amount of pepper in it but you would have to pay me money before I would add any myself. My MH does not like pepper and everyone has their own set of ELDs that influence MH. These ELDs are all based on emotion and not rational thinking. Unknown ELDs may help explain why some people do the things they do.

As adults there are **Significant Emotional Events** or **SEEs** that also influence your MH. These events occur throughout our adult life and can play anywhere from an insignificant role to a life threatening outcome. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is one outcome that all too often has tragic endings. COVID 19 is a granddaddy of a SEE for many. What may be a bearable SEE (let's say the threat of a divorce or even just a break up) to one person; because of genes and ELDs can become an "over the edge" event. A SEE that occurred recently from the threat of a divorce saw the father kill his two small girls. To the normal, rational, MH person this makes no sense but in that person's MH mental state it was the logical way to show his displeasure to the person who was, at least in his mind, hurting him.

Let's look at the man that carried out America's greatest mass murder to date. On October 1, 2017, 64 year old, Stephen Paddock killed 60 strangers, plus himself and wounded a further 867 in Las Vegas. A reason for him to commit this atrocity has never been determined. The FBI stated it was the result of a "complex merging of stressors" which could be the politically correct way to say "Dammed if we know."

Stephen had never been in trouble with the law and those who knew him over the years described him as a quiet loner. He had been divorced twice, but dealing in real estate made him worth about two million dollars at one point.

Some said that he had recently been in declining health and appeared despondent, but nothing serious.

So, what could be some contributing factors to his declining MH?

1. The aches and pains of getting older brought on the realization his PH was only going to get worse until death ends it.
2. His family genes possibly predisposed him toward being despondent with his PH
3. His ELDs very likely contributed to his MH decline as his father was a bank robber and at Stephen's age of seven he was sentenced to 20 years in jail. While we don't know what his ELDs may have been by this, it is not uncommon the child will say that they hate their father, but subconsciously look for his love and approval by imitating him. I remember my younger (about seven years old) cousin and I hiding under his bed because his father was drunk again and beating his mother. He told me in all sincerity that he hated his father and was never going to drink when he grew up. Yet, he killed three people as an adult while driving drunk. ELDs are a powerful influencer of our MH.
4. It is difficult to determine if there were SEEs in his life that contributed to his decision to seek revenge for the life he had lived or to show his deceased father that he also could be bad.
5. It was a "complex merging of stressors" that pushed him over the edge.

So what are some signs that your MH may be declining?

- a) An increase in sudden bouts of anger over trivial things.
- b) Increased bad moodiness and you're not sure why.
- c) Have difficulty in completing tasks. Start things and may never complete them.
- d) A feeling of being overwhelmed at times.
- e) You are more prone to argue or suppress the anger and fume over what are trivial things.
- f) Things become more "black or white" and you have difficulty seeing the other person's point of view.
- g) Become more withdrawn and may even begin to shun old friends.
- h) You begin to feel that the whole world is "going to hell in a handbasket."
- i) Life is not as much fun and enjoyable as it used to be.
- j) Feeling of depression and thoughts of this life is not worth living.
- k) If life is no longer worth living I might as well go out with a "bang." (Oct 1, 2017, Las Vegas)

Life and MH has its ups and downs, but what can I do about it?

1. Positive thinking has to be the best antidote for negative feelings. Just take a few seconds to think positive thoughts.
2. Count your blessings. There are millions of people in this world who would risk their life to be in your shoes.
3. When you first wake up in the morning set goals to have a great day. When I wake up, I first thank the Lord that I see the ceiling and set a few goals to accomplish.
4. Exercise. Exercise is good for the PH as well as the MH.
5. Have a hobby doing something that you like.
6. Take a break from your daily routine. Getting your mind off of the negativity even for a short while serves to improve your MH.
7. Talk to someone. By talking about what is bothering you, you are able to look at solutions to lower the stressor and improve your MH
8. Practice meditation and/or confide in your church for assistance.
9. Make it a practice to help someone else.
10. Have a pet, like a dog (not a snake) who will always be willing to listen to you and provide unconditional love. That can do wonders to your MH.
11. Write things down and count your blessings.
12. Seek professional help if needed.