



MENTAL FITNESS

What is Mental Fitness?

Mental Fitness refers to a person's capacity to be **self-determined**.

- Self-determination refers to a **person's capacity to think about, plan, and act** on personal decisions that contribute to emotional, social and physical development.

Our capacity to make positive changes in our daily routines, whether eating healthy, being physically active, or living tobacco-free is impacted by our Mental Fitness.

What are Mental Fitness Needs?

- Mental fitness is fostered in environments and relationships that address important psychological needs. These include the interrelated needs for **autonomy, relatedness, and competence**.
- Current research suggests that **satisfaction of all three needs** is associated with emotional well-being or resilience, as well as participation in healthy lifestyle behaviours during middle childhood and adolescence.
- When mental fitness needs are **not met**, youth may be at **higher risk** for experiencing difficulties related to their **emotional, social, and physical development**.

Autonomy refers to our need for personal freedom to make choices or decisions that affect our lives.

Relatedness refers to our need for connection to and closeness with family, peers, and other significant individuals.

Competence refers to our need for recognizing and using our personal gifts and strengths in achieving personal goals.

How Does Mental Fitness Relate to Other Lifestyle Variables?

Behaviours and Feelings

- Increases in mental fitness are associated with increases in pro-social* behaviour.
- Increases in mental fitness are also associated with decreases in oppositional* behaviour.
- At moderate and high levels of mental fitness, increases in mental fitness are associated with increases in pleasant feelings (pleasant* vs. unpleasant* feelings).

* *Examples of Pro-social and Oppositional Behaviours, and Pleasant and Unpleasant Feelings*

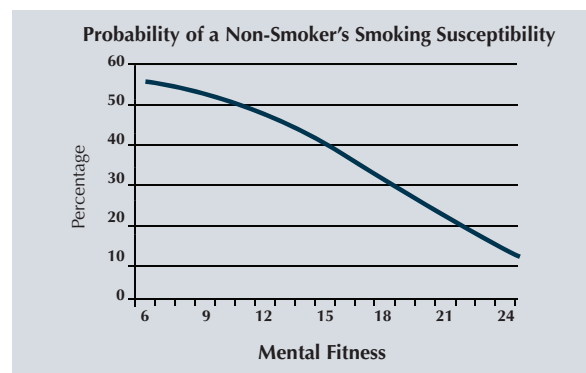
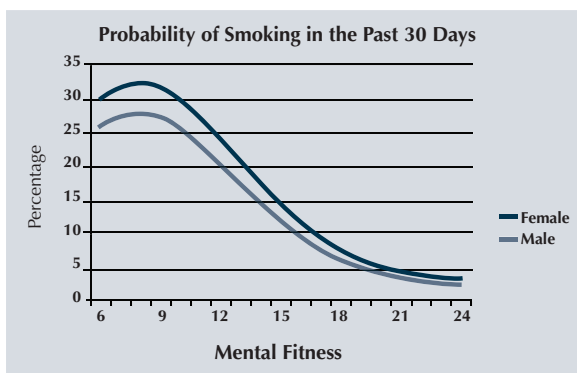
- Pro-social: helpful, respectful, thoughtful
- Oppositional: defiant, disrespectful, rude
- Pleasant: happy, energetic, active
- Unpleasant: sad, concerned, anxious

Smoking in the past 30 days

- Increases in mental fitness are associated with reduced smoking in both males and females.

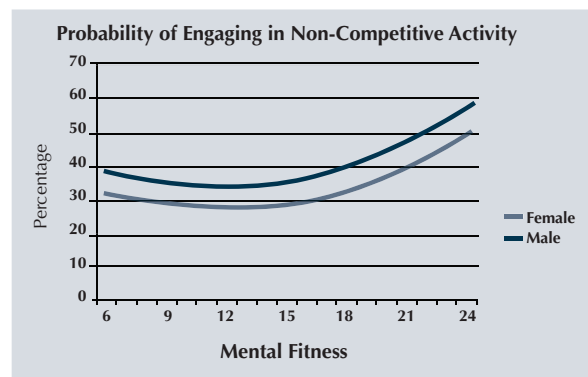
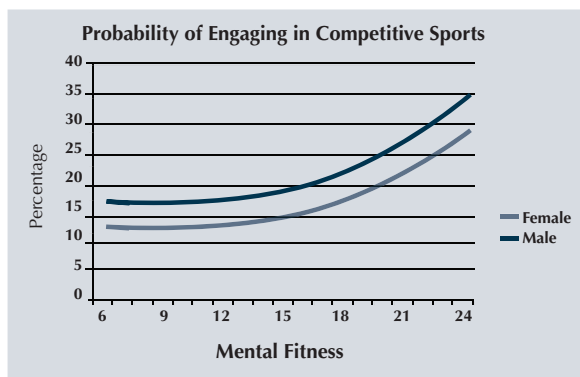
Susceptibility to Smoking

- At low levels of mental fitness, both genders appear to be highly susceptible to smoking behaviours. As mental fitness increases, the level of susceptibility falls.



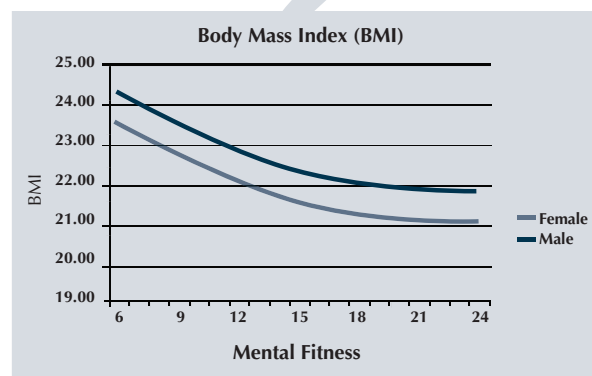
Competitive & Non-Competitive Sports

- As mental fitness increases, the probability of engaging in competitive activity (e.g. sports) almost doubles.
- While not as large, an increase in mental fitness is also associated with an increase in participation in non-competitive activity (e.g. intramurals).



Body Mass Index

- Body Mass Index is a measure of a person's weight in comparison to their height.
- At low levels of mental fitness, BMI tends to be relatively high for both males and females. As mental fitness increases there is a decrease in BMI scores. This decrease levels off as mental fitness increases to high levels.



- *These results were obtained from the 2006-2007 New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey.*
- *The survey data were gathered from over 33,000 students in the province.*
- *The majority of the students surveyed were in grades 6 to 12 with some grade 5 students included.*
- *184 schools were included in the survey.*

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