

# MENTAL HEALTH AND BEING YOUNG & QUEER

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# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- . . . the state of our emotional/psychological functioning.
- . . . concerns about personal meaning and finding our place in the world to managing severe and persistent, diagnosable mental illnesses that are potentially debilitating.
- When a person's emotional and psychological state is impaired to the point that they struggle to function or experience significant distress . . . Regardless of their "diagnosis" it could be said that that person is suffering from a Mental Illness.

# WHY TALK ABOUT MH?

- About 20% of all persons will personally experience at least an episode of mental illness. The rate for Queers is around 40% (Chakraborty, A. et al. (2011)). The rate for Queers of colour (ex. Latino) may be as high as 80%.
- The onset of some of the most debilitating mental illnesses is between the ages of 16 – 30 . . .
- The major transitions and stressors on young adults and “Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation . . .” MAY be significant triggers for the onset of mental illness

# A COUPLE OF THINGS I THINK I KNOW

- There is a complex relationship between how genetic predisposition and environmental stressors work together to produce mental health problems.
  - Increasingly we understand that social factors have a direct and profound affect on our mental health and our attempts to treat mental illness. Radical shifts in economy, community, diversity (racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, etc.) are creating new stressors that we are needing new or better tools to manage.
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# GENETICS & STRESS



Stress . . . Daily happenings, social context, expectations

Genetics . . . Biologically determined limits to our capacity

This is the life that we're able to build by "channelling" the stress

# GENETICS & STRESS

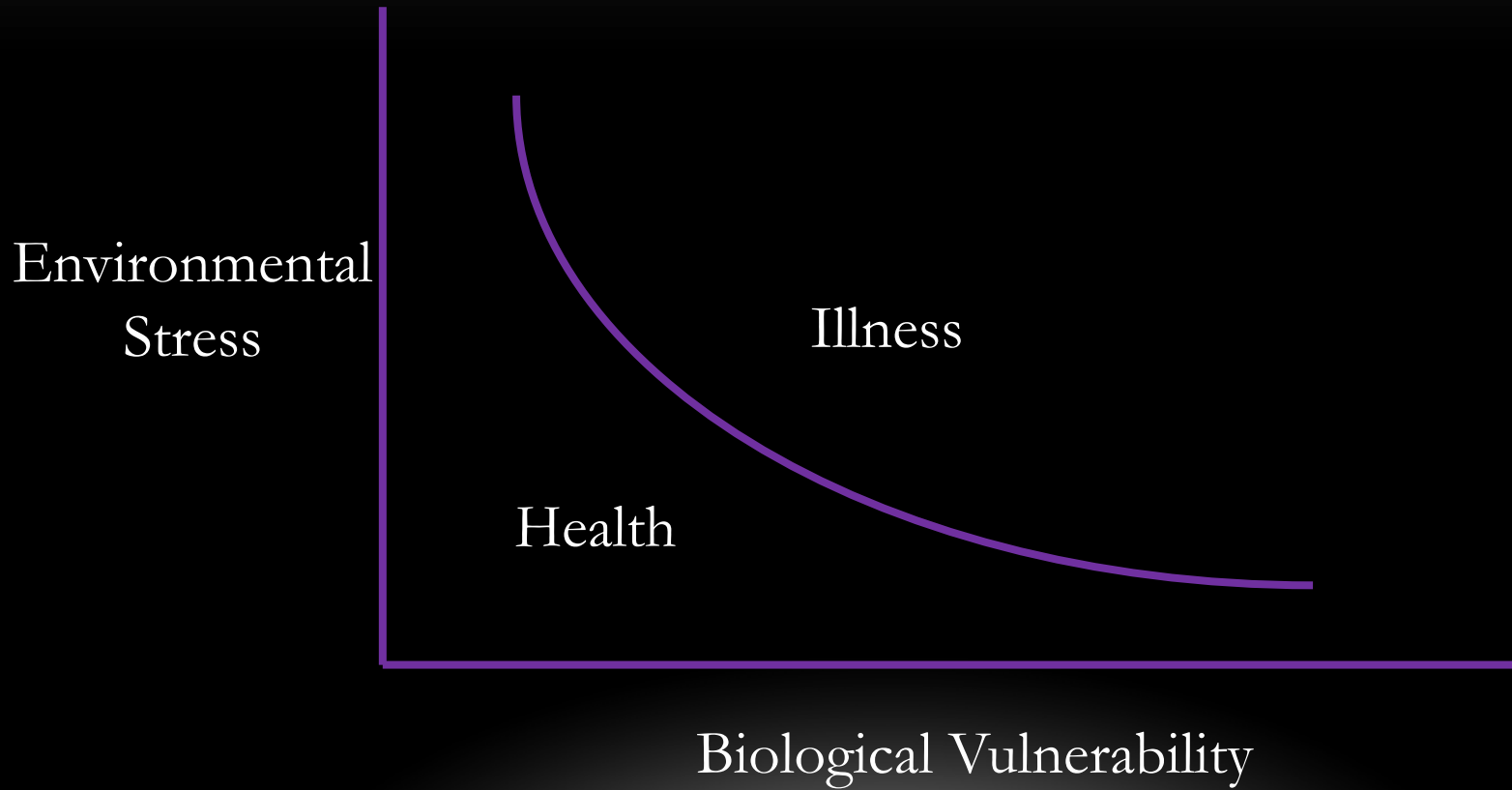


What happens if the funnel is too narrow?

What happens if we pour too quickly?

What happens if more liquid is spilling out of the funnel than is neatly being collected in the vessel?

# BIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT



# SPECIAL MENTION M.I.

- Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Suicide
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Gender Dysphoria
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# FUTURE SHOCK AND MENTAL HEALTH/ILLNESS

- Alvin Toffler – Future Shock
- Thomas Homer-Dixon – Ingenuity Gap
- Robert Kegan – In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life
- Mary Pipher – The Shelter of Each Other
- Each of these authors describe problems related to rapid social/technological change and our inability to keep up. The water is being poured too quickly for our funnels!!!

# WHAT KIND OF THINGS ARE WE FACING TODAY?

- Renewed and sophisticated forms of racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia
- Gender and sexual fluidity in the context of a still sexually repressed society
- Complex expectations around body image and popular, gendered concepts of beauty
- Community erosion and dislocation and increased pressures to support the “community” . . .
- Normalized substance use, novel social pressures (social media?), new and dramatic financial challenges,

# SO WHAT DO WE DO?

- Acknowledge the reality that you may be experiencing problems with your mental health.
  - Talk openly about mental health problems to decrease isolation and seek appropriate help.
  - Don't be a victim . . . Actively contribute to those activities that highlight and resist the forces that are undermining our collective wellness.
  - Consider medical intervention, medication and therapy as options to assist you.
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# HOW DO YOU STAY SANE?

- I have developed a 6 point plan for my personal sanity preservation (you can be the judge of my success):
    - Identity
    - Competence/Excellence
    - Analysis
    - Independence
    - Process
    - Action
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