# **Chapter Five**

# **Prevention and Promotion**

Concepts of prevention and promotion are taken from public health into community mental health. Previously, psychologists were preoccupied with treatment of psychological problems. The idea that mental health problems could be prevented and promoted gained popularity in recent years.

* 1. **The Ecological Perspective in Prevention and promotion**

A preventive orientation affirms how social systems can be organized to have a positive impact on the development of those individuals who make it up. The essence of the ecological perspective is to construct an understanding of the interrelationships of social structures and social processes of the groups, organizations, and communities in which we live and work.

According to ecological perspective, people and their environment are interrelated. The physical and social environment of people could not be seen in separation. Physical health and emotional wellbeing is depend not only on individual level factors, but also on societal dynamics and circumstances (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Therefore, the ecological approach involves the development of perspectives on how social systems and communities may be characterized and how the reciprocal relationship between individuals and social settings can be understood and modified.

In addition to the contribution of the ecological framework, ***the bio-psychosocial model*** has also played a significant role in showing that mental health diagnosis, prevention, and intervention requires recognizing the influence of biological, psychological and social factors in mental health. Orford (2008), however, suggested that this model did not challenge the existing biological model of mental health. Unlike the bio-psychosocial model, the ecological perspective believes that social contexts (rather than psychological or medical problems) are the fundamental cause of major social problems (Perkins, 2007).

The ecological perspective according to Tricket (2009) tries to *understand people in community context and the community context itself*. Tricket further stated that the ecological perspective generally emphasizes on:

* Coping and adaptation ability of individuals in community context.
* People as active agents in their ecology.
* The role of community tradition, custom, culture, norm, and social structures in affecting social and individual life.
  + 1. **Levels of Ecological Perspective**

Community psychology emphasize the principle of interdependence. The concept of interdependence is the basic principle of the ecological perspective (Kelly, 1966, 1968, 1997a, 1997b; Kelly & Hess, 1987; Trickett, 1984, 1987, 1996). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that individuals, societies, and the levels between them are interdependent, and their contributions to individual behavior and social problems may overlap in different ways. He identified five ecological levels in the social system: *the micro system, the meso system, the exo system, the macro system and the chromo system*. Bronfenbrenner focused mainly on the interactions between social systems at different ecological levels and how these social systems and people affect each other. The ecological levels of analysis helps to clarify how a single event or problem has multiple causes and to illustrate multiple answers to an important question for community psychology.

The following diagram that shows ecological level sand the discussion bellow it, however, is different in some details from Bronfenbrenner’s’ approach.



Figure 4.1.1 Ecological levels/framework

The community psychology ecological framework includes:

* **The Individual**: The individual is nested within the other levels. The individual chooses his or her relationships or environments to some extent and influences them in many ways; likewise, they influence the individual. Each person is involved in systems at multiple ecological levels (e.g., family and friends, workplace, and neighborhood). The goals of preventive interventions will be to increase personal capacities to address problems in communities. Many preventive approaches promote social-emotional competence skills for adapting to challenging contexts, and ecological transitions from one context to another, such as entering school or becoming a parent (Weissberg & Kumpfer, 2003).
* ***The micro system***: the environment/system in which a person interacts with others regularly (e.g. families, neighbors, friendship networks, school, classrooms, athletic teams, church, hospital, musical groups, day care centers, self-help groups, etc.). In micro systems, individuals form interpersonal relationships, assume social roles, and share activities (Maton & Salem, 1995). Microsystems are more than simply the sum of their individual members; they are social units with their own dynamics. For example, family therapists have long focused on how families function as systems beyond their individual members (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Members have roles, differential power in making decisions, reactions to the actions of other members, etc. Microsystems can be important sources of support for their members and also sources of conflict and burdens.
* **The Organizations:** are systems larger than micro systems and have a formal structure: a title, mission, policies, meeting or work times, supervisory relationships, and so on. Organizations, such as human service and health care settings, treatment programs, schools, workplaces, neighborhood associations, cooperative housing units, religious congregations, and community coalitions and others are important forms of community in that they affect people who associate with, what resources are available to them, and how they define and identify themselves.

Organizations, for example Jigijiga University, often consist of sets of smaller micro systems, such as classes, activities, departments, staff, administrators, and boards and so on. Large community organizations usually work through committees. However, organizations are not simply the sum of their parts, but rather the dynamics of the whole organizational hierarchy and culture. In turn, organizations can be parts of larger social units. A local congregation may be part of a wider religious body. A neighborhood association offers a way for citizens to influence city government.

* **The Localities:** Although the term community has meanings at many levels of analysis, one prominent meaning refers to geographic localities, including rural areas, small towns, urban neighborhoods, or entire cities. Localities usually have administrators, local economies, media, systems of social, educational and health services, and other institutions that influence individual quality of life.

Localities may be understood as sets of organizations or micro systems. Individuals could influence the wider community if they work alongside other citizens in the organization or micro system. An association of neighborhood residents is an organization, while the entire neighborhood is a locality. That neighborhood may also host micro systems of teen friends, adults who meet for coffee, and parents and children who gather at a playground. However, a locality is not simply the sum of its citizens, micro systems, or community organizations. Its history, cultural traditions, and qualities as a whole community surround each of those levels.

* ***The macro system***: a system that is associated with formulation and regulation of ideologies, social structures, norms, and values (with in which the micro, meso and exo systems operate) such as laws, broad economic and social forces, political parties, corporations, policies, social movements, international labor unions, gender roles, culture, social class, etc. Macro systems exercise influence through policies and specific decisions, such as legislation and court decisions, and through promoting ideologies and social norms. Ideals of individual autonomy greatly influence U.S. culture and the discipline of psychology. Mass media communicate subtle forms of racial stereotyping and cultural expectations for thinness, especially for women. Macro systems also form contexts within which the other levels function, such as the economic climate affecting businesses. But systems at other levels can influence macro systems through social advocacy or through actions such as buying locally grown foods.
* ***The chromo system***: related to dimensions of time, socio-historical circumstances.
  + 1. **Principles of the Ecological Perspective**

Adapting concepts from the biological field of ecology, James Kelly, Edison Trickett, and colleagues proposed four key ecological principles in understanding human environments: *interdependence, cycling of resources, adaptation, and succession* (Kelly, 1966, 1979a; Trickett, 1984; Trickett, Barone, & Watts, 2000; Trickett, Kelly, & Todd, 1972). These are principles about characteristics of settings that govern people in their environment.

For example, workplaces differ in the extent of interdependence among workers, in what resources are exchanged, and in what processes are needed to adapt to the setting. Of course, these factors can influence individual life greatly in schools, families, workplaces, and other settings. This framework guides where and how to observe environments. Let us look at these principles in greater detail.

* **Interdependence**: different parts of the ecological system are interdependent. For a public school, interdependent components include students, teachers, administrators, secretaries, janitors and other staff, parents, board members, and district taxpayers. Any actions or problems of any of these groups can affect everyone else. State and national governments and local and international economies can also affect local schooling.

Consider the ecology of a family as another example. If one family member gets the flu, everyone else is affected in one way or another. If a young child is sick, an older member of the family will likely miss work or school to stay at home with the sick child. Others in the family may also become ill. If the primary caregiver gets the flu, meal preparation, washing, and a host of other daily operations for every other member of the family are affected.

The principle of interdependence tells us that any change in a system will have multiple consequences—some of them unanticipated and perhaps unwanted. So that, change efforts within a system should concern to address all possible interdependent components of the system.

* **Adaptation**: refers to people’s capacity in coping and adapting to the changing conditions in the ecology. This ecological principle concerns the transactions between person and environment. This is a two-way process where individuals cope with the constraints or demands of an environment, and environments adapt to their members (Trickett et al., 1972). For example, recall how you adapted to the demands of Jigjiga University. To adapt, you probably learned new values, rules without losing your unique identity. Some jobs require changes in appearance, changes in relating to people, or changes in schedules. Environments also adapt to their members. At a higher level of analysis, an organization that does not respond to the needs of its members will find it difficult to retain member involvement or attract new members. For individuals and social systems to survive, they need to adapt to each other (Kelly et al., 2000). Social settings also adapt to the larger environments in which they are nested (Kelly et al., 2000). For instance a local school system adapts yearly to changes in the requirements and funding of local, state, and national government as well as to changes in the student makeup of the schools. Changes in technology, the economy, and cultural ideas about education also affect local schools. A further implication of the adaptation principle is that every environment demands different skills. Skills students need are somewhat different from those for factory workers or homemakers or police officers. For example, consider the role of neighborhood contexts in parenting. Effective parenting in dangerous neighborhoods is more directive, setting more rules and firmer limits, than effective parenting in safer neighborhoods (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996).
* **Recycling of resources**: refers to the identification, allocation, and utilization of resources within the ecosystem. It specifies that any system can be understood by examining how resources are used, distributed, conserved, and transformed (Trickett, Kelly, & Todd, 1972). From an ecological perspective, social settings have many more resources than are commonly recognized. Community psychologists can help to define and utilize resources that have been overlooked (e.g., students at a school for an anti-bullying program). Community resources such as nonprofessional groups; social networks, voluntary groups, social capital, self-help groups, etc. can serve as resources to help mentally ill people. Kloos, et al. (2012, p.142) identified:
  + ***Personal resources****:* include individual talents, knowledge, experiences, strengths, or other qualities that can address challenges in a setting.
  + ***Social resources****:* occur in relationships among members of the setting, including shared beliefs, values, formal rules, informal norms, group events, and shared sense of community.
  + ***Physical resources****:* physical aspects of a setting are resources, such as a library with rooms for group study, quiet nooks for individual study, and a place to take a break.
* **Succession**: Settings and social systems change over time so that the other three principles (interdependence, resource cycling, and adaptation) must be understood in that perspective (Trickett et al., 1972). For instance, over time, patterns of partner interdependence, the cycling of resources, such as emotional support, and the adaptation of each partner to the other can change without their noticing. The nature of the relationship changes over time. With successful adaptation and cycling of resources, the relationship continues and may deepen. If adaptation is difficult over time or needed resources are not available or utilized, perhaps partners drift apart. You can see succession in these relationship “settings” when there is a divorce, at the start of new relationships, and when children make decisions about their life commitments based on their parents’ experiences.

An implication of understanding succession in settings is that psychologists need to understand a system’s history before they plan an intervention in that system. In trying to make a neighborhood a safer place, what have people tried to do in the past? What worked? How did the problems develop? Psychologists should also carefully consider the likely consequences of the intervention, including possible unintended consequences.

How can the community continue the intervention after the formal involvement of the psychologist ends?

* For example, we can see the succession of relationship “settings” when there is a divorce. We need *to understand a system’s history before we plan an intervention in that system*.

The ecological perspective can help us (Kloos, et al., 2012; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Orford, 2002):

* To apply the ecological principles to prevention and promotion
* To increase the interdependence between the community researcher and the host community. The need to work with systems and with those who control the system (e.g. politicians, clan leaders, elders, and local communities).
* To use locally identified resources of the community through research
* To know social problems are interrelated and attempts to solve problems may lead to other problems (nonlinear aspect of social change)
* Etc.
  + 1. **The Ecological Assessment**

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) stated that there are three ways in environment assessment a) participants perception about their environment b) contextual (setting characteristics) and c) transactional analysis on the dynamic interplay of environment and behavior.

1. **The Social Ecology: Perceived Ecology**

The social ecology refers to the perceived ecology by the members of the ecology. Here we ask do the people perceive their ecology (environment) as empowering, oppressive, supportive, or flexible, etc. Rudolf Moos and colleagues developed a social climate approach in assessing shared perception of members towards their environment (Kloos, et al., 2012). According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), the social environment, could include the following elements:

* **Relationships**: This dimension of settings concerns mutual supportiveness, involvement, and cohesion of its members (Moos, 2002). The social climate approach looks for evidence of relationship qualities in each setting. How coercive or supportive the environment appears to its members. For example, we may ask whether the people understand their people, authorities, and social institutions as supportive, caring, compassionate, oppressive, and so on.
* **Personal development**: This dimension of settings concerns whether individual autonomy, growth, and skill development are fostered in the settings (Moos, 2002). How the people view their setting as favorable to achieve their need for autonomy, independence, personal growth, and skill. Personal development is closely related to Kelly’s adaptation principle (Kloose, et al., 2012). Here we may ask the independence of workers in organizations, members in a community, and students in school.
* **System maintenance and change**: This dimension of settings concerns settings’ emphasis on order, clarity of rules and expectations, and control of behavior (Moos, 2002). It deals with how people understand their ecology, setting or system as flexible or rigid. *Predictable ecology*, refers to a system that is characterized by rigid, immutable, authoritarian roles and responsibilities. This kind of ecology may bread the feeling of boredom and resentment among the members. On the other hand, the *flexible ecology*, is characterized by openness to change and innovation. Extreme flexibility can bring about fear, confusion and uncertainty.

1. **The Objective Ecology**

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) stated that the second approach in ecological assessment involves assessing the objective characteristics of the environment (ecology) in spite of the perception and behavior of its participants. The assessment process may involve the use of:

* **Observation**. The community researcher can carefully observe:
  + *The facilities in the environment* such as schools, hospitals, roads, electricity, buildings, etc.
  + *Residents’ autonomy*
  + *Social integration within neighborhood*
  + *Physical integration of the community with the community*
  + *Physical characteristics of the ecology:* including the architecture, type of houses, weather, position of the windows,
  + *Time related issues* such as when class starts and ends, the time when the hospital (in the community) is opened and closed, time of major activities (e.g. working time, time of drug addiction, etc.)
* ***Demographic and social data***: involves using information about the community on socio economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion, crime rates, infant mortality, and maternal mortality could be used to understand the setting.

1. **Transactional Analysis: Person-environment Interaction**

Linney (2000, cited in Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005) states that the transactional approach considers the interaction of the environment and behavior of the persons. For example Bekker’s ***Behavior-setting*** shows how behavior varies based on peoples’ physical environment.

* 1. **Mental Health Prevention**

WHO defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. According to *World Health Report* (2001, cited in WHO, 2002) *About 450 million people suffer from mental and behavioral disorders worldwide. One person in four will develop one or more of these disorders during their lifetime.* (WHO, 2004 p.13). Mental health disorders often result in:

* Emotional problems (personal distress)
* Diminished overall quality of life
* Stigma and discrimination
* Alienation

Mental disorders may require longer time for treatment and they are associated with unemployment, absence from work due to the disorder. Indirectly, these problems lead unemployment, to economic insecurity, and poverty among the family members and the community (WHO, 2002). According to Ethiopian Ministry of Health document (2013) Substance abuse is a highly prevalent problem in Ethiopia, particularly among the young population. Alcohol, khat and cannabis are the commonly abused substances in Ethiopia. Substance abuse and mental illnesses are frequently co-occurring disorders. The report, furthermore, showed the estimated mental disorders in Ethiopia as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mental disorder | Prevalence (%) | Mental disorder | Prevalence (%) |
| Psychosis | 0.3% | Bipolar disorder | 0.5% |
| Depressive disorder | 2% | Epilepsy | 1.4% |
| Developmental disorders | 0.6% | Behavioral disorders | 1.9% |
| Dementia | 0.1% | Alcohol use disorder | 5% |
| Suicide attempt/Deliberate Self Harm | 0.1% |  |  |

**Defining prevention**

Literally, prevention comes from Latin *praevenre; preae* “before” and *venire* to “come”. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*(2004) defines prevention as keeping something from happening.

The medical model of prevention focuses on preventing certain illnesses having identifiable causes (etiology) from occurring. The public health model is related to reduce the incidence of physical disorders. Most people were victims of acute diseases such as malaria, typhoid, diarrhea, etc. however, improvement in sanitation and the introduction of vaccines has led to the successful prevention of different disorders.

Unlike the physical disorders, mental health disorders don’t have single causes rather they are caused by micro, meso, and macro system factors. Even though mental health disorders do not have single identifiable causes, prevention and promotion of in mental health is important. In addition, WHO (2002) asserted that preventive strategies need to be conducted before the onset (incidence) of mental health disorders.

Gerald Caplan used the concept of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention in mental health.

**Primary prevention**: focus on entire population (when they are not in a condition of distress). The goal is reducing the incidence (onset) of new mental disorder cases.

**Secondary prevention**: targets at people showing early signs of a mental disorder. It is about early detection and treatment.

* + *Case identification*: Early and reliable recognition of disorder (e.g. people who are at risk; argue with coworkers, children with learning difficulty, shy or withdrawn children, etc.)

**Tertiary prevention**: interventions aimed at reducing the possible disability that may result from the disorder. This is called rehabilitation for individuals. It can also target at avoiding the relapse of the disorder.

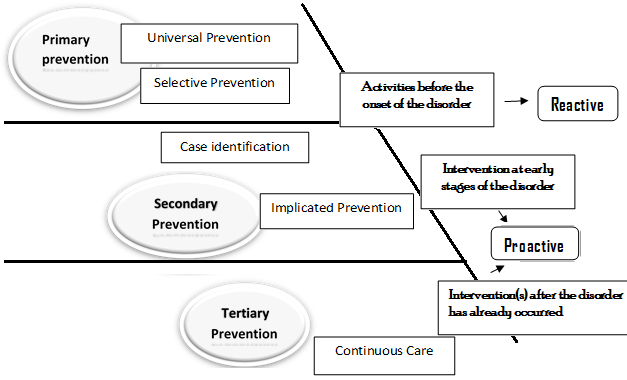
**Universal prevention**: activities aimed at the general (the whole) population even when the risk is not identified. For example, Working with a community to reduce risk factors associated with mental disorders through building sense of community, coping skill, and enhancing social capital could serve to prevent mental health problems.

**Selective prevention**: targets people (group) with higher risk of developing mental disorder. For example, childhood programs, head start, and positive parenting programs can be examples of selective prevention. It refers to programs for disadvantaged populations; people exposed to adverse life experiences (e.g. trauma, divorce, bereavement, etc.).

**Indicated prevention**: targets at people with higher risk for mental disorders. This prevention is given for people who are already identified but the detected symptoms do not meet the requirements of DSM criteria. For example, social support for the elderly, children, and, ill people with some sort of predispositions of developing mental disorders. In addition, indicated prevention could address children with some signs of ADHD, children having psychotic parents, etc.

* Universal and selective preventions are conducted before the problems arise.
* However, indicated preventive intervention is conducted during the early stages of the disorder.
* Everyone is served in universal intervention but “people at risk” in selective, and people who are have been developing the symptoms will be in implicated prevention.

**Figure 1. The basic processes of prevention and intervention**



**Models of Prevention**

Felner, Felner, and Silverman (2000) stated that there are two approaches to prevention.

1. **The blended model**

The blended model contends that prevention is not a different concept from other forms of intervention. It is rooted the public health that states primary (incidence focuses) and secondary (prevalence based) prevention efforts are not different from other forms of medical and human service interventions (e.g. problem identification, caring, and treatment) in dealing with emotional and behavioral disorders.

1. **The unique model**

Unlike the blended model, the unique model asserts that prevention is distinct from any kind of activity in a continuum of care (Felner, et al., 2000).

* 1. **Mental Health Promotion**

**Defining Promotion**

According to *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2004) the word promotion comes from Latin *Promovere* to mean “to move forward”, advance, and encourage something to a higher position. Therefore, we can define health promotion as the enhancement of health and wellbeing of people.

WHO (2002) defines health promotion as the process of enabling people to enhance control over their health or improve their health. Similarly, mental health promotion could be defined as proactive (not retrospective) set of activities directed at enhancing positive mental health and wellbeing among people (families, groups, and communities) in their context (WHO, 2002).

Even though the concepts of prevention and promotion are overlapping, promotion is concerned with improving health and wellbeing whereas prevention is about avoiding disorders. The negative definition of mental health (the absence of mental illnesses) could reflect prevention and the positive definition (the presence of optimum social, emotional, and cognitive functioning) (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) could reflect mental health promotion. The two approaches are concerned with reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors in mental health. Prevention and promotion are not mutually exclusive, the achievement of one can help the other. For example, universal prevention that enhance healthy life style (e.g. appropriate dieting, physical activity, abstinence from drug addiction, etc.) could help in increasing life satisfaction and wellbeing of people.

**Cowen’s Pathways to psychological wellbeing**

Emory Cowen (1994) identified five pathways to psychological wellness. Cowen listed that attachment, competencies, adaptation, empowerment, and coping skills are positively associated with psychological wellbeing.

* 1. ***Attachments***: wholesome early connection to parents and care givers.
  2. ***Competencies***: age and ability related appropriate competencies. For example, coping skills assertiveness, interpersonal competences, resistance skills, problem solving skills, self-esteem, and other forms of life skills.
  3. ***Setting***: environments that enhances adaptive outcome (e.g. social support, good family, school, and neighborhood).
  4. ***Empowerment***: mastery over one’s own life.
  5. ***Skills in coping with life stressors***: resilient people who overcome adversities of life positively.