IN2102-1 Health Beliefs

Examples of Health Beliefs:

Culture largely determines how a person views and explains the world. The way they explain the world then guides how they explain health and illness. For example, people in some cultures view everything in the world as being made up of fundamental elements (fire, earth, ether, water and air) and illnesses are seen as an imbalance of these elements in the body. Therefore it is believed that health is achieved through the re-balancing of the body elements.

In cultures where the body is seen as an embodiment of the mind you may treat someone physically for a mental health issue and vice versa e.g. – depression may be experienced and understood by the sufferer through physical symptoms only.

In some cultures the concept of preventative health – to have check-ups to maintain health does not exist.

Different cultures have different views on what constitutes “disability” and what that means to the individual, family and their place in the community. In some cultures shame and loss of face are attached to particular disabilities.

Rehabilitation as a concept does not exist in some cultures, and the idea of maximising a person’s independence and self-reliance may not be a sought-after quality in a person within an extended family structure – it may be seen as a failing of the family to look after that person.

Some cultures view illness in terms of an imbalance of “hot” and “cold” within the body, and view foods as possessing “hot” and “cold” properties also – foods may be consumed based on how they are viewed in relation to the illness in order to regain a balance in the body.

In some instances, a person may seek out medical care from traditional health practitioners rather than bio-medical (Western) practitioners if they believe it will be a more effective treatment. In other instances a person may seek out help from both types of practitioners. It is important that these choices of the individual are respected, and that open lines of communication are established to create an environment whereby the person can feel comfortable in identifying to staff that they may also be seeking, or have sought out treatment from a traditional practitioner.