

Mental Health Awareness 101

When you have a physical health issue like a broken leg, flu or ear ache, you often make an appointment and go to the doctor right away. For issues related to emotional health though, individuals often do not seek services and symptoms are left untreated due to the stigma and/or high cost of accessing services.



Emotional Well-Being

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

In today's society, mental health conditions have a stigma. Individuals are feared, shamed and face discrimination due to the lack of understanding and misinformation. Many of their family members are also impacted by the stigma and feel guilt or blame.

Causes of Mental Health Conditions

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) explains that a mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests that multiple, linking causes such as genetics, environment and lifestyle all influence whether someone develops a mental health condition.

A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible to mental health conditions, as do traumatic life events like being the victim of a crime. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure also play a role in mental health.

Statistics

- Approximately one in five adults in the U.S. experiences mental illness in a given year.
- Approximately one in 25 adults in the U.S. experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.
- 42 million adults in the U.S. live with anxiety disorders.
- More than 90 percent of people who die by suicide show symptoms of a mental health condition.

These statistics demonstrate the high prevalence of mental health conditions in individuals, families and workplaces.

What to Do

We all play a part in reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions. NAMI recommends the following for creating a stigma free home or workplace:

- **Use person-first language.** A person is not defined by a condition, and someone should not be addressed as such. A person experiences bipolar disorder — he's not bipolar.
- **Be cautious when talking about suicide.** Suicide is a sensitive topic and should be talked about in a way that is respectful to the person and their loved ones. A person is "lost to suicide" or "died by suicide" rather than "committed suicide."
- **Challenge misconceptions.** If you hear people use stigmatizing or harmful language, let them know.
- **Don't use mental health conditions as adjectives.** You shouldn't call yourself "OCD" because you like to organize or say the weather is "bipolar" because it keeps changing. This undermines legitimate diagnoses.

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Mental Health Awareness (continued)

- **Don't refer to someone as “crazy,” “psychotic” or “insane.”** For people going through challenging symptoms beyond their control, it can be very harmful to be labeled as “crazy” on top of it all.
- **Avoid saying things like** “We have all been there” or “Just get over it or snap out of it”
- **Show support** by saying things like: “I am here for you if you need anything;” “How can I help you?” or “How are you feeling today?”

Treatment

Only 44 percent of adults with diagnosable mental health problems and less than 20 percent of children and adolescents receive needed treatment. There is no one treatment that works for everyone. If you or a loved one needs treatment, here are a few starting places:

Primary Care Doctor. If symptoms are impacting everyday functioning, it is important to tell your doctor or pediatrician. They can also provide a referral to a psychiatrist for specialized care, if needed.

Health Insurance. If you have health insurance, you can also contact the number on the back of your insurance card for assistance locating a therapist in your health insurance network. It is important to ask about qualifications and experience with the symptoms that you are experiencing.

MyMDCARES The State of Maryland offers a confidential, no cost assistance program through BHS. They can assist you with getting connected for behavioral health assistance and other resources that can assist you with your problem.

National Resources:

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)

Provides Education, Support, Advocacy and Resources
www.nami.org

1-800-950-NAMI (6264) 10am-6pm EST
Text NAMI to 741-741 (24/7 Crisis Text Line)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

<https://988lifeline.org/> and <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
Call 988 or 800-273-TALK (8255) (offers 24/7 call, text and chat access)

Helping someone who is struggling can be emotionally draining. There are resources available for additional support. Check with your company's human resource department for more information on the programs and benefits that are available.

Sources:
nami.org
www.who.int

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