

A GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Ulliance
Enhancing People. Improving Business.



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Welcome

Ulliance Life Advisor Well-being addresses the most preventable and most costly well-being conditions by leveraging the combination of digital tools and resources, one-on-one counseling and expert well-being coaching.

How We Can Help *You...*

We help keep employees focused and productive with programs built on 30+ years of experience addressing real-life problems.



Mental Health Awareness

Are you aware that America has been acknowledging May as Mental Health month for a number of decades? While many are just now becoming familiar with this movement, the first observation of this awareness campaign was actually in 1949. For 73 years, groups have been working to create awareness and acceptance of sound mental health as a crucial element of overall health. People have been suffering from the stigma of experiencing a mental health disorder for centuries. However, in the last dozen years or so, acknowledgement of the importance of mental health as a major component of overall health has grown exponentially. Today, mentions of mental health in daily, ordinary conversation and in the media have –shall we say –‘gone mainstream?’ Many believe that recent changes that we have seen mean that mental health is losing its stigma!

Somehow, good mental health has frequently been equated with a ‘strong mind’ and an ability to solve one’s mental health issues by oneself. Today, scientists are discovering on a near-daily basis new knowledge of how that most intricate of organs, the brain, actually operates. And it turns out that brain function has a major impact on our mental health, often with different parts of the brain working together and also in subtle ways. What we’re finding is that many parts of the brain are responsible for and interact with other parts of the brain to create the state we call ‘mental health.’



Mental Health Awareness

Expecting someone to suddenly overcome a mental health issue is the equivalent of expecting a broken leg to heal correctly without assistance. An important realization is that we cannot always solve our problems on our own. Although this approach has been lauded for many years, we are realizing that there are more effective ways to solve personal and mental health concerns.

Here are some of the factors that have led to an increase in mental health awareness:

- Focus on good mental health has become more prevalent in our society today, and are openly discussed at a level not previously seen, in good part due to the effect that the COVID pandemic has had on our daily lives.
- By increasing our focus on mental health, we help elevate the importance of good mental health and that recovery from mental health concerns takes time.
- Our language is changing around mental health matters, with the goal of increasing sensitivity to and respect of mental health concerns as legitimate concerns.
- The prevalence of telemedicine and other forms of electronic communications to support mental health, such as relaxation and meditation apps, has increased and is more readily available to those in need.
- Celebrities and other famous individuals have been forthcoming about their personal mental health struggles, which has increased the perception that it is 'ok' to talk about our own internal struggles.



WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH



DID YOU KNOW?

Mental health conditions & related symptoms can affect women & men differently?

How can being Female Impact Your Emotional Health?

Biological Influences:

- Mood boosting serotonin can be lower in women because it's absorbed faster, leading to more mood fluctuations.
- Females are more likely to experience physical symptoms in connection with their mental health including fatigue, a loss of appetite, headaches, restlessness, & nausea.
- Normal hormonal fluctuations experienced during menstruation, pregnancy, post-partum, & menopause can increase the likelihood of emotional health disturbances.

*WOMEN ARE
2X MORE LIKELY TO
EXPERIENCE PTSD
FOLLOWING A
TRAUMATIC EVENT*



How can being Female Impact Your Emotional Health?

Socio-Cultural Influences:

- **Self-Stigma** - A woman's self image is more likely to be formed by how others perceive them, leading to "self stigma" and a reduced likelihood of seeking out proper mental health care.
- Full-time working mothers juggle caregiving for kids and & elderly family members. Women are more likely to have their self-esteem impacted by their outward appearance.
- Despite strides, women still face challenges surrounding socio-economic power, status, position, & dependence, which can contribute to depression.

Modern Pressures & Social Media Influences:

- Frequent use of social media is associated with decreased personal connections and increased isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression.
- Cyberbullying is common amongst teen girls and young women. Women are more likely to compare themselves to other women with perfect looking lives and physical appearances on social media.



MEN & MENTAL HEALTH



STATS

Approximately 6 million men in the U.S. suffer from depression.

1 in 5 males will develop alcohol dependency issues in their lifetime.

More men than women die by suicide, and suicide is consistently one of the top 10 leading causes of death for males in the United States.

Despite these sobering statistics, males still represent an underserved population in terms of mental health treatment. According to Mental Health America, men are less likely than women to seek treatment for behavioral health issues such as depression and substance abuse due to a reluctance to talk, social norms, and the downplaying of symptoms.

(Sources: Mental Health America / National Institute of Mental Health.)

Like Diabetes or Heart Disease...

One way to destigmatize mental health treatment is to regard mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety, as analogous to physical health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease. In fact, leaving mental health issues untreated can have an adverse impact on one's overall physical health.

- Severe, chronic mental health issues can lead to decreased life expectancy.
- Chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, can lead to increased risk for mental health issues.
- There is a correlation between negative emotions and heart attacks, as well as other potentially fatal physical problems.

Why it's tough to talk

We are all products of our environment and upbringing, and for a long time and even to this day, the cultural messaging that men receive is “be tough.” “Rely on yourself because there's no one else you can rely on.” “Don't air your laundry in public.” “Never ask for help.” “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.”

The truth is everyone experiences difficulties in life from time to time. We all have setbacks, disappointments, fears, and insecurities. The problem with not acknowledging or refusing to talk about these issues is that, when you repress something, it almost invariably comes out in other, possibly harmful ways: isolation, self-harm, angry and/or violent outbursts, alcohol or substance use (“self-medicating”).



Why it's tough to talk

Imagine pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. Think of all the effort you'd have to put in to achieve this. But guess what? You can't. Pulling yourself up by your bootstraps is physically impossible –in fact, the original meaning of this phrase referred to impossible tasks. But it only takes a moment to accept someone else's hand and to begin the process of lifting yourself up, improving not only your life, but the lives of others around you as well.

10 ways to get back in the zone

1. Take a walk.
2. Call a friend.
3. Volunteer.
4. Work out.
5. Make a playlist.
6. Cook a healthy meal.
7. Watch a movie that inspires you.
8. Read a book that motivates you.
9. Take care of a project you've been putting off.
10. Do something nice for yourself.



Athletes need coaches

Just as a world-class athlete still needs a coach to provide motivation and point out blind spots, we all sometimes need outside support. Even if we have a lot of insight, knowledge, and awareness, having that objective third party listener as a sounding board and an ally is invaluable.

If you've never worked with a counselor or a life enhancement coach before, you might be surprised how incredibly beneficial such a professional relationship can be. When we talk to friends or loved ones, there is a "give and take." We might also feel an unspoken pressure to be positive, take the lead, and mask our true feelings about a given situation.

With a counselor or a coach, it's all about you – the real and unfiltered you.



PARENTS RAISING CHILDREN WITH MENTAL ILLNESS



It is estimated that worldwide up to **20% of children suffer from debilitating mental illness**. Mental disorders that pose a significant concern include learning disorders, hyperkinetic disorders (ADHD), depression, psychosis, pervasive development disorders, attachment disorders, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, substance abuse and eating disorders. Living with such children can be very stressful for caregivers in the family.

(National Library of Medicine-Child Adolescent Psychiatry Ment Health.2012; 6: 16.)

Raising Children with a Mental Health Condition

Raising children with mental health conditions is challenging. Patience can wear thin, because you want your child to do the things you need them to do. Frustration can leak into your communication. Walls can go up. Instead of loving each other, you feel like you're at war. (National Alliance on Mental Health-Raising Children with Mental Illness, 2018; Melinda Cook). Ultimately, without the correct education on their child's mental health diagnosis, this can cause a discord in the relationship, and an environment of strife.

Studies have shown parents that have a child with mental illness tend to suffer a great deal of guilt and/or shame. Some parents tend to take on the belief that their child's mental illness was a result of being passed down by their genetics and/or merely the result of improper upbringing or other stressful circumstances. As a result, parents tend to experience emotional, mental, and physical fatigue with the belief that somehow, they've failed their child.

It has been shown that a child's development depends on their parents—and other caregivers who act in the role of parents—who serve as their first sources of support in becoming independent and leading healthy and successful lives. Depending on the family dynamics, being the sole support system with very little outside support can over time become emotionally, mentally, financially, and physically depleting to a parent(s).



Things to Consider and Remember When You're the Caregiver

A few things to consider while occupying the parent/caregiver role. Common and important themes include:

- Two common emotions parents/caregivers experience is guilt and shame. Guilt and shame tend to hinder parents from getting involved in treatment and are unnecessary emotional burdens. Serious mental disorders are typically the result of brain-based and biological factors that are beyond a parent and/or their child's control. While it's the parent's responsibility to help get the best care for their child, parents tend to take the burden of guilt. To successfully seek out and obtain care for your child you must be willing to be honest with your family/supports and child about the diagnosis so everyone can support treatment in a healthy and productive way.
- Give yourself and everyone a break. You, your providers, your child, and your family are all going to make mistakes. There is much we are still learning about how to respond to each child's unique needs. Take a breath, speak up when you have a concern, resolve the problem, and then get back to it. This is a great lesson for a child.



Things to Consider and Remember When You're the Caregiver

- Educate yourself from reliable sources about your child's diagnosis. While not all children experience the same mental illness in the same way, being able to anticipate possible symptoms and treatment recommendations provides reassurance that there is light at the end of the tunnel.
- Remember, not all mental illnesses are the same. Some can be treated and, with good self-care, may not return. Others will be life-long, with reoccurring symptoms that require ongoing services to manage symptoms. In all cases, even individuals with the most serious mental illnesses can substantially improve their health and wellness and lead meaningful, productive, and happy lives.
- Ask good questions. Science about treating mental illness has improved over the past decade. If your provider is not using evidenced-based treatment, ask why. There may be a good reason, or you may opt for a second opinion. If you are exhausted and need more support than what your family and community can provide, consider asking your provider about respite services or some other higher level of care for your child. Don't try to be superhuman -it could be dangerous.



Taking Care of Yourself

Taking care of yourself helps your child's recovery because it demonstrates that things like rest, socializing and eating well are key to overall health and wellness. It also helps you to be at your best when your child needs it and helps prevent responding in an emotional or fatigued state. Here are some tips:

- **Think small.** Even regular, brief walks, short conversations, and an occasional night out with friends can make a difference.
- **Get help from trustworthy friends and family.** It gives them something important to contribute and makes them feel helpful.
- **Find a local parent support group.** Two such organizations, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and Mental Health America (MHA), have local organizations across the country. Some churches, behavioral health organizations and hospitals also have these types of groups. Services are usually free and offer support that both parents, siblings and extended family members find helpful. They
- **Nurture, praise, and support, but do not overprotect your child.** Set clear limits and reinforce them as consistently as possible. Children learn quickly and if caregivers do difficult things for them, they will let them. However, this prevents your child from learning much needed coping skills and reinforces manipulative behavior. The line between appropriately protecting and ensuring safety can be a fine one, but with help from your treatment providers, you can figure it out.



Taking Care of Yourself

- **Take care of your relationships.** A high number of parents report that their marriages and significant relationships suffer as result of caring for a child with mental illness. Nurturing these relationships is as important as nurturing your child. Not doing so can create anger and resentment and, in the end, could rob the whole family of the very things that brings them strength and joy.
- **Prepare for transitioning to adulthood.** As adolescents become adults, it can be especially challenging for both parents and child. Reinforcing their independence and responsibility is especially important during this time. Some failures are going to happen. With support and encouragement, these can be the basis for new learning and the development of resiliency.





CONTACT US

When you partner with Ulliance, our Life Advisor Consultants are always just a phone call away to teach ways to enhance employee work/life balance and increase happiness. The Ulliance Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program can help employees and employers come closer to a state of total well-being.

Investing in the right EAP or total Well-being Program to support your employees will help them and help you. Visit ulliance.com, or call 866-648-8326. The Ulliance Employee Assistance Program can address the following issues:

- Stress about work or job performance
- Crisis in the workplace
- Conflict resolution at work or in one's personal life
- Marital or relationship problems
- Child or elder care concerns
- Financial worries
- Mental health problems
- Alcohol/substance abuse
- Grief
- Interpersonal conflicts
- AND MORE!

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