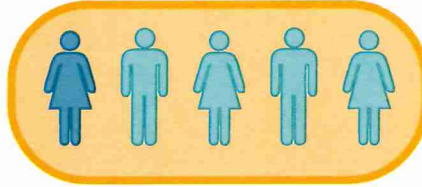


MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

B4Stage4

Changing the Way We Think About Mental Health

When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don't wait years to treat them. We start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. When people are in the first stage of those diseases and are beginning to show signs or symptoms like a persistent cough, high blood pressure, or high blood sugar, we try immediately to reverse these symptoms. We don't ignore them. In fact, we develop a plan of action to reverse and sometimes stop the progression of the disease. So why don't we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness?

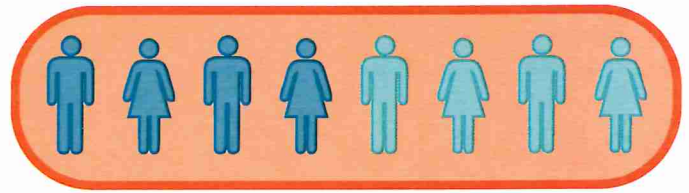


1 in 5

American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.¹

50

PERCENT



of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.²

Stages of Mental Health Conditions

Stage 1:
Mild Symptoms
and Warning
Signs

At Stage 1, a person begins to show symptoms of a mental health condition, but is still able to maintain the ability to function at home, work or school—although perhaps not as easily as before they started to show symptoms. Often there is a sense that something is “not right.”

Stage 2:
Symptoms Increase
in Frequency and
Severity and Interfere
with Life Activities and
Roles

At Stage 2, it usually becomes obvious that something is wrong. A person's symptoms may become stronger and last longer or new symptoms may start appearing on top of existing ones, creating something of a snowball effect. Performance at work or school will become more difficult, and a person may have trouble keeping up with family duties, social obligations or personal responsibilities.

Stage 3:
Symptoms Worsen with
Relapsing and Recurring
Episodes Accompanied
by Serious Disruption in
Life Activities and Roles

At Stage 3, symptoms have continued to increase in severity, and many symptoms are often taking place at the same time. A person may feel as though they are losing control of their life and the ability to fill their roles at home, work or school.

Stage 4:
Symptoms are
Persistent and Severe
and Have Jeopardized
One's Life

By Stage 4, the combination of extreme, prolonged and persistent symptoms and impairment often results in development of other health conditions and has the potential to turn into a crisis event like unemployment, hospitalization, homelessness or even incarceration. In the worst cases, untreated mental illnesses can lead to loss of life an average of 25 years early.

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B4Stage4 Get Informed

When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what the risk factors and symptoms are will help to catch them early. Often times, family and friends are the first to support a person through these early stages. Like other health conditions, we need to address the symptoms early, identify the underlying illness, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.

Risk Factors

Genes

17-28%

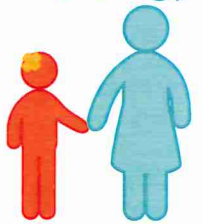
Much stronger links were found in twin and family studies. Estimates for total heritability, or how much a disease is tied to genetics, are¹:

Schizophrenia 81%
Bipolar disorder 75%
ADHD 75%
Depression 37%

of risk for mental illnesses can be accounted for by variations in common genes.

Biology

In one study, head injury between the ages of 11-15 was the strongest predictor for development of schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder.²



Brain changes like building a "tolerance" or reward response to stress, or abnormalities in the prefrontal and frontal cortex, and irregularities in the function of the neurotransmitter glutamate are also risk factors for mental illness and substance use.⁴



Environment

People who are exposed to adverse childhood events including abuse, neglect, divorce, witnessing domestic violence and having parents who have substance use issues, mental illnesses or are in jail are:

2.6x

more likely to have depression

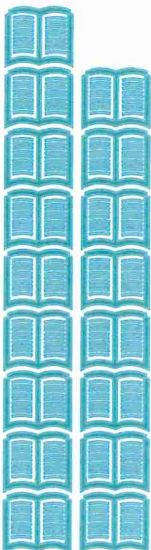
5x

more likely to have serious alcohol problems



17x

more likely to have learning or behavioral problems



3x

more likely to have serious job problems³



Lifestyle

Substance use can increase chances of developing a mental illness



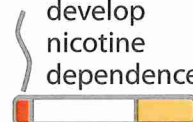
and having a mental illness can increase risk of using substances



People with any mental illness are:

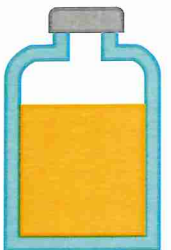
2.3x

as likely to develop nicotine dependence



3x

more likely to develop alcohol dependence



30x

more likely to develop illicit drug dependence⁵



Early Warning Signs and Symptoms

Having a combination of symptoms (not just one symptom) indicates that someone might be showing signs of a mental health condition. Be aware of these symptoms when they last longer than a few weeks:



Problems with concentration, memory, or ability to think clearly



Changes in eating such as loss of appetite or overeating



Not being able to complete school or work tasks



Feeling overly worried



Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or worthless



Sensitivity to sounds, sight, smell, or touch



Irritability and restlessness



Loss of interest in activities that are normally enjoyable, withdrawal from others, or disconnection



Feeling like your brain is playing tricks on you. Hearing knocking or scratching sounds, or name being called



Changes in energy level and sleep patterns. Often someone will sleep during the day and be up at night

Signs and symptoms that require immediate attention:

- Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting one's self or another person
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
- Unexplainable changes in thinking, speech, or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Serious drop in school or work performance
- Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), go to your local Emergency Room or call 911.

www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may



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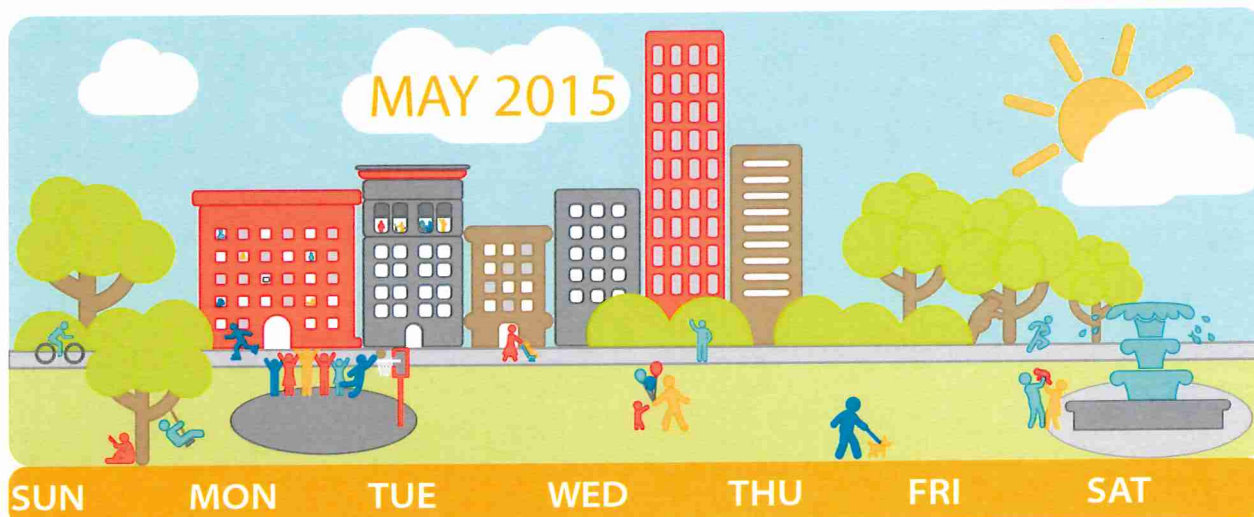
MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

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Where to Get Help

When you've decided to seek help, knowing what resources are available and where to start can be tricky. Use the decision map below to help you figure out your options. If you don't find help where a path ends, try any of the resources in the gold boxes.





MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015 **MIA** Mental Health America **B4Stage4**

1

Switch up your exercise regimen. Try a dance class or a new sport. Exercising with other people can enhance its stress-reducing benefits.

2

Try something new and creative. Art projects can be relaxing and promote well-being.

3

Feed your brain. Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as wild salmon, are linked to decreased rates of depression and schizophrenia.

4

Feeling groggy? Take a nap! Napping can improve your ability to work and perform daily tasks.

5

Share an apple or some nuts with your teacher or mentor. They are good sources of vitamin E, which helps maintain the thinking functions of the brain.

6

Don't wonder about your mental health! Take a screen at MHAScreening.org and get the tools you need.

7

Craving sugar? Try swapping sweets for complex carbohydrates, like fruits, veggies, and whole grains. This may help boost activity or serotonin, an important chemical in the brain.

8

What's for dinner? Foods rich in vitamin B12 and folic acid - such as grilled chicken with a side of broccoli - can help prevent mood disorders.

9

Travel to a new place or try something you've always been a little scared of - do something outside of your comfort zone to give yourself a sense of satisfaction that you can handle life's challenges.

10

Stop and smell the roses...literally. Or pick up some flowers for Mom. Studies show that being surrounded by nature is a mood booster.

11

Get connected - share a meal with someone or pick up the phone. Studies show that good relationships make the difference between very happy and less happy people.

12

Hold the door for a stranger or sign up to volunteer for your favorite charity. Studies show that random acts of kindness increase release of oxytocin - the "feel good" hormone.

13

Consider donating time or money to a worthy cause. By helping others you can foster a sense of belonging and remind yourself that you are relatively lucky.

14

Feeling in a rut? Do something silly and laugh at something you did. Remember, everyone deserves a break and we're often hardest on ourselves.

15

Get comfortable and read a good book. Reading can help relieve stress and tension.

16

Write down and share a few things that you are grateful for. People who keep track of their gratitude are more upbeat and have fewer physical aches and pains than others.

17

Watch a comedy or visit a funny website. Laughter boosts the immune system and can reduce anxiety.

18

Call someone close to you and tell them how much you appreciate them. Thanking them for their support can boost your mood and theirs.

19

Swap regular coffee for decaf or freshly brewed tea. While a little caffeine can improve brain function, reducing your overall caffeine intake supports sleep.

20

Take the stairs instead of the elevator, or park your car farther away from the store. Even small additions of exercise throughout the day can decrease tension and improve sleep.

21

Add some green to your office or home (if you don't have much of a green thumb, try a cactus). Seeing plants can reduce stress and anxiety.

22

Keep Cool, Be Mindful. Try this mindfulness technique: Eat an orange slowly, segment by segment. Focusing on the taste, touch, sight and smell of the orange will help reduce stress.

23

Make a list of activities you enjoy. Set aside time each week to focus on yourself and what makes you happy.

24

Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep tonight. People who get enough sleep are more likely to succeed at their daily tasks.

25

Enjoy Memorial Day! Make sure to enjoy 15 minutes of sunshine, and apply sunscreen. Sunlight synthesizes Vitamin D, which experts believe is a mood elevator.

26

To deal with a difficult task, write out steps you can take to complete it. People facing stress feel less depressed after problem-solving.

27

Give yourself a break! Take 10 minutes out of your day for a walk. Small breaks (and exercise) improve your ability to deal with stress.

28

Give yoga a try. Stretching and other forms of exercise help relieve tension caused by stress.

29

Take a break from social media. Looking at social media can raise your levels of anxiety.

30

Take a few minutes to breathe deeply - in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try this technique: Pretend you're taking a giant whiff of a bouquet of flowers, then pretend to blow out a candle.

31

Don't go it alone. Tell your goals to someone you trust and ask them to help you stick with a plan. Studies show that social support helps you achieve your goals.

Bonus: Play a Brain Game

Can you find the following items in the scene above?

- ☐ An angry bear
- ☐ Fish
- ☐ Someone reading a book
- ☐ Twelve perfect circles (heads don't count)



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