

Momentum

Treating mental health needs, avoiding stigma



Employee Assistance Program
For Professional Consultation

Call 1-800-523-5668

For TTY Users: 1-800-456-4006

Facts about mental health

- ✓ Approximately 44 million U.S. adults experience a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year, yet nearly 60 percent are not treated.
- ✓ About 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S.
- ✓ Friends and loved ones can make a big difference for someone with mental health problems. You can reach out and be available, encourage treatment, and help dispel negative stigmas.

Increase your mental health awareness

Do you realize how prevalent mental health conditions are in the people around you? It's important to be sensitive to the mental health challenges that many others face.

Similarly, if you struggle with mental health problems, it helps to recognize that you're not alone. People from all walks of life are impacted by mental health disorders (such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders) and substance use disorders (such as alcohol or drug dependence). In fact, one in five American adults experienced a mental health issue within the past year.

Our culture's traditionally negative stereotyping of people with mental health challenges often does damage to those who live with the conditions. If you learn that someone in your life is dealing with mental health problems, treat them with respect and understanding—not ridicule. Stigma related to mental illness causes needless shame and isolation, and can potentially cause people to deny their symptoms.

Treatment works, so it's important to arrange for an evaluation if you or a household member struggle with daily activities. Call your program's toll-free number or visit MagellanHealth.com for information and support.

It's not a personal weakness! Mental illness is often caused by biological factors such as brain chemistry imbalances, painful life experiences like trauma or abuse, or family histories of mental illness.



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Common stigmas toward mental illness

Stigmas can be very damaging—as prejudice, rejection and discrimination are directed at people who seem “different.” Here are some common stigmas, and contrary truths, about those with mental illness.

- **We shouldn't talk about mental illness.** Not true. The less we talk about mental illness, the more of a mysterious “other” it becomes—and the less we're able or willing to support those in the midst of it.
- **People with mental illness are dangerous.** Most are not violent, and only 3 to 5 percent of violent acts can be attributed to individuals with serious mental illness. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.
- **We're already compassionate enough.** One study found that 57 percent of adults without mental health symptoms believed that people are sympathetic toward people with mental illness. However, only 25 percent of adults with mental health symptoms believed that to be true.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), MentalHealth.gov, JustBetterCare.com.

Being more inclusive of those around you



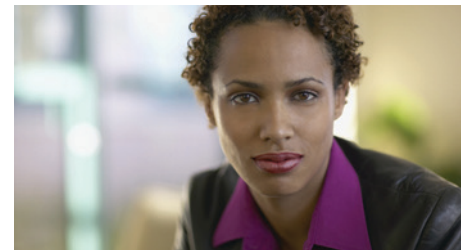
Accept others' challenges

Extending understanding to those in your midst can—bit by bit—help empower them and improve their quality of life. Take time to get to know individuals dealing with mental illness. Recognize that they are not their diagnosis; they have many gifts and talents to share.



Promote sensitivity

If someone uses harsh language or perpetuates negative stereotypes about others with behavioral challenges or disabilities, gently educate them about using words more sensitively. Further, if you have dealt with mental health issues, talk about your own experience when appropriate. This can help others with such challenges overcome shame and secrecy.



Use people-first language

Instead of using negatives such as “a mentally disturbed” or “crazy” person, say that the individual “has a mental health condition” or is “a person with a behavioral health disability.” Your language should refer to *the kind of condition a person has*, not *what a person is*.



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