

Moving Forward with Professionalism - Promoting mental well-being

Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism from
the State Bar of Georgia

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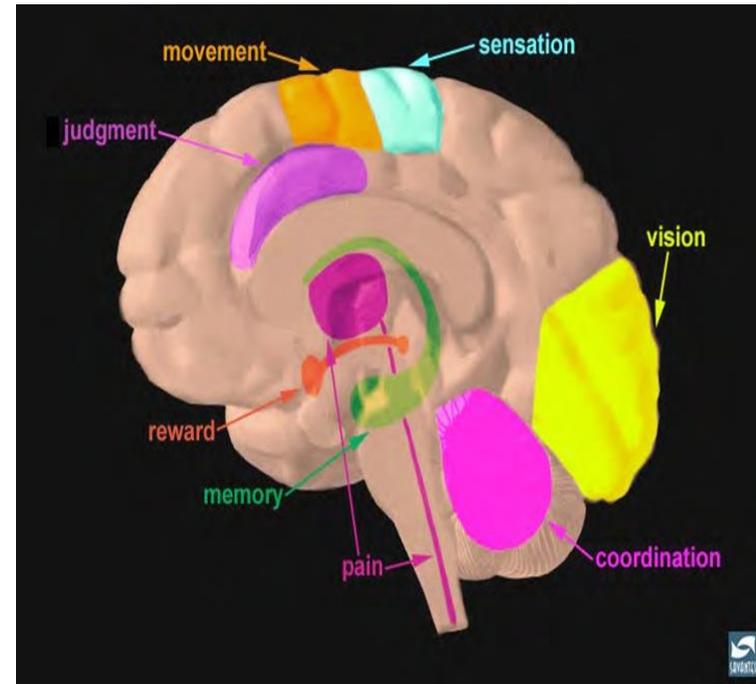
U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Outline

- Define the issue
- Dispel some myths
- Describe the scale of the problem?
- Identify risk factors
- Identify protective factors
- What can be done
- Further information

Definitions

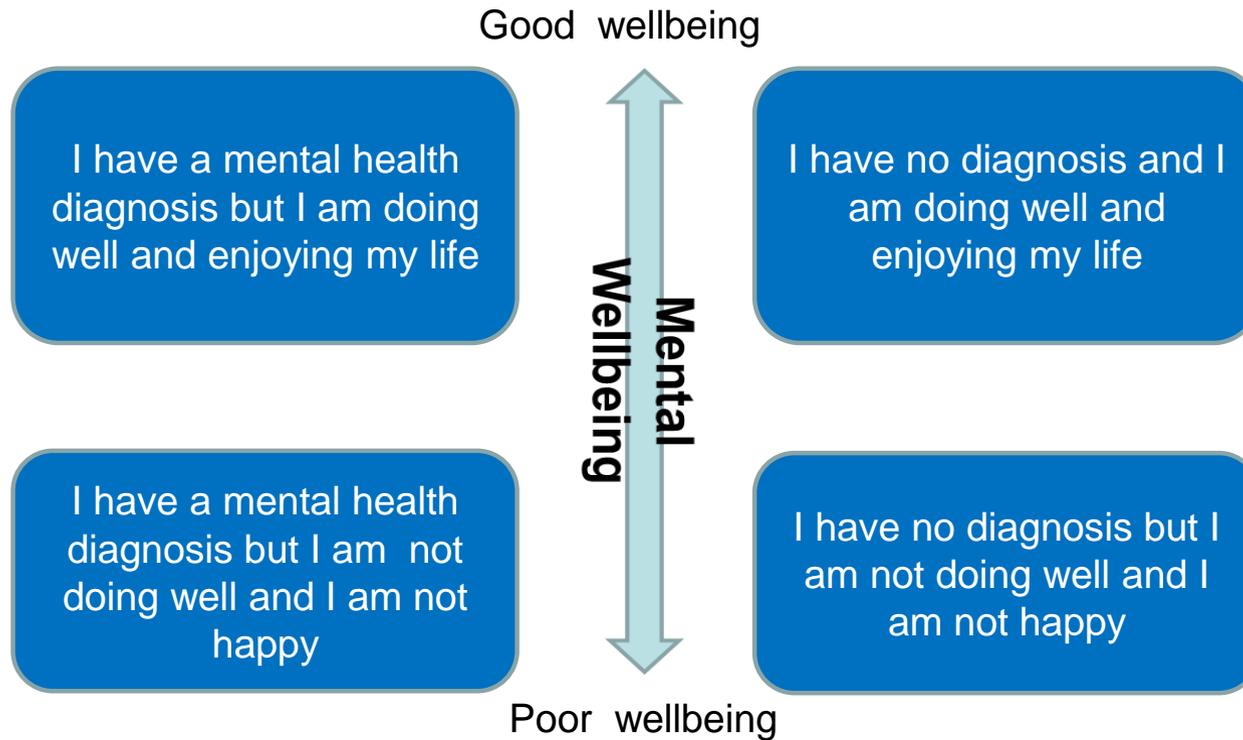
- Mental health is a state of
 - successful performance of mental function,
 - results in productive activities,
 - fulfilling relationships with other people, and
 - the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity.
- Mental health is indispensable to personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and contribution to community or society.



Source: World Health Organization. (2004). Promoting mental health : concepts, emerging evidence, practice : summary report / a report from the World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse in collaboration with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the University of Melbourne. World Health Organization.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42940> and <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

The mental health continuum



Common myths about mental health problems

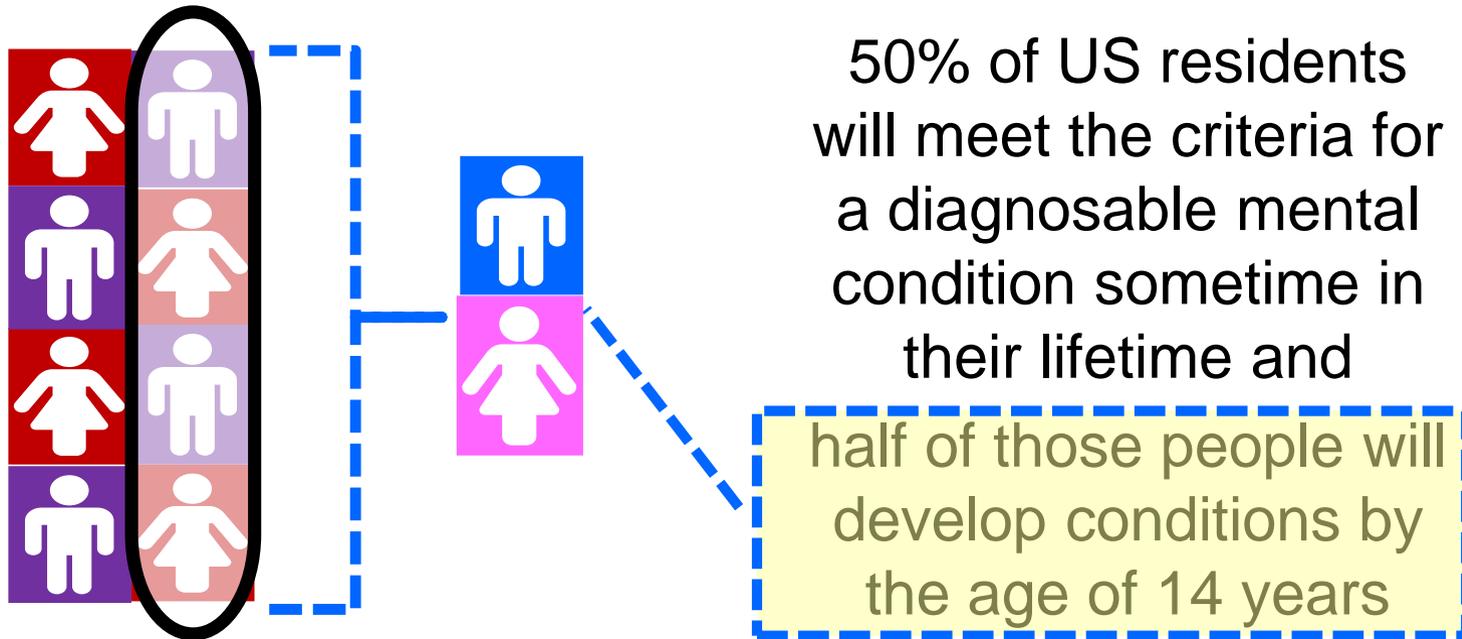
- Myth 1: Mental health problems don't affect me.
- Fact: Mental health problems are actually very common.
 - One in five American adults experienced a mental health issue in any given year
 - One in 10 young people experienced a period of major depression



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

Mental health problems affect many people



Source: Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2005;62(6):593–602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593

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Common myths about mental health problems

- Myth 2: Mentally ill people are violent and unpredictable
- Fact: The vast majority of people with mental health problems are less likely to be violent than the general public
 - Most people with mental illness are not violent and only 3%–5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness.
 - People with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.

Source: Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 1999)

Common myths about mental health problems

- Myth 3: Personality weakness or character flaws cause mental health problems. People with mental health problems can snap out of it if they try hard enough.
- Fact: Mental health problems have nothing to do with being lazy or weak and many people need help to get better.
 - Factors that contribute to mental health problems, include: Biological factors; Life experiences; and family history
 - People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

Source: Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 1999)

Common myths about mental health problems

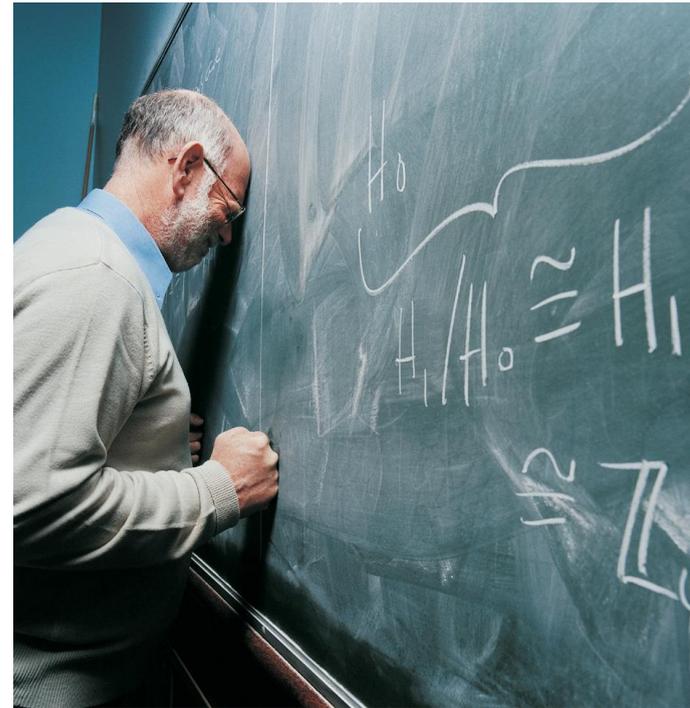
- Myth #4: Prevention doesn't work. It is impossible to prevent mental illnesses.
- Fact: Prevention of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders focuses on addressing known risk factors such as exposure to trauma that can affect the chances that children, youth, and young adults will develop mental health problems.

Source - Institute of Medicine 2009. Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

9 <https://doi.org/10.17226/12480>.

Common myths about mental health problems

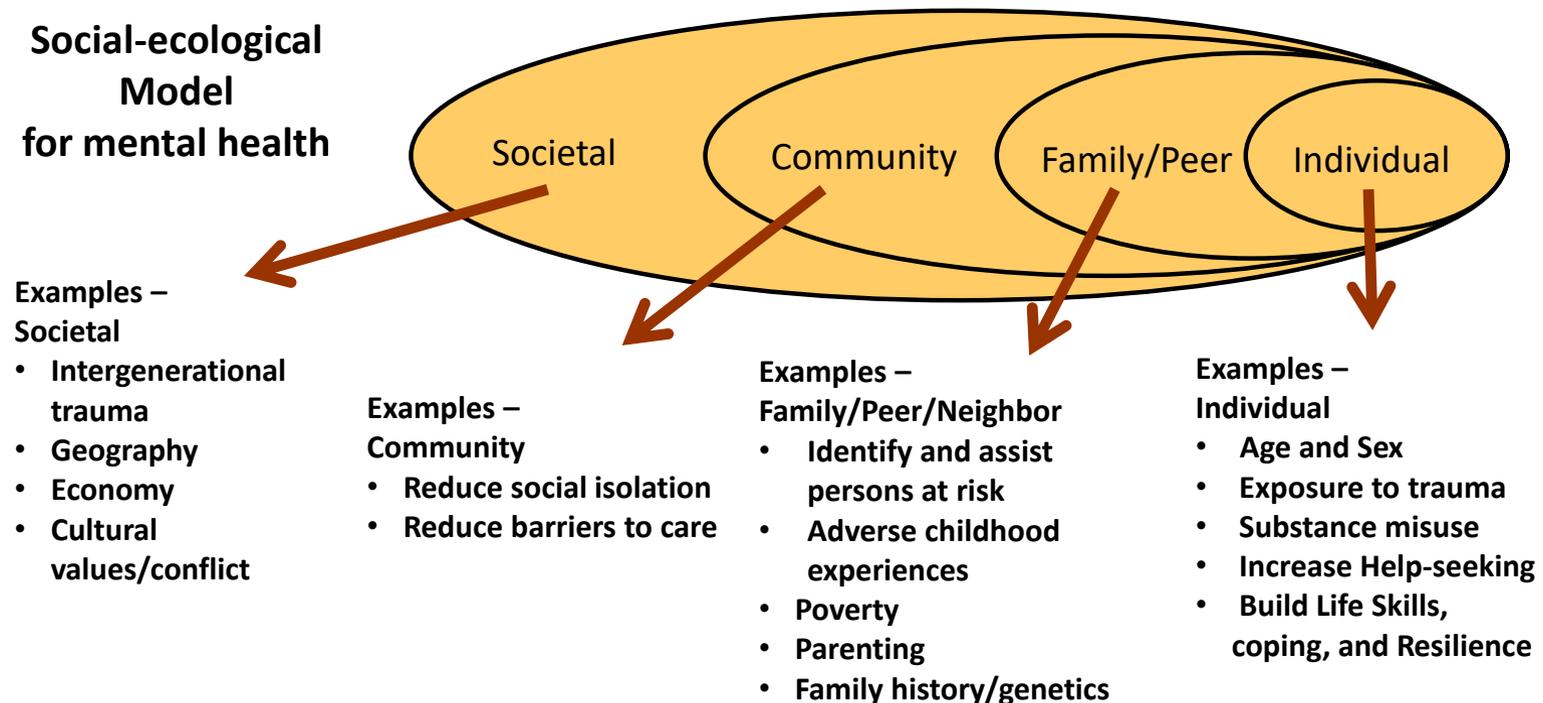
- Myth 5: People with mental health needs, even those who are managing their mental illness, cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job.
- Fact: People with mental health problems are just as productive as other employees.
 - Employers who hire people with mental health problems report good attendance and punctuality as well as motivation, good work, and job tenure on par with or greater than other employees.



Source: Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 1999)

Selected risk and protective factors connected to mental health problems

Social-ecological Model for mental health



Strategies for improving mental health

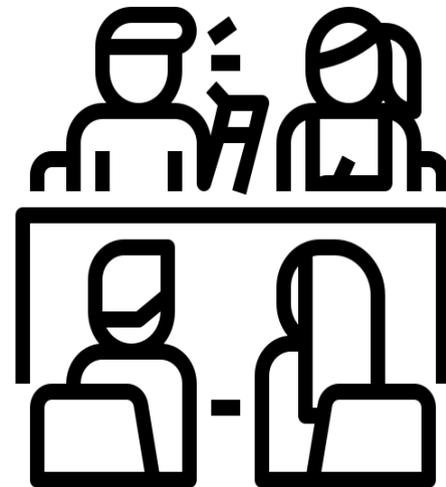
- As individual
 - Adopt behaviors that promote stress management and mental health.
 - Eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night.
 - Encourage employers to offer mental health and stress management education and programs and participate.
 - Take part in activities that promote stress management and relaxation
 - Build and nurture social connections.
 - Take the time to reflect on positive experiences and express happiness and gratitude.



Source: CDC Mental health and workplace;

Strategies for improving mental health

- As employer
 - Distribute materials, such as brochures, fliers, and videos, to all employees about the signs and symptoms of poor mental health and opportunities for treatment.
 - Host seminars or workshops that address depression and stress management techniques
 - Provide managers with training to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and depression in team members.
 - Give employees opportunities to participate in decisions about issues that affect job stress.
 - Offer health insurance that adequately covers mental health.



Source: CDC Mental health and workplace; Picture - Monkik

Strategies for improving mental health

- As community leader
 - Promote mental health and stress management educational programs to working adults through public health departments, parks and recreational agencies, and community centers.
 - Support community programs that indirectly reduce risks, for example, by increasing access to affordable housing, opportunities for physical activity (like sidewalks and trails), tools to promote financial well-being, and safe and tobacco-free neighborhoods.
 - Create a system that employees, employers, and health care providers can use to find community-based programs (for example, at churches and community centers) that address mental health and stress management.



Source: CDC Mental health and workplace; Picture - Monkik

Conclusion

- Mental health problems are seen frequently
- Mental health is an important part of overall health
- Research has shown many mental health problems can be prevented or treated
- Broad responsibility for addressing the issue
 - communities must work together
 - no one person or group can do it alone



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Resources

- COVID-19 and stress
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- Taking care of your behavioral health
 - <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>
- Coping with disaster or trauma
 - <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp>

Tips For Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During An Infectious Disease Outbreak

What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters may close, and sports events and religious services may be cancelled.

What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.

What Is Isolation?

Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

Introduction

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, local officials may require the public to take measures to limit and control the spread of the disease. This tip sheet provides information about **social distancing**, **quarantine**, and **isolation**. The government has the right to enforce federal and state laws related to public health if people within the country get sick with highly contagious diseases that have the potential to develop into outbreaks or pandemics.

This tip sheet describes feelings and thoughts you may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. It also suggests ways to care

for your behavioral health during these experiences and provides resources for more help.

What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. People may feel:

- **Anxiety, worry, or fear related to:**
 - Your own health status
 - The health status of others whom you may have exposed to the disease
 - The resentment that your friends and family may feel if they need to go into quarantine as a result of contact with you
 - The experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of the disease
 - Time taken off from work and the potential loss of income and job security
 - The challenges of securing things you need, such as groceries and personal care items
 - **Concern** about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care
 - **Uncertainty or frustration** about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future
 - **Loneliness** associated with feeling cut off from the world and from loved ones
 - **Anger** if you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence
 - **Boredom and frustration** because you may not be able to work or engage in regular day-to-day activities
 - **Uncertainty or ambivalence** about the situation
 - **A desire** to use alcohol or drugs to cope
 - **Symptoms of depression**, such as feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, or sleeping

too little or too much

- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as intrusive distressing memories, flashbacks (reliving the event), nightmares, changes in thoughts and mood, and being easily startled

If you or a loved one experience any of these reactions for 2 to 4 weeks or more, contact your health care provider or one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet.

Ways To Support Yourself During Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation

UNDERSTAND THE RISK

Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. The public perception of risk during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak is often inaccurate. Media coverage may create the impression that people are in immediate danger when really the risk for infection may be very low. Take steps to get the facts:

- Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure. Avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this tends to increase anxiety and worry. Remember that children are especially affected by what they hear and see on television.
- Look to credible sources for information on the infectious disease outbreak (see page 3 for sources of reliable outbreak-related information).

BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

Speaking out about your needs is particularly important if you are in quarantine,

since you may not be in a hospital or other facility where your basic needs are met. Ensure you have what you need to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

- Work with local, state, or national health officials to find out how you can arrange for groceries and toiletries to be delivered to your home as needed.
- Inform health care providers or health authorities of any needed medications and work with them to ensure that you continue to receive those medications.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Health care providers and health authorities should provide information on the disease, its diagnosis, and treatment.

- Do not be afraid to ask questions—clear communication with a health care provider may help reduce any distress associated with social distancing, quarantine, or isolation.
- Ask for written information when available.
- Ask a family member or friend to obtain information in the event that you are unable to secure this information on your own.

WORK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER TO REDUCE FINANCIAL STRESS

If you're unable to work during this time, you may experience stress related to your job status or financial situation.

- Provide your employer with a clear explanation of why you are away from work.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Labor toll-free at 1-866-487-2365 about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows U.S. employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for serious medical conditions, or to care for a family member with a

serious medical condition.

- Contact your utility providers, cable and Internet provider, and other companies from whom you get monthly bills to explain your situation and request alternative bill payment arrangements as needed.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. You can:

- Use the telephone, email, text messaging, and social media to connect with friends, family, and others.
- Talk “face to face” with friends and loved ones using Skype or FaceTime.
- If approved by health authorities and your health care providers, arrange for your friends and loved ones to bring you newspapers, movies, and books.

- Sign up for emergency alerts via text or email to ensure you get updates as soon as they are available.
- Call SAMHSA’s free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.
- Use the Internet, radio, and television to keep up with local, national, and world events.
- If you need to connect with someone because of an ongoing alcohol or drug problem, consider calling your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous offices.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you are in a medical facility, you may have access to health care providers who can answer your questions. However, if you are quarantined at home, and you’re worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider:

- Ask your provider whether it would be possible to schedule remote appointments via Skype or FaceTime for mental health, substance use, or physical health needs.
- In the event that your doctor is unavailable and you are feeling stressed or are in crisis, call the hotline numbers listed at the end of this tip sheet for support.

USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO COPE AND RELAX

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, or engage in activities you enjoy.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do something fun after a hard task.
- Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends, if you find it helpful.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive

Sources for Reliable Outbreak-Related Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
<http://www.cdc.gov>

World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization
525 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202-974-3000
<http://www.who.int/en>

thinking; consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.

AFTER SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINE, OR ISOLATION

You may experience mixed emotions, including a sense of relief. If you were isolated because you had the illness, you may feel sadness or anger because friends and loved ones may have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious.

The best way to end this common fear is to learn about the disease and the actual risk to others. Sharing this information will often calm fears in others and allow you to reconnect with them.

If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of extreme stress—such as trouble sleeping, problems with eating too much or too little, inability to carry out routine daily activities, or using drugs or alcohol to cope—speak to a health care provider or call one of the hotlines listed to the right for a referral.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Helpful Resources

Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablanos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx>

Treatment Locators

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator Website:

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

FindTreatment.gov

For help finding treatment 1-800-662-HELP (4357) <https://findtreatment.gov/>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

**Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

HHS Publication No. SMA-14-4894 (2014)



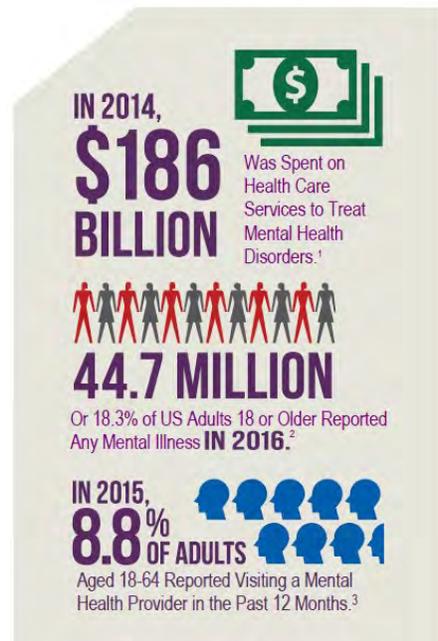
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Mental Health Disorders and Stress Affect Working-Age Americans

Mental health disorders are among the most burdensome health concerns in the United States. Nearly 1 in 5 US adults aged 18 or older (18.3% or 44.7 million people) reported any mental illness in 2016.² In addition, 71% of adults reported at least one symptom of stress, such as a headache or feeling overwhelmed or anxious.⁴

Many people with mental health disorders also need care for other physical health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, respiratory illness, and disorders that affect muscles, bones, and joints.⁵⁻⁸ The costs for treating people with both mental health disorders and other physical conditions are 2 to 3 times higher than for those without co-occurring illnesses.⁹ By combining medical and behavioral health care services, the United States could save \$37.6 billion to \$67.8 billion a year.⁹

About 63% of Americans are part of the US labor force.¹⁰ The workplace can be a key location for activities designed to improve well-being among adults. Workplace wellness programs can identify those at risk and connect them to treatment and put in place supports to help people reduce and manage stress. By addressing mental health issues in the workplace, employers can reduce health care costs for their businesses and employees.



PROBLEM

Mental Health Issues Affect Businesses and Their Employees

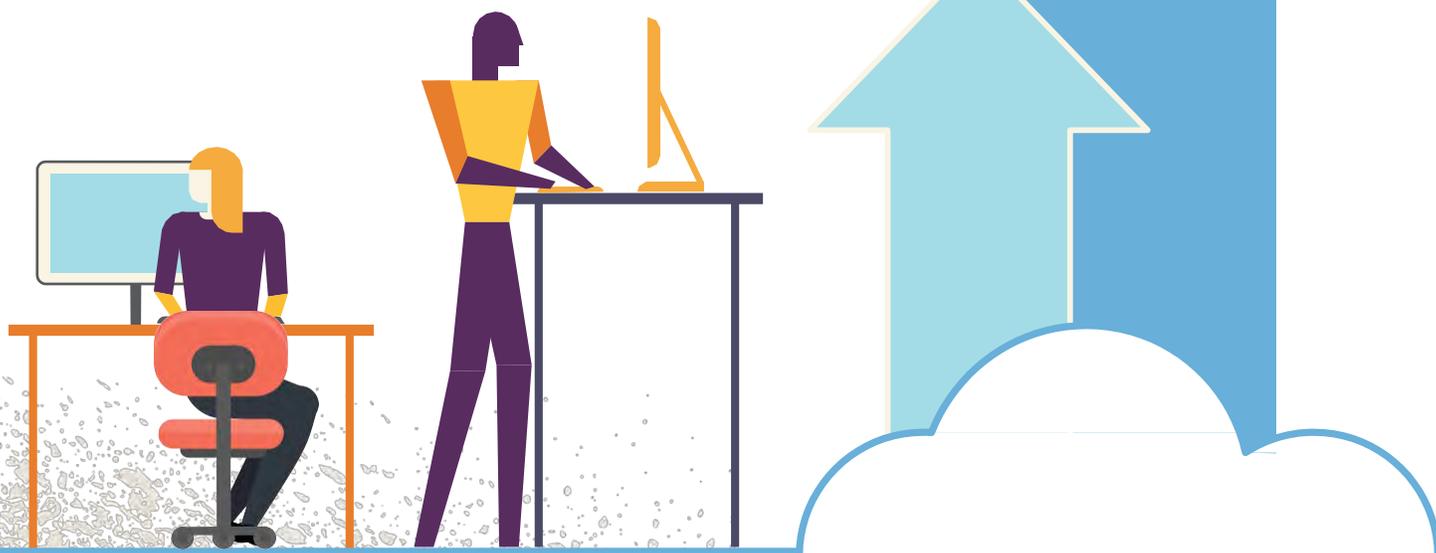
Poor mental health and stress can negatively affect employee:

- Job performance and productivity.
- Engagement with one's work.
- Communication with coworkers.
- Physical capability and daily functioning.

Mental illnesses such as depression are associated with higher rates of disability and unemployment.

- Depression interferes with a person's ability to complete physical job tasks about 20% of the time and reduces cognitive performance about 35% of the time.¹¹
- Only 57% of employees who report moderate depression and 40% of those who report severe depression receive treatment to control depression symptoms.¹²

Even after taking other health risks—like smoking and obesity—into account, employees at high risk of depression had the highest health care costs during the 3 years after an initial health risk assessment.^{13,14}



SOLUTION

Employers Can PROMOTE Awareness About the Importance of Mental Health and Stress Management

Workplace health promotion programs have proven to be successful, especially when they combine mental and physical health interventions.

The workplace is an optimal setting to create a culture of health because:

- Communication structures are already in place.
- Programs and policies come from one central team.
- Social support networks are available.
- Employers can offer incentives to reinforce healthy behaviors.
- Employers can use data to track progress and measure the effects.

Action steps employers can take include:

- Make mental health self-assessment tools available to all employees.
- Offer free or subsidized clinical screenings for depression from a qualified mental health professional, followed by directed feedback and clinical referral when appropriate.
- Offer health insurance with no or low out-of-pocket costs for depression medications and mental health counseling.
- Provide free or subsidized lifestyle coaching, counseling, or self-management programs.
- Distribute materials, such as brochures, fliers, and videos, to all employees about the signs and symptoms of poor mental health and opportunities for treatment.



- Host seminars or workshops that address depression and stress management techniques, like mindfulness, breathing exercises, and meditation, to help employees reduce anxiety and stress and improve focus and motivation.
- Create and maintain dedicated, quiet spaces for relaxation activities.
- Provide managers with training to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and depression in team members and encourage them to seek help from qualified mental health professionals.
- Give employees opportunities to participate in decisions about issues that affect job stress.



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

SUCCESS STORIES

Many Businesses PROVIDE Employees With Resources to Improve Mental Health and Stress Management

Prudential Financial¹⁵

- Monitors the effect of supervisors on worker well-being, especially when supervisors change.
- Conducts ongoing, anonymous surveys to learn about attitudes toward managers, senior executives, and the company as a whole.
- Normalizes discussion of mental health by having senior leadership share personal stories in video messages.

TiER1 Performance Solutions¹⁶

- Focuses on 6 key health issues: depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and addictions as part of its Start the Conversation about Mental Illness awareness campaign.
- Provides resources to assess risk, find information, and get help or support using multiple formats to increase visibility and engagement. For example, information is provided as infographics, e-mails, weekly table tents with reflections and challenges, and videos (educational and storytelling).

Beehive PR¹⁷

- Maintains the “InZone,” a dedicated quiet room that is not connected to a wireless internet signal, which gives employees a place to recharge.
- Combines professional and personal growth opportunities through goal-setting, one-on-one coaching, development sessions, and biannual retreats.

Tripler Army Medical Center¹⁸

- Requires resiliency training to reduce burnout and increase skills in empathy and compassion for staff members who are in caregiver roles. Training sessions mix classroom-style lectures, role-playing, yoga, and improvisational comedy to touch on multiple learning styles.

Certified Angus Beef¹⁹

- Provides free wellness consultations by an on-site clinical psychologist. Employees do not have to take leave to access these services.
- Holds lunchtime learning sessions to reduce stigma about mental health and the services available to employees.
- Offers quarterly guided imagery relaxation sessions to teach stress management strategies.

Houston Texans²⁰

- Provides comprehensive and integrated physical, mental, and behavioral health insurance coverage, including round-the-clock access to employee assistance program (EAP) services.
- Extends EAP access to anyone living in an employee’s home, with dedicated programming for those who are caring for children or elderly parents.



What Can Be Done

Strategies for Managing Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace

Health care providers can:

- Ask patients about any depression or anxiety and recommend screenings, treatment, and services as appropriate.
- Include clinical psychologists, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and other allied health professionals as part of core treatment teams to provide comprehensive, holistic care.

Public health researchers can:

- Develop a “how-to” guide to help in the design, implementation, and evaluation of workplace health programs that address mental health and stress issues.
- Create a mental health scorecard that employers can use to assess their workplace environment and identify areas for intervention.
- Develop a recognition program that rewards employers who demonstrate evidence-based improvements in metrics of mental health and well-being and measurable business results.
- Establish training programs in partnership with business schools to teach leaders how to build and sustain a mentally healthy workforce.

Community leaders and businesses can:

- Promote mental health and stress management educational programs to working adults through public health departments, parks and recreational agencies, and community centers.
- Support community programs that indirectly reduce risks, for example, by increasing access to affordable housing, opportunities for physical activity (like sidewalks and trails), tools to promote financial well-being, and safe and tobacco-free neighborhoods.
- Create a system that employees, employers, and health care providers can use to find community-based programs (for example, at churches and community centers) that address mental health and stress management.



What Can Be Done

Federal and state governments can:

- Provide tool kits and materials for organizations and employers delivering mental health and stress management education.
- Provide courses, guidance, and decision-making tools to help people manage their mental health and well-being.
- Collect data on workers' well-being and conduct prevention and biomedical research to guide ongoing public health innovations.
- Promote strategies designed to reach people in underserved communities, such as the use of community health workers to help patients access mental health and substance abuse prevention services from local community groups (for example, churches and community centers).

Employees can:

- Encourage employers to offer mental health and stress management education and programs that meet their needs and interests, if they are not already in place.
- Participate in employer-sponsored programs and activities to learn skills and get the support they need to improve their mental health.
- Serve as dedicated wellness champions and participate in trainings on topics such as financial planning and how to manage unacceptable behaviors and attitudes in the workplace as a way to help others, when appropriate.
- Share personal experiences with others to help reduce stigma, when appropriate.
- Be open-minded about the experiences and feelings of colleagues. Respond with empathy, offer peer support, and encourage others to seek help.
- Adopt behaviors that promote stress management and mental health.

- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Take part in activities that promote stress management and relaxation, such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness, or tai chi.
- Build and nurture real-life, face-to-face social connections.
- Take the time to reflect on positive experiences and express happiness and gratitude.
- Set and work toward personal, wellness, and work-related goals and ask for help when it is needed.



CDC's Workplace Health Resource Center (WHRC)

is a one-stop shop for organizations of all sizes to find credible tools, guides, case studies, and other resources to design, develop, use, evaluate, and sustain workplace health programs.

Glossary

Any mental illness is defined as having any mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder in the past year that met *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (DSM-IV) criteria (excluding developmental disorders and substance use disorders). Mental illness can vary in impact, ranging from no impairment to mild, moderate, and even severe impairment.

Mindfulness is a psychological state of moment-to-moment awareness of your current state without feeling inward judgement about your situation. Mindfulness can be achieved through practices

like yoga, tai chi, and qigong or through meditation that helps you to foster control and develop skills such as calmness and concentration.

Self-management is a collaborative, interactive, and ongoing process that involves educators and people with health problems. The educator provides program participants with the information, problem-solving skills, and tools they need to successfully manage their health problems, avoid complications, make informed decisions, and engage in healthy behaviors. These programs can be provided in person, over the phone, or online.

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Reducing Stigma

It is important to remember that people – including those of Asian descent – who **do not live in or have not recently been in an area of ongoing spread** of the virus that causes COVID-19, or **have not been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case** of COVID-19 are **not at greater risk** of spreading COVID-19 than other Americans.

Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), are stressful times for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social *stigma*⁽¹⁾ toward people, places, or things. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Stigma can also occur after a person has been released from COVID-19 quarantine even though they are not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.

Some groups of people who may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19 include:

- Persons of Asian descent
- People who have traveled
- Emergency responders or healthcare professionals

Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards other people.

Stigmatized groups may be subjected to:

- Social avoidance or rejection
- Denials of healthcare, education, housing or employment
- Physical violence.

Stigma affects the emotional or *mental health*⁽²⁾ of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in. Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members *resilient*⁽³⁾.

Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by [knowing the facts](#) and sharing them with others in your community.

Related: [Resources on Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19.](#)

Communicators and public health officials can help counter stigma during the COVID-19 response.

- Maintain privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare and those who may be part of any contact investigation.
- Quickly communicate the risk or lack of risk from associations with products, people, and places.
- Raise awareness about COVID-19 without increasing fear.
- Share accurate information about how the virus spreads.
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements on social media about groups of people, or exclusion of people who pose no risk from regular activities.
- Be cautious about the images that are shared. Make sure they do not reinforce stereotypes.
- Engage with stigmatized groups in person and through media channels including news media and social media.
- Thank healthcare workers and responders. People who have traveled to areas where the COVID-19 outbreak is happening to help have performed a valuable service to everyone by helping make sure this disease does not spread further.
- Share the need for social support for people who have returned from China or are worried about friends or relatives in the affected region.

Related: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Key Terms

1. **Stigma** occurs when people associate a risk with a specific people, place, or thing – like a minority population group – and there is no evidence that the risk is greater in that group than in the general population. Stigmatization is especially common in disease outbreaks.
https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/cerccorner/article_123016.asp
2. **Mental health** is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of well being in which a person realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response> [↗](#)
3. **Resilience** is the ability to withstand and recover from stress.
<https://blogs.cdc.gov/publichealthmatters/2017/08/predicting-community-resilience-and-recovery-after-a-disaster/>

More Information

[Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones](#)

[Pandemic Preparedness Resources](#)

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