



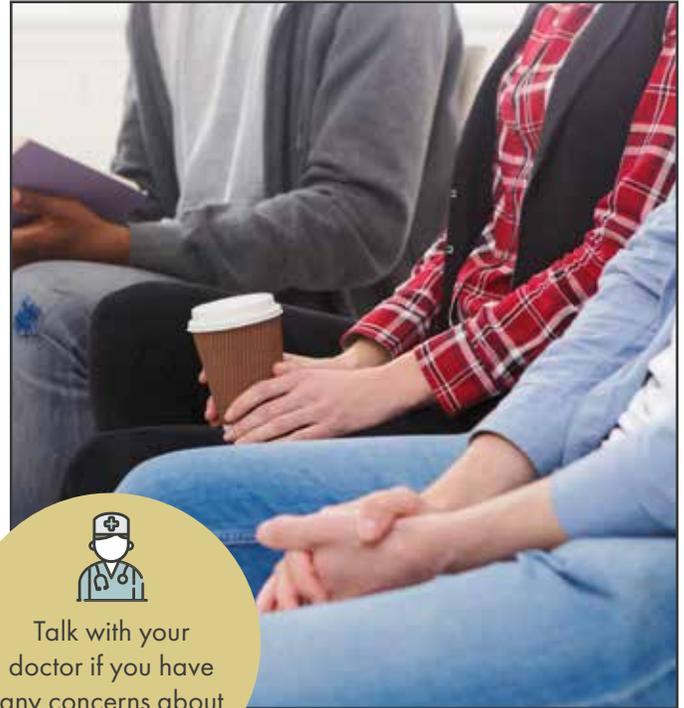
Mental Health

Break the Stigma

Mental health is one of the leading causes of disability. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds. And yet it has this stigma to it that makes people feel afraid to talk about it and uneasy to hear about it. We've got to do better and learn how to support people, letting them know it is safe to reach out for support. Mental illness affects emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. It can often manifest itself in physical ways as well, such as stomach aches or headaches. It can make school, work, and relationships extremely difficult or impossible. And even with the same diagnosis, each person is affected differently, has different triggers, and different things that help them.

THERE ARE FIVE MAIN CATEGORIES OF MENTAL ILLNESS, WITH AN UMBRELLA OF DIAGNOSES UNDER THEM.

1. Anxiety disorders, characterized by constant fear or worry, inability to cope with life events, and/or attempt to control surroundings.
 - Social phobia or social anxiety disorder
 - Panic disorder
 - Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
2. Mood disorders, characterized by extreme mood changes, feeling sad or suicidal, and/or low energy.
 - Depression or Major depressive disorder
 - Bipolar disorder
 - Premenstrual dysphoric disorder
 - Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
3. Schizophrenia and Psychotic Disorders, characterized by paranoia, hallucinations, and disorganized thought and/or speech.
 - Schizoaffective disorder
 - Delusional disorder
 - Substance-induced psychotic disorder
4. Dementia, characterized by the inability to think or reason, memory loss, and change in motor skills.
 - Alzheimer's disease or other diseases, such as Parkinson's
 - Substance-induced dementia
 - Traumatic brain injury



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

5. Eating disorders, characterized by obsessive food habits such as over- or undereating, as well as a concern with body image and weight.

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa
- Binge eating disorder

There are many contributing factors to why some people struggle with a mental health illness. These include family history, brain chemistry, or a major life event such as trauma or abuse. Substance abuse often goes hand-in-hand with mental illness, because:

- » Along with mental illness, those with substance abuse struggle with the same contributing factors (family history, brain chemistry, or a major life event).
- » Many of the illegal drugs actually cause signs and symptoms of mental health disorders.
- » Those with a mental illness often turn to drugs and alcohol as a form of self-medication.

HOW CAN WE HELP OURSELVES OR OTHERS?

- » If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, call 911 immediately and seek help. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in the U.S. is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You can also call your healthcare provider, mental health specialist, minister, or a loved one.
- » It's so important to watch for warning signs, both for ourselves and loved ones we might be concerned about. Know what the triggers are, as well as tips to work through them.
- » Get plenty of sleep, eat a well-balanced diet, and get regular physical activity as they are great for everyone's mental health.
- » See your doctor regularly for follow-up. There are many medications available to help control the symptoms of a mental health illness.
- » Attend psychotherapy sessions with a mental healthcare provider. This involves talking and learning about your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, as well as gaining coping tools to help through stressful times.
- » Substance abuse treatment may be needed as well, depending on the person's unique experiences.

- » Other options are available such as inpatient treatment at a hospital or brain-stimulation treatments. Talk with your doctor about the best route for you.
- » Join a support group. Nobody understands what you're going through more than people going through similar situations.

With treatment, most people with mental illness can live a completely normal life and have healthy relationships. There are more treatment options, services, and community support systems in place now than ever before and they are successful in helping people manage their mental illness.

TIPS TO PROMOTE GOOD MENTAL HEALTH:

- » Eat a well-balanced diet
- » Get plenty of sleep
- » Exercise regularly
- » Avoid smoking, alcohol, and drug use
- » Practice good coping skills
- » Surround yourself with a good support system
- » Try meditation, yoga, or relaxation techniques
- » Make time for hobbies
- » Practice positive thinking
- » Try journaling

