

Health Insights

May 2023

Breaking the Barriers of Mental Health

People often avoid or delay seeking treatment for their mental illness for fear of being treated differently or even losing their jobs and livelihood. That's because stigma, prejudice, and discrimination have led to marginalization of those with mental illness. Understanding what that looks like—and how to address it—is the first step towards eradicating barriers to acceptance and support for those who need it most.

The Facts on Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination

Stigma around mental health often comes from fear or a lack of understanding. Inaccurate or misleading media representations of mental illness contribute to both of those factors. A review of studies on stigma shows that while the public may accept the medical or genetic nature of a mental health disorder and the need for treatment, many people still have a negative view of those with mental illness.

Researchers identify different types of stigma:

- **Public stigma** involves the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have towards mental illness.
- **Self-stigma** refers to the negative attitudes—including internalized shame—that people with mental illness have about their own condition.
- **Institutional stigma** is more systemic, involving policies of government and private organizations that (intentionally or unintentionally) limit opportunities for people with mental illness.

Stigma in the Workplace

A 2019 national poll from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) found that mental health stigma is a major challenge in the workplace. About half of workers were concerned about discussing mental health issues at their jobs. More than one in three were concerned about retaliation or being fired if they sought mental health care.

About 1 in 5 workers were completely comfortable talking about mental health issues. The poll found a generational divide: millennials were almost twice as likely as baby boomers (62% vs. 32%) to be comfortable discussing their mental health. Half of the workers polled were at least somewhat comfortable talking about mental health and most said they would help guide a troubled co-worker to mental health resources. However, even among those willing to help, about one in four said they would not know where to turn for mental health help.

Addressing Stigma

Research shows that knowing or having contact with someone with mental illness is one of the best ways to reduce stigma. Individuals speaking out and sharing their stories can have a positive impact on those who have less exposure to mental illness. When we know someone with a mental illness, it becomes real and relatable rather than scary and threatening.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), commonly available through employers, help employees deal with a variety of concerns such as work-life stressors, issues affecting mental and emotional well-being, family issues, financial concerns, relationship problems, or legal concerns. However, the services often go unused—only about 3-5% of employees use available EAP services, according to the Center for Workplace Mental Health.

American Psychiatric Association. (2020). Stigma, prejudice and discrimination against people with mental illness. Psychiatry.org - Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination Against People with Mental Illness. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/stigma-and-discrimination>



Mental Health Moment

Mental Health Matters

Your mental health, including your mental and emotional well-being, can change over time due to several different factors like workload, stress, and work-life balance. May is **Mental Health Awareness Month** which is a time to offer support to those with mental illness and fight the stigma surrounding mental health.

Mental illnesses are some of the most common health conditions in the United States; more than 50% of the population will be diagnosed with a mental illness at some point. As many as 1 in 5 people will experience mental illness in a given year, and as many as 1 in 25 live with a serious mental illness such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. It is vital to provide support to those who are struggling with mental health, and it is just as important to take care of your mental health.

The past few years have been challenging for mental health, but it has enabled more transparency and empathy for those who may be struggling. Here are a few strategies to help you thrive:

Create healthy routines. Healthy routines include eating a nutrient-rich diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep. Start with small changes and work your way up to more impactful ones.

Own your feelings. It can be easy to get caught up in emotions as you're feeling them. Take time to identify your feelings and learn how to better cope during challenging situations.

Connect with others. Connections with friends, family, or communities help enrich your life and enable you to power through tough times.

Cultivate gratitude. Practicing gratitude is linked to improved mental health. Consider keeping a gratitude journal, meditating, or making a point to thank others in your life.

Source: May Is Mental Health Awareness Month - Infographic. Zywave. (N.d.). Retrieved February 9, 2023

Supporting Your Mental Health

Mental Health disorders (including depression, anxiety, stress, and other psychological disorders) affect nearly a quarter of all adults, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Employees afflicted with poor mental health and high levels of stress often experience reduced focus, low productivity, reduced cognitive abilities, and poor physical health. Utilizing community and other educational resources can be a great starting place for supporting your mental health.

- 1. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Call, text, or chat 988 to be connected with trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. www.988lifeline.org
- 2. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP):** Provides mental health trainings, like SafeTalk, and a variety of community resources for everyone. www.afsp.org
- 3. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Provides a variety of free community resources as well as a support group for those experiencing a mental health crisis, including those supporting a loved one in their mental health struggle. www.nami.org/home
- 4. MentalHealth.gov:** This is an online resource that provides free education on mental health. Some of the topics they include are what to look for, how to talk about mental health, and how to get help. www.mentalhealth.gov/

Additional Strategies

- Take advantage of your workplace Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Make time to unwind. Participate in some activities that you enjoy, catch up on a project, or start a new hobby.
- Limit screen time by disconnecting from your phone, tv, or computer screen a couple of times each day.
- Connect with a counselor. Free and confidential resources are available to help you or a loved one find the help you need.



Summer Orzo Salad

Ingredient List:

- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 (16 ounce) package orzo pasta
- 1 ½ tablespoons butter
- ¼ Cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 cup pine nuts
- ½ Teaspoon dried basil
- ½ Teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ Teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 cup pitted kalamata olives
- 1 (2 ounce) jar capers, with liquid
- 12 ounces basil-flavored feta cheese
- 1 (10 ounce) bag fresh spinach leaves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Instructions:

1. Bring chicken broth to a boil over high heat. Add orzo pasta and cook until al dente, 8 to 10 minutes. Drain well, then pour orzo into a bowl and toss with butter to keep it from sticking; set aside.
2. While pasta is cooking, heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in garlic and cook until garlic softens, about 2 minutes. Stir in pine nuts, basil, thyme, and red pepper flakes. Cook and stir until pine nuts have toasted to a light golden brown.
3. Stir pine nut mixture into orzo along with olives, capers, and feta cheese. Toss in spinach and lemon juice.
4. Serve either warm or cold, but it's better the next day.

Refreshing summer orzo salad. Allrecipes. (2022, December 1). Retrieved February 21, 2023, from <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/164473/refreshing-summer-orzo-salad/>



May Quiz

Mental Health Quiz

Breaking the Barriers of Mental Health

1. What are the three types of stigmas discussed in the article?

2. What percentage of employees are concerned about discussing mental health issues at work?

- a. About 50% b. More than 50% c. Less than 50%

Mental Health Matters

3. Which of these is a strategy for improving mental health?

- a. Create healthy routines c. Cultivate gratitude
b. Own your feelings d. All of the above

4. More than ___% of the population is diagnosed with a mental illness at some point.

- a. 15% b. 5% c. 70% d. 50%

Mental Health Moment

5. List one community resource for mental health.

Healthy Habits Calendar

May 2023 - Mental Health

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Welcome to May! Start the <i>Who's My Neighbor</i> Challenge.	2	3 Wellness Wednesday: If you haven't yet, schedule a preventative care visit with your doctor.	4	5 Cinco de Mayo	6 Selfless Saturday: Reach out to someone and offer service.
7	8 Motivation Monday: Create a summer goal and challenge yourself to be accountable	9 Tuesday's Tip: Start your day with a mindfulness or meditation practice.	10	11 Challenge Check-in: What have you learned about diversity in your community?	12	13
14 Mother's Day	15	16	17 Wellness Wednesday: Make a list of 10 things you're grateful for.	18	19 Fitness Friday: Try incorporating active transportation into your commute today.	20
21	22 Motivation Monday: Listen to a podcast or read a book on a topic that interests you.	23	24 Wellness Wednesday: Schedule time to play a game with friends or family this week.	25 Challenge Check-in: What was one thing you learned from a different community?	26	27 Service Saturday: Offer to help a neighbor with yard work or a project
28 Self-Care Sunday: De-stress and change your perspective. Take time to journal today.	29 Memorial Day	30	31 Wellness Wednesday: Go for a short hike or walk with friends or family.			

Challenge: Who's My Neighbor?

When we get caught up in day-to-day life, it can be hard to acknowledge or be aware of what is happening around us. It can even be challenging to know your neighbors, whether they're neighbors next door, your coworkers, or the person sitting next to you on the train. We can all take steps to learn more about the people around us.

For this challenge, we invite you to learn more about the different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds of those around you. You may consider watching videos, reading an article or book, listening to a podcast, or simply talking to another person to learn more about them. Spend at least two hours per week completing any of the activities listed below or any other activities that support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Use the tracker to log what you learn each week. Learning about our neighbors can help us expand our horizons, gain a different viewpoint, and adapt to new ways of seeing the world.

Idea Bank:

- Listen to new music
- Watch a documentary
- Try a new cuisine
- Talk to people
- Read an autobiography
- Begin learning a language
- Visit a museum
- Listen to a podcast
- Read a book
- Volunteer with humanitarian organizations



What did I learn this week about my neighbors?

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

For more ideas on what you can do to learn about others, consider visiting one of these websites:



25 Fun Ways to Experience Different Cultures from Home When You Can't Travel



10 Ways to Learn More about Other Cultures

Answers to Quiz:

- Q1 : Public Stigma, Self-Stigma and Institutional Stigma | Q2: a. About 50% | Q3: d. All of the above
 Q4: d. 50% | Q5: Possible answers are AFSP, NAMI, Mentalhealth.gov, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline