



Let's talk about mental health

Authors:

Andrew Airey,
Lindsey Daoust,
Jaime Escobedo, MPH,
Jimmy Hamrick,
Nate Payton,
Kira Siepman,
Julie Smith, and
Jenn Whitney,
Undergraduate students
in Nursing;
Tessa Garrow, MS, LMHC
Purdue University

Conversations about health across the country are no longer limited to just a person's physical well-being, but now include a balance of physical and mental health. One in five adults in the United States currently deals with mental health issues. As mental health struggles continue to grow and we talk about them more openly, it is helpful to understand what "mental health" means.

Mental health includes a person's thoughts, emotions, and how they experience the world around them. When a person's mental health negatively affects how they function, this becomes a mental health disorder. Mental health struggles occur with or without an official diagnosis. Estimates indicate that 5% of adults experience a mental health issue in any one year in the United States (about 44 million people). Only 41% of those

adults received professional mental health care during that year. Fewer than half of all individuals living with a diagnosable mental health condition actually seek treatment.

Many people do not seek mental health treatment because of negative attitudes and assumptions about mental health, also known as stigma. Stigma can particularly influence whether minorities, youth, men, military professionals, and health professionals seek treatment. Yet mental health struggles do not indicate weakness. With the right resources and support, people with mental health issues can get better. Increased understanding about mental health can lessen fears and stigma. By reducing stigma, people are more likely to reach out when they have concerns.



Common Mental Health Issue Signs

- Feeling hopeless.
- Social withdrawal.
- Mood changes.
- Unexpected weight changes.
- Appetite changes.
- Trouble focusing.
- Sleep changes.
- No longer enjoying activities previously enjoyed.
- Extreme worry.
- Extreme stress.
- Physical pain or illness.

Reach Out for Help if Someone Has:

- Thoughts about harming themselves.
- Thoughts about harming others.
- Thoughts of dying.
- Attempts to self-harm or complete suicide.
- Hearing things that are not there.
- Seeing things that are not there.

If someone experiences these symptoms, it is time to ask for help. Start by talking to a trusted person. This can be a loved one, teacher, mentor, coworker, or healthcare provider. A healthcare provider can be a nurse, doctor, mental health therapist, or community health leader. They can suggest appropriate mental health resources.

Helpful Tips and Resources

Just like there are things a person can do to stay physically healthy, there are habits a person can develop to protect their mental health. Engaging in self-care, maintaining self-awareness about emotions felt, and fostering supportive relationships all benefit someone's mental health. These habits and connections can help someone shift from using harmful coping behaviors.

Mental health disorders need professional treatment. These treatments are not one-size-fits-all methods. Below are some resources to explore:

- **National Helpline** - call 1-800-662-3457 (1-800-662-HELP). Free and available 24/7. This helpline provides information about local groups and treatment centers. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>.
- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - call 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK). Free and available 24/7. This call directs to the nearest crisis center in the area. <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.
- **The Crisis Text Line** – text “HOME” 741741 for assistance with crises or thoughts of suicide. Free and available 24/7. www.crisistextline.org.
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** – A federal organization that offers education, research and guidance for how to find mental health or substance misuse treatment options. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>.
- **Mental Health America** – A nonprofit organization based in communities to provide education and support networks for mental health issues, and helps connect people with local services. www.mhanational.org.
- **Mental Health First Aid** – A one-day course to learn how to support someone struggling with their mental health. Information available at www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness** – A grassroots mental health advocacy group with support networks and resources for struggling individuals and their families. www.nami.org.
- In case of emergency or immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

Final Takeaway

- Struggling with mental health does not make someone weak, and it is OK to reach out for help.
- Knowing mental health condition signs can lead to earlier treatment.
- Having treatment access may improve mental health.

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