



A Practical Guide to Mental Health Awareness

Developed by Wade Sorochan, 2018

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking the first step along the total health path. I believe it will be one of the most important decisions you will ever make for yourself and your loved ones.

There is much information available about mental illness. This can be overwhelming, especially for those who suffer from a mental disorder. Based on my own research, I have compiled practical and easy to understand information about anxiety and depression, two of the most common mental disorders.

The PATH initiative comes from my own lifelong battle with anxiety and depression. After being emotionally abused and abandoned as a child, experiencing five mental breakdowns and hitting rock bottom, I eventually sought help and received the treatment that put me on the path to better mental health. Today I am functioning better than ever. I now have the strategies and tools to keep me on the total health path.

My hope is that this important information reaches as many people as possible to help them take the first steps along the total health path. So join me on the PATH so you too can start enjoying life to the fullest again (or for the first time). It's time for a call to action on mental health. There is no health without mental health.

Wade Sorochan
Speaker, author and mental health advocate

Know the Facts

Information Leads to Hope and Hope Leads to Action

- 20-30% of people will experience a mental illness in their lifetime — approximately 4.5 million Canadians and 61.5 million Americans. (*Canadian Mental Health Association, National Alliance on Mental Illness*)
- Women are twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression as men. (*Canadian Mental Health Association and Depression Association of America*)
- Research indicates that the onset of anxiety and depression occurs earlier now in children than in past decades. (*Rotter's Scale 1960-2002*)
- Anxiety and depression continue to be Canada's fastest-rising diagnosis (*Statistics Canada*)
- Mental disorders contribute more to the global burden of disease than all cancers combined (*Mood Disorders Society of Canada*)
- Studies indicate a clear link between mental illness, addictions and substance abuse (*Centre for Addiction and Mental Health*)
- Unemployment rate among people with serious mental illness: 70–90%. (*Mood Disorders Society of Canada*)
- Mental illness is the number one cause of workplace disability. (*Canada Safety Council/Centre for Addiction and Mental Health*)
- 500,000 Canadians miss work every day due to mental health issues. (*Canadian Mental Health Association*)
- Statistics have shown that over 60% of people with a mental health problem or illness won't seek help for fear of discrimination. (*Mental Health Commission of Canada*)

What Causes Mental Illness?

Today most researchers agree that no one thing causes mental illness. They acknowledge that biological, psychological and environment elements all play a role in causing mental illness.

The terms *mental illness* or *mental disorder* or *psychiatric condition* are terms used to describe a wide range of different conditions. But what they have in common is that they *all* affect a person's emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

Normal vs. Disorder

It's important to note that anxiety is normal; it's hard-wired into our brains. It's part of the body's fight or flight response, which prepares us to act quickly in the face of danger. It's a normal response to uncertainty, trouble or feeling unprepared. However if common everyday events bring on severe or persistent anxiety that interferes with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder.

Mood swings are normal. Small mood swings are a part of most people's lives. The normal ups and downs of life will cause sadness or "the blues" from time to time, but if symptoms persist, you may have depression.

People with anxiety or mood disorders experience anxiety and mood swings with greater intensity and for longer periods of time.

Anxiety and **Depression** are two of the most common mental illnesses. One is an anxiety disorder and one is a mood disorder.

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders affect about 10% of the population, they include; Panic Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Social Anxiety or Phobia and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which is the most common anxiety disorder.

Mood Disorders

Mood disorders affect about 10% of the population. They include Bipolar Disorder (manic depression), Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and Depression, which is the most common mood disorder.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is the most common anxiety disorder. People with GAD worry excessively and uncontrollably about daily life events and activities. This high-level anxiety makes normal life difficult and relaxation impossible. GAD causes significant disruption in a person's life. People with GAD may develop other disorders, such as panic disorder or depression.

Substance abuse or dependence may also become a problem.

(Depressed and Anxious, The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Overcoming Depression and Anxiety. Thomas Marra, PH.D. 2004)

Psychological Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Irritability
- Feelings of dread
- Inability to control anxious thoughts
- Edginess or restlessness and inability to relax
- Difficulty sleeping and concentrating
- Fear of losing control or being rejected

Physical Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Muscle tension, aches, or soreness
- Stomach problems, nausea, diarrhea
- Jumpiness or unsteadiness
- Fatigue
- Shakiness
- Sweating
- Headaches

Worry Warning Signs *(Melinda Smith, M.A. and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.)*

- Your worrying significantly disrupts your job, activities, or social life.
- Your worrying is uncontrollable.
- Your worries are extremely upsetting and stressful.
- You worry about all sorts of things, and tend to expect the worst.
- You've been worrying more days than not for at least six months.

Depression

Depression is the most common mood disorder. Depression is a “whole body” illness, involving your body, mood, and thoughts. It affects how you feel, think and behave. Depression isn’t just a temporary mood swing or a sign of personal weakness. It is a serious medical condition with many emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioral symptoms that affect all areas of a person’s life.

Acronym for Summarizing Symptoms of Depression

(Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments)

SADIFACES

Sleep – decrease or increase

Appetite – decrease or increase

Depressed mood *

Interest (loss of) *

Fatigue

Anxiety or **A**gitation

Concentration (difficulty with)

Esteem (feelings of worthlessness)

Suicidal Thoughts

*Clinical depression is commonly diagnosed when a person experiences *depressed mood, loss of interest* and any five out of the nine symptoms for at least two weeks.

Suicide Awareness: There Is Another Way

Untreated mental illness can ultimately end in death by suicide. Suicide occurs across all age, economic, social and ethnic boundaries. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10-24 (CMHA). Some people get so overwhelmed by unbearable emotional pain that the only way they see to end their pain is to end their life. Suicide is not necessarily about ending life, it’s about ending pain. Unfortunately the pain doesn’t end, it just transfers to others. Most people who attempt suicide want to live, but they become overwhelmed by unbearable emotional pain and can’t see any other option. Suicide *is* preventable.

Myths and Truths about Suicide

Myth: Young people rarely think about suicide.

Truth: Kids Help Phone survey reveals: 22% of Canadian teens seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months. 46% reported they had a plan. (2016 Kids Help Phone survey of 1,319 students between the ages of 13 and 18)

Myth: Talking about suicide will give a person the idea to consider suicide as a solution to their problem.

Truth: Talking calmly without showing fear or making judgments can bring relief to someone who is feeling terribly isolated. It's important to take all threats or attempts seriously by responding in a direct straight forward manner. Do not try to solve the problem yourself, do not be sworn to secrecy, and do seek the assistance of a trained professional as soon as possible.

General Rule of Thumb

If your thoughts, feelings or behaviors are significantly impairing your daily life, it may be time to seek help. Your family doctor is a common place to begin your search for help. Encourage others to talk to their doctor if you notice warning signs.

Remember that symptoms of mental health disorders can sometimes be caused by other medical conditions and therefore it is ALWAYS important to consult your doctor to rule out any other medical reasons for these symptoms.

Treatment for Anxiety and Depression

The most common treatment includes anti-anxiety/anti-depressant medication, therapy or both.

Medication

There are many different types of anti-anxiety/anti-depressant medications. Because medications address the symptoms of anxiety and depression, a physician will prescribe medication based on an individual's specific set of symptoms. It may take several attempts using different types of anti-anxiety/anti-depressant medications to find the one that best addresses a person's particular set of symptoms, while causing the fewest side effects. Anti-anxiety/anti-depressant medication is not a quick fix, it may take several weeks or more before positive results are noticed.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy treatment that helps patients understand the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviors. It focuses on reducing negative thoughts, changing errors in thinking, and improving assertiveness and problem solving skills to reduce feelings of hopelessness and despair. CBT is commonly used to treat a wide range of disorders, including phobias, addiction, anxiety and depression.

(Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy David D. Burns MD. 1980)

Exercise and Mental Health

For many years experts have known that physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may have a positive effect on mental health. As a result of exercise, the body releases various chemicals that affect the brain. One group of chemicals is called *endorphins*. During exercise the release of beta-endorphin by the pituitary gland increases and produces an analgesic effect on the body that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. You'll also look better and feel better when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem. Exercise is a healthy lifestyle activity for body and mind. The bottom line is that physical exercise is good for our mental health.

Mental Health as Part of Total Health

Good mental health is a vital part of overall good health and well-being. It is just as important to maintain good mental health as it is to maintain good physical health. *There is no health without mental health.*

Supporting Someone with a Mental Illness

Educate Yourself

Educating yourself will give you a better understanding of what the person is going through, and it will show that you care. But *do not* diagnose. Provide practical information to help that person further understand and learn more about mental disorders.

Encourage Them to Seek Help From Their Doctor

A family doctor is a good place to start to get the proper diagnosis and treatment.

Be Understanding, Encouraging and a Sympathetic Listener

Allow them to express their feelings. Let them know that you are there if they need a sympathetic ear, encouragement or assistance. Remind that person that you care and that you'll do whatever you can to help, but supporting someone with a mental disorder can be emotionally draining, so it's important to look after *your own* mental well-being.

Breaking the Silence and Ending the Stigma

Statistics have shown that only 1 out of 4 people afflicted with a mental disorder will seek help. Stigma plays a clear role. Of those who had untreated disorders, more than half said they were too embarrassed to seek help. Slowly the picture is changing. Canadians are increasingly choosing to seek help, usually when there is a media awareness campaign.

When we start to talk openly and honestly about mental health people start to seek help and realize these **5 basic truths about mental illness**:

- 1. Mental illness is not a character weakness**
- 2. It is not your fault**
- 3. You are not alone**
- 4. Mental illness is treatable**
- 5. There is Hope (Hang On Pain Ends)**

Don't Give Up

For many years, I would fight my diagnosis and go off my treatment program when I started feeling better---but that would always lead to a major emotional crash when facing any adversity in my life. I fought my diagnosis because I just wanted to be “normal” like everyone else. But everyone’s “normal” is different. My new normal became taking medication and receiving counselling. I still struggle at times today with high anxiety, depression, mental and physical exhaustion; and simple tasks can be emotionally and physically overwhelming. I have to stay on my treatment program and use the learned strategies every day to deal with my mental illness. Mental illness is not curable, but it is treatable. If you stay on *your* treatment program, you should notice a difference in how you’re feeling and functioning and others will notice as well. In the beginning it may take time to start feeling better, so... DON ’T GIVE UP.

Untreated mental illness causes difficulties in all areas of life. It can ruin relationships, marriages and careers. It can ruin a life or ultimately end a life. It was a major contributing factor in ending my marriage after 30 years. It can be very difficult living with someone who has mental illness. I respect my ex-wife for recognizing how I was affecting her and taking action to take care of her own mental health. A person living with someone who has a mental illness needs to be aware of how their own mental health is being affected. Everyone needs to take care of their own mental health first and foremost.

Admitting I had a problem and seeking help was hard, but it was the best decision I have ever made for myself and my family. The tendency is to want to be alone in our suffering and not be a burden to others. The truth is that others care and want to help. We need to reach out and be honest with our family, friends and healthcare providers about our feelings and emotions so we can receive the right treatment to get back on track. The earlier this can happen, the better. It’s important to seek help as soon as possible because untreated mental health issues will affect your physical health as well, and cause serious issues in all areas of your life.

A Call to Action on Mental Health

Mental illness is just that; an *illness*, yet there is a reluctance to talk about it like other illnesses, leaving the mentally ill to suffer in silence. Like any other illness, if mental illness goes untreated it can be fatal. We need governments at all levels, as well as organizations, churches and individuals to lead the call to action. While there has been some progress, having a mental illness can cause discrimination based on fear, misunderstanding or just plain ignorance.

We can all play a part in breaking the silence and ending the stigma about mental illness, so that everyone can get the treatment they need without fear of discrimination. Let's keep talking and keep this call to action going to help save lives.

About Wade

Wade Sorochan is a well-known radio personality in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Wade first gained recognition for his pioneering impact on the number one rated and "Canada's most unique" radio talk show *The Bill & Bill Show*. Nicknamed "The Tone Arm," Wade became the first broadcaster in history to spontaneously use song clips to enhance a radio talk show. He went on to produce and host his own popular radio talk shows *Life Talk with Wade Sorochan* and *Edmonton This Week*. Wade is recognized as a talk show pioneer with a career that has spanned four decades.

As a mental illness survivor, Wade is a sought after motivational speaker sharing his inspiring personal story of living with mental illness at numerous events; including the 2011 International Symposium on Wellness and the 2017 National Mental Health Conference.

Wade Sorochan is a national recipient of the CAMH "Difference Makers Award" recognizing 150 leading Canadians for mental health and the 2017 "Canada 150 in 150 Award" recognizing inspiring Albertans.

Wade Sorochan is the author of the books *UNSOCIAL MEDIA: Virtual World Causing Real World Anxiety*---a ground-breaking book about how social media affects mental health and *Fastest Tone Arm in the West; Chasing a radio dream*---behind the scenes of a successful radio career and inspiring story of surviving mental illness. **Both books available at Chapters/Indigo/Coles and online at www.wadesorochan.com.**

Resources/References

Canadian Mental Health Association

www.cmha.ca

Mood Disorders Society of Canada

www.mdsc.ca

Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

www.camh.ca

Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada

www.anxietycanada.ca

Depression Information

www.depressionhurts.ca

Books:

Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy, David D. Burns MD. 1980, Revised 1999 HarperCollins Publishers

The Feeling Good Handbook, David Burns MD. 1989, Revised 1999 The Penguin Group

Boundaries Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend Zondervan; Rev Ed edition (April 1, 2002)

Mindfulness and Acceptance, Expanding the Cognitive Behavioral Tradition Hayes, Follette, Linehan 2004 Guilford Press

The Depression Workbook, Second edition, Guide for Living with Depression and Manic Depression, Mary Ellen Copeland M.S., M.A. 2001, New Harbinger Publications Inc.

The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression, William J. Knaus, ED. D. 2006, New Harbinger Publications Inc.

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Contact and booking information available at: www.wadesorochan.com

Disclaimer

The information in this guide is meant to provide general information only and is not a substitute for professional advice. If you feel you may need medical advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. Although a reasonable effort was made to ensure that the information is accurate, the reliability of the information cannot be guaranteed.

In an emergency situation call 911 or proceed to your nearest emergency department.