



Let's talk about mental health: Three ways to support each other



DeAnne Aussem, NBC-HWC, PCC, CHIC

Wellbeing Leader @PwCUS | Proud LGBTQ+ wife and mom, positive deviant, trailblazer, inclusive leader and culture warrior | CHIEF Member...

20 articles

✓ Following

December 7, 2021

Open Immersive Reader

There was a time when I tended to ignore painful feelings. As one of those people with a naturally optimistic outlook, I told myself that whatever was bothering me would pass. And it usually did.

But now I'm facing the recent death of my amazing, one-of-a-kind mother six years after my father's passing. The fear, anger and grief are overwhelming at times. This is not something I can or even want to push aside. And while my

family, friends and colleagues are going above and beyond to support me (a big shout-out to you all — you know who you are!), I know I'm going to need more help to get through a loss that cuts this deep.

That's why I'm taking advantage of the individual and group counseling recommended by the hospice organization that cared for my mother.

I know I'm hardly alone. The pandemic has brought profound loss over the past two years. People are grieving the deaths of loved ones, struggling with job losses, and mourning a familiar way of life. [Statistics from the CDC](#) back up what we see around us: Significantly more people have reported symptoms of anxiety and depression since the start of the pandemic than prior to 2020.

Yet it can be hard to take that first step to get help — or to reach out to help someone else. Especially if you've grown up believing that mental health challenges and emotional pain don't deserve or require treatment in the same way as medical issues. But asking for help is no sign of weakness. We've come a long way in recent years in de-stigmatizing mental health, especially as the pandemic has raised awareness of the need for attention and resources.

So, what can you and I do to keep moving forward? Here are three ways to help ourselves and each other with our mental health:

Ask: "How are you ... really?"

Caring questions start conversations that can make a real difference.

Last week, a colleague asked me how I was. "OK," I replied. She paused and looked at me through the screen. "Really? Because I know you're going through a tough time with the loss of your mom. How are you doing ... really?"

She was right. I wasn't feeling "OK," and both her acknowledgement and willingness to see me and step into my grief space made me feel a little better.

My colleague demonstrated exactly the type of behavior that mental health

advocates recommend we all practice:

- Listen more, talk less
- Be empathetic and supportive
- Do not diagnose (leave that to the professionals)
- Avoid downplaying feelings or offering advice unless it's requested
- Let them know you care

Recognize the signs

Just like certain medical issues, mental health challenges often reveal subtle cues.

Here are some signs to look out for:

- Extreme mood changes or irritability
- Behavior that's noticeably different from usual or "off"
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Sleeping too much or having trouble sleeping
- Routinely late or absent

If you notice these signs in yourself, it may be time to reach out for help or find ways to replenish your reserves and build resilience. If you see these signs in someone else, use neutral language to open a caring conversation. You might start with: "You haven't seemed like yourself lately. Is everything OK?" Or simply refer to my first point above and ask: "How are you ... really?"

Know where to get help and resources

Whether it's for yourself or others, make sure you include mental health in your well-being toolbox. Sometimes adopting a few [healthy habits](#) can be a great start.

Here are some ways to get started:

- Check out this list of [mental health resources](#) provided by Mental Health First Aid from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.
- Virtual therapy and counseling apps can be helpful, based on the level of support you're looking for.
- If you have healthcare insurance, review your benefits and reach out for answers if coverage is unclear.
- If you work, your employer may have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can provide free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals and follow-up services for personal and/or work-related problems.
- If you're a college student, check into campus resources.
- Watch the PwC US firm's [Green Light to Talk](#) video series and review the conversation guide.

Remember, it's OK not to be OK. And it's OK — and very important — to talk about it. Let's be there for one another. And please, get help if you need it.

Be like my colleague. Take the time to really check in and listen. You might be the one to make the difference when someone needs it most.

And if you're struggling, it's important to reach out. It's better to seek help early than to wait for a crisis. *(If you or someone you know is in crisis, contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or dial 911 in case of emergency.)*

[Report this](#)

Published by



DeAnne Aussem, NBC-HWC, PCC, CHIC

Wellbeing Leader @PwCUS | Proud LGBTQ+ wife and mom, positive deviant, tr...
Published • 2y

[20 articles](#)

[✓ Following](#)

The past 20+ months have taken a heavy toll on our well-being. As the holiday season gets underway, I want to share some important [#mentalhealth](#) tips we can all benefit from. Let's [#BeTheDifference!](#) [#BeWellWorkWell](#)

 Like  Comment  Share

   1.4k views 33 comments

 Like  Comment  Share

   118 • 33 comments