



Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental Health Awareness Starts Today!

For far too long, the topic of Mental Health was considered taboo and simply not openly discussed by many medical practitioners. More importantly, people struggling with mental health problems did not feel comfortable openly discussing issues often related to their own emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Thankfully, mental health is finally a topic everyone is speaking freely and truthfully about and now openly shared without the fear of stigmas or discrimination. Today more than ever people are discovering alternate ways to build communities through friends, family, or social groups online, which help our mental calmness.

The true term mental health is associated with the types of coping mechanisms they control or employ during social situations in times of extreme stress or anxiety. Most easily stated, it reflects on a person's daily decision-making processes in one's output, which play a vital role in determining the person's mental status. Extremely noticeable changes in the way a person thinks, feels, acts, or how they relate to others could be a warning sign that a person's mental health is declining and needs a consult by a doctor or a professional. But if you are interested in a personal assessment by one of our caring members at Active Aging 365 for one-on-one assessment, please "Contact Us" or call us. We would love to chat with you and help you find your best self!

Current COVID-19 pandemic caused a screeching halt to our daily routines and as expected, significant amount of people were confused with the ever changing rules in our daily news and updates from the nations' politicians, tactical doctors, and even

News reporters that are often confusing, conflicting, or alarming to say the least. These rapid change and constant negative outlook can obviously affect one's mind set and moods. Even the most productive front-line workers, executives, teachers, parents, kids and even pets are not used to this type of daily uncertainties and hence cause undue stress to everyone. If you or your loved ones have "snapped" with an unlikely comment or gesture, it is totally understandable. All of us as creatures of habits are more comforted by routines and cycles, so the drastic change of restrictions and limitations have left more people at unease. The lack of control of time and flow of movements are new to many people who are in quarantine by choice or not. So as expected in assessing the current situation, the magnitude of limitations, and daily obstructed movements affects each of our emotional mental states all differently.

With the unexpected changes forced upon us without any choice or warning, it is understandable the potential effects in people's mental health. Circumstances that have changed during this time are comprised of issues like working from home, loss of income, extreme sickness, unsure futures, and homeschooling of children. Each one of these could have altered the emotional state of some, but the combination of these all these can be classified as substantial changes. Without clinically naming everyone mentally affected, we know significant amount of people are seeking more mental assistance through "touchless" encounters like Google Hangouts, Zoom, FaceTime, and other forms of group therapy. Many mental clinicians know these cases are not yet clinically problematic, but they encourage people to care for personal mental health by continuing to seek treatments through any forms of emotional connections, even virtually.

For this reason alone, proper education regarding mental health is more important than ever. Since the topic of mental health has found its way to headlines and front lines, educational resources are readily available. Learning what you can about mental health is now imperative, as mental illness does not discriminate. Therefore, no matter your age, race, gender, IQ, level of self-confidence, level of education, or your occupation, mental illness can and will cross any of these borders; it knows no bounds. Mental health issues can arise for anyone at any time. Even when you educate yourself about mental health, it is often hard to determine what is "normal" when it comes to feelings and emotions, especially during times of increased stress. Furthermore, trying to tell the difference between what "appropriate" behaviors look like and what behaviors might be considered a sign of mental illness isn't an easy task. When these lines become blurred, it is time to look for help. Start by looking at information provided by experts. The following information is a list of warning signs that a person is experiencing mental health problems. The information contained in this list is provided by the <https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth/> website.

- A change in your eating or sleeping habits
- Withdrawing from the people and activities you enjoy
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains

- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in your relationships
- Having thoughts and memories that you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Not being able to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

These are only some of the warning signs, so when in doubt seek expert medical advice. If a person is diagnosed with a mental health condition, the clinician will explain treatment options. Gone are the days when issues like depression and anxiety were discussed only behind closed doors by a very small fraction of the total population of those who actually suffered from these mental health issues. Treatment is a team effort, with all the information readily available to those who will be charged with supporting the patient.

When it comes to treatment options, the staff at Active Aging 365 are firm believers in Collaborative Care Plans (CCP). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states, "Using the CCP, a family team works together to develop treatment goals, responsibilities and action plans to facilitate recovery." It is clear that NAMI are also firm believers in utilizing Collaborative Care Plans to treat mental health conditions.

Collaborative Care Plans are comprised of three parties: the person with the mental health condition, their family or loved ones, and the clinician. The collaborative method is based on the principles that utilizing a team as a treatment method combined with the collaborative development of goals, complete with an action plan will render the treatment outcomes substantially more likely to prove effective.

The reference site for the following information on Collaborative Care Plans and the attached 12-page pdf Collaborative Care Plan can be found here:

https://www.forlikeminds.com/collaborative_care_plan

"Caring consumers, a person living with a diagnosis of a mental health condition and loved ones working together using clear, supportive, compassionate communication achieve better outcomes. The Collaborative Care Plan ("CCP") provides a framework for mental health consumers, their loved ones, and clinicians to better communicate. The goal is to facilitate shared decision making by incorporating the expectations, needs, and roles of all participants. Balancing the sometimes conflicting needs of the consumer and their loved ones is a sound foundation for long term recovery. Using the CCP, the consumer's care network together develops treatment objectives, responsibilities, and action plans. Developing a CCP when participants have clarity of mind without the pressures of an unfolding crisis can help mitigate and manage the everyday challenges and extreme uncertainty associated with mental illness. The

biggest uncertainty may well be how we will be impacted and behave in a mental health crisis. Moreover, the CCP can make both the consumer and their loved ones feel better about the treatment process as they all have a say and sense of ownership in the process. This dynamic may foster a virtuous cycle of improved interpersonal relations, decreased symptomology, increased consumer compliance, improved self-care, and reduced caregiver fatigue.” Note: Download the Collaborative Care Plan for your individual use.

Finally, as a word of caution, if multiple signs of mental illness are left untreated or undiagnosed, persistent mental health problems can lead to serious permanent conditions to the individual as well as their surroundings. If you or someone you know needs serious help now, please call for immediate care and response at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or call 911, they will provide an effective response.

We sincerely hope you will STRIVE HAPPY and STAY HEALTHY, from your Active Aging 365 Team.