

Mental Health



UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of development, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. (Mental Health: MedlinePlus, n.d)

Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions — disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and schizophrenia. Substance use disorders also are common and involve abuse and dependence on substances such as tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and opiates. In 2014, 18.1 percent of all adults in the United States an estimated 43.6 million adults aged 18 or older had Any Mental Illness, of that 43.6 million an estimated 9.8 million adults aged 18 or older in the nation had Serious Mental Illness in the past year (Hedden et al., 2014). Approximately 20% of adolescents have a diagnosable mental health disorder, 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24. Many mental health disorders first present during adolescence. The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years. (Merikangas et al., 2010)

LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS/STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY

Individuals diagnosed with mental illness or substance use disorders can recover and live productive lives. Self-management and formal treatment are important components to a person's recovery. There is need to educate the public about how to support individuals with mental illness and reduce barriers for those seeking or receiving treatment for mental illness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Here are some helpful self-management tips:

- Recognize signs of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.
- Exercise regularly—just 30 minutes per day of gentle walking can help boost mood and reduce stress.
- Schedule regular times for healthy and relaxing activities and healthy meals.
- Stay in touch with people who can provide emotional and other support. Ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations to reduce stress due to work burdens or family issues, such as caring for a loved one.
- If you feel you are having a difficult time coping with stress, seek help from a qualified mental health professional who can guide you. You can also talk to your primary care doctor about your treatment options. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014).



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