

# 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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## WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a serious mood disorder, shown by the symptoms of major depressive disorder: primarily depressed mood for 2 weeks or more, and/or a loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities. This is also often accompanied by other symptoms such as feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, sleeping too little or too much, anxiety, worthlessness, guilt and/or irritability, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, remembering details or making decisions, and thoughts of or attempts at suicide. (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5, 2013)

More than 1 out of 20 Americans 12 years of age and older reported current depression (moderate or severe depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks) in 2009-2012. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016) 2014 NIMH statistics show the following numbers for teens that had at least one major depressive episode in the previous 12 months: 11.5% Hispanic, 12.0% White, 9.1% Black, 10.4% Asian, 6.9% American Indian/Alaska Native, 12.5% were of 2 or more nationalities.

The economic burden of depression, including workplace costs, direct costs and suicide-related costs, was estimated to be \$210.5 billion in 2010 (Greenberg et al., 2015).

## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress can be defined as the brain's response to any demand, real or imagined, positive or negative. Routine stress includes the pressures of work, family, and other daily responsibilities. Stress can be brought about by a sudden negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness. 51% of women and 32% of men say they have lain awake at night in the past month due to stress. (Stress in America: Paying with Our Health, 2015) .

Despite men reporting lower stress levels and being less likely to report symptoms of stress, men are more likely than women to say they never engage in an activity to help relieve or manage their stress (22% of men vs. 18% of women) (Stress in America: Paying with Our Health, 2015). Poor coping with stress can lead to relational problems, substance use disorders, worsening mood and even depression.

Traumatic stress includes, experience in an event like a major accident, war, sexual assault, or a natural disaster where one may be seriously hurt or in danger of being killed. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014). While most individuals will recover from traumatic stress, some will develop depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life, but anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. The feelings can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, school work, and relationships. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014). Women are 60% more likely than men to experience an anxiety disorder over their lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014).

Non-Hispanic blacks are 20% less likely, and Hispanics are 30% less likely, than non-Hispanic whites to experience an anxiety disorder during their lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014).



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