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Basics

What To Look For

Talk About Mental Health

How To Get Help



Why You Should Care About Mental Health



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Most people don't realize how common mental health and substance abuse problems are in the United States. Just as there are many types of physical illness, mental illness is varied and can affect people at all stages of life. In fact, at some time in their lives, nearly all Americans will be affected by a mental health or substance use disorder in themselves or their families. These are the hard facts:



- Depression is a common but serious illness. Each year almost 7 percent of U.S. adults experience a major depressive disorder. Depression also affects our youth—3 percent of 13- to 18-year-olds have experienced a seriously debilitating depressive disorder.
- One in 10 adolescents aged 16 to 17 had a major depressive episode in the past year. One in five young adults aged 18 to 25 (18.7 percent) have experienced some form of mental illness in the past year.
- An estimated 23.1 million Americans (8.9 percent) needed treatment for a problem related to drugs or alcohol.
- People with depression, other mental disorders, or a substance abuse disorder are at risk for suicide. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. and for every death by suicide, there are 25 attempts.

Unfortunately, up to half of all people with mental illnesses and 90 percent of people who have a substance use disorder do not get the treatment they need. There are steps we can take to make a difference. Mental illness is treatable and the vast majority of Americans who have experienced mental illness recover and live happy, productive lives. They are our friends, neighbors, and families. We can strive to provide the best prevention, treatment, and recovery support services based on scientific evidence and the rich experiences of our diverse communities. We can involve individuals, families, schools, businesses and others to ensure that all Americans receive the support they need to achieve optimum behavioral health.

Long gone are the days in which we thought of physical health and mental health as separate and distinct. One is not possible without the other. I challenge you to join me in making a difference and together we can improve the health of the nation.

Learn more about [mental and emotional well-being](#) and the other priorities in the [National Prevention Strategy](#).

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