

Mental Health

Nearly 57 million people suffer from a diagnosable mental illness each year. Anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorder, and schizophrenia are all examples of mental illnesses. According to the U. S. Surgeon General's report on mental health, more than half of all Americans with a severe mental illness fail to get treatment due to:

- Lack of awareness of the problem
- Fear of a stigma
- Lack of access to services

Focus on Depression

Every year nearly 1 in 10 people suffer from some form of depression. Depression is an illness that involves your body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. In fact, a combination of family history, brain chemistry, and situational factors such as the loss of a loved one can cause depression.

Depression is often linked with changes in the brain. The brain controls our emotions and feelings. The cells of the brain, known as neurons, communicate with each other using special chemical compounds called "neurotransmitters." In a depressed person, there is an imbalance in their neurotransmitters. The good news is that there are treatments for depression.

Depression and Older Adults

Depression is a common problem among older adults, but it is NOT a normal part of aging. When older adults do suffer from depression, it may be overlooked because they may be less willing than younger people to talk about feelings of sadness or grief, and doctors may be less likely to suspect or spot it. Life changes such as retirement, health problems, or the loss of a loved one may cause feelings of uneasiness, stress, and sadness. It is normal to feel sad during these times, but if these feelings persist, you should talk to your doctor.

Get Moving

Regular physical activity reduces feelings of depression and anxiety while promoting mental health and reducing feelings of stress.

In addition to reducing feelings of depression, 30 minutes of physical activity a day can improve circulation, boost your immune system, and slow the progression of osteoporosis.

Here are some tips to get you moving:

- Warm up before exercising
- Don't do too much too fast
- Choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly
- Drink lots of water
- Try a class on Tai Chi or Yoga
- Consult your physician

Mental Health Self Assessment

- Have you or a loved one felt down, depressed, or hopeless for two or more weeks?
- Have you or a loved one felt little interest or pleasure in daily activities for two or more weeks?

If you answered YES to one or both of these questions, talk to your doctor about how you are feeling.

<http://healthfinder.gov/newsletter/200705.asp#sec3>