



JUNE

Knowing When to Reach Out

Prioritize Your Mental Health & Well-Being in 2021

Over the past year, the mental and physical health of so many individuals has been negatively impacted. On top of that, new barriers have formed for those already suffering from mental illness — making it even more difficult to know how or where to access treatment or guidance. While talking to others about your mental health may be uncomfortable, communicating how you feel can help yourself and those around you learn and grow. There are a multitude of resources available to support you in your journey to improving your mental health. We've outlined some tips to help you start the conversation.

- 1. *Talk with Someone You Know*** — Think of those in your life who have been supportive or with whom you feel most comfortable. An individual that may fall into these categories could be a friend, family member, guidance counselor, coach, teacher, faith-based or community leader, family doctor or medical provider. Sharing how you are feeling in any given moment can prompt support and understanding from the people you trust, reduce the stigma around mental illness, and show others that it is okay to talk about mental health.
- 2. *Talk with a Trained Professional*** — Finding someone whom you like and are most comfortable with can be difficult, especially when approaching them with questions regarding your health. Think of yourself as a key player on your own healthcare team. Asking questions can improve the care you receive because your inquiries give health professionals essential information about you. Without proper clinical attention, an accurate mental health diagnosis and effective treatment may be more difficult to acquire. If it feels like too big of a step to call and schedule an appointment with a professional, break it down and ask someone to help you get there. Baby steps will get you closer to the support you need.
- 3. *Be Patient*** — Finding the right professional help takes time. You can start by asking your primary care doctor for a referral based on their assessment of the support you need. You can benefit by making a list of three to five individuals you would like to visit and getting to know them on a personal level. Remember, keep an open mind, and do not get discouraged if it takes a while to find the best fit for you. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has local centers nationwide to support individuals under duress. They can also help you find a therapist and a support group, as well as share coping strategies and ways to notice signs if you are in a decline.
- 4. *Find a Support Group*** — To come to terms with knowing “we cannot do everything on our own” and “it is okay to ask for help” is a strength. When it comes to dealing with any kind of physical or mental illness, it can be beneficial to hear the experiences of others. When you realize you are not alone and within a safe and supportive environment, you may begin to feel comfortable sharing your feelings and life circumstances. This can be a very therapeutic and healing experience, particularly as you find that others in the group can relate, will listen non-judgmentally and will praise you for your openness and courage. Support groups can also offer new tips for dealing with identified concerns. Members share their success stories and the strategies that helped them move forward in their journey. Strategies could include art, music or animal therapy, which have all proved to be effective when utilized by people of all ages and abilities, to treat a wide range of mental health disorders and psychological distress.