



OCTOBER

Building Health Literacy

Prioritize Your Mental Health & Well-Being

Health literacy is the degree of which people can locate, comprehend, and use information to make health-related choices. With high health literacy, there is a full understanding of information and services which leads individuals to make beneficial health-related decisions. When people do not understand information and services, due to any number of reasons, it is known as low health literacy.

HOW HEALTH LITERACY AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health and health literacy affect one another closely. A well-informed decision may lead to a healthier physical lifestyle, thereby positively impacting mental health. Similarly, poor health decisions, both mental and physical, have lasting impacts. Making beneficial health decisions can become increasingly difficult if mentally or physically unwell.

BARRIERS TO HIGH HEALTH LITERACY

Health decisions are made based upon various forms of communication. Barriers to health literacy come when that communication is disrupted. As we age, memory, hearing, and vision tend to diminish which affect how we process information. When parties speak separate languages, information could be lost or misinterpreted without the help of a translator. Those we received minimal education may not be able to understand documents or information provided by a doctor. Those who lack transportation or don't have access to the internet are at a disadvantage in comparison to those who do.

Fortunately, barriers can be circumvented. There are many online resources to improve your health literacy. The best way to be prepared is to be proactive and take your health into your own hands by staying well-informed.

HOW TO BUILD UP HEALTH LITERACY

1. Keep a running list of questions. Writing every question down on a paper or a notebook that will be taken to the appointment alleviates the need to have an excellent memory.
2. Repeat doctor's instructions back in own words. Taking the time to rephrase a doctor's instructions in terms you understand is an excellent way to make sure both parties are on the same page.
3. Bring a trusted person with you to appointments. Consider bringing a loved one to an appointment to have a better chance of obtaining and retaining the pertinent information.
4. Ask for help when it's needed. Don't let uncertainty be what diminishes health literacy. Advocate for yourself and request necessary accommodations.