

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

MAY 2024



Mental Health in America and How to Get Help

More than half of adults in the United States will experience mental illness—which refers to a variety of conditions that affect one’s mood, behavior, feelings or thinking—at some point in their life. Mental illnesses can occur occasionally, while others are chronic. Common mental illnesses include anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental Health Awareness Month, observed every May, is a time to raise awareness about mental health, break the stigma and support people with mental illness. Access to mental health care is crucial to helping many individuals receive the support necessary for treatment and recovery. However, roughly half of adults with mental illness in the United States don’t receive the treatment they need.

Common barriers include the high costs of and difficulty accessing mental health care, mental health professional shortages, and the stigma associated with mental health. When left untreated, mental health conditions can affect a person’s ability to manage both work and personal responsibilities.

Getting Help

Millions of Americans are affected by mental illness each year, so know that you are not alone. Mental health conditions are common, real and often treatable. Each condition has its own symptoms, but here are some common signs of mental illness:

- Excessive fears and worries
- Prolonged sadness or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in eating habits or weight
- Changes in sleeping habits or energy
- Growing inability to cope with daily life
- Social withdrawal
- Substance misuse
- Suicidal thoughts

If you have concerns, talk to your primary care physician; they can refer you to a qualified mental health professional. Your health insurance company can also provide a list of available providers in your plan.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, remember that Americans can call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Spring Cleaning Your Mindset

Spring isn’t just for cleaning out your closet. It’s also a great time to refresh your mind. It’s important to check in on yourself regularly; a routine refresh can help you reduce stress and feel in control.

Consider the following tips to freshen up your daily routine and promote a healthy mindset this spring:

- **Declutter your space.** A cluttered home or working environment can cause stress and anxiety, so a purge of items could help clear your mind and improve your mood.
- **Let go of negative thinking patterns.** Letting go of negative thoughts or beliefs can help make space for healthier ideas and behaviors.
- **Practice gratitude.** To change your perspective for the better, consider ways to be intentional about choosing a positive outlook. For example, you could start a gratitude journal or meditate.

- **Make time for hobbies.** Just like you’d honor a work meeting or personal appointment, participate in activities and hobbies that fulfill you and bring joy.
- **Spend time outdoors.** Spring is a great time to reconnect with nature. You could try walking around the neighborhood, enjoying your coffee or tea outside or moving a regular workout outdoors.
- **Connect with others.** Many people enter hibernation mode during the winter. Leverage the change of the seasons to reconnect with loved ones and engage in meaningful conversations.

Spring is a time of new beginnings and growth, so use this seasonal change to reset your mind and commit to healthy practices and behaviors. Determine where your mental energy is best spent this season, prioritizing what matters most.