

# PLAN FOR HEALTH

## Being Mindful of Your Mental Health

MARCH 2023



**Mental health and mental illness are often used interchangeably, but they are different. Someone can experience poor mental health but never be diagnosed with a mental illness. On the flip side, someone diagnosed with a mental illness can experience periods of physical, mental, and social well-being. More than 50% of people in the United States will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their life and there are more than 200 types of mental illness.**

### MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being and is important at every stage of life. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness.

*"An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly."* - Unknown

The most effective self-care and coping skills are those you can practice anywhere at any time. Find a small way to care for yourself each day.

- **Practicing gratitude**, which means being thankful for the good things in your life. Practicing gratitude can help you keep things in perspective and appreciate moments of positive emotion.
- **Staying connected with friends and family.** Talking with people you trust about your feelings and concerns can relieve stress.
- **Helping others.** Caring for others in your community can also help you feel a sense of purpose, mindfulness, and gratitude.
- **Practicing relaxation techniques** like meditation and deep breathing exercises. Relaxation techniques can help slow your breathing, lower blood pressure, and reduce muscle tension and stress.
- **Take care of your body.** Staying physically healthy by getting enough sleep, eating healthy and being physically active can improve your emotional well-being.

## OVERCOMING STIGMA

Changing the stigma around mental health and illnesses can impact you and those around you. According to the Mayo Clinic, stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common. You may even judge yourself. Stigma and negative attitudes toward mental health and illnesses can have harmful consequences. Here's some steps you can take to deal with stigma and be mindful of your mental health:

**Reach out and find support** – Whether you just need someone to talk to or want to seek professional treatment, find support and resources that work for you:

- Don't isolate yourself. Seek comfort and support from a trusted family member or friend.
- Talk to a school guidance counselor for yourself or for your child.
- Talk to your primary care physician about your concerns. You can also call the number on the back of your health insurance card to find out what mental health resources are available to you.
- Consider professional treatment by connecting with a therapist or psychologist depending on your needs.

### **Don't let stigma create self-doubt and shame** –

Stigma doesn't just come from others. You may mistakenly believe that your mental illness or health is a sign of personal weakness or that you should be able to control it without help. Seeking out help can help you regain self-esteem and overcome self-judgement.

**Speak out against stigma** – Speak about your opinions or experiences to others. Others' judgments almost always stem from a lack of understanding rather than information based on facts. Speaking out can give others the courage to make a change for themselves too.

## IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS, GET IMMEDIATE HELP:

- **Call 911**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or call 988
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- **National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline:** 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- **Veteran's Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text 8388255
- **Disaster Distress Helpline:** CALL or TEXT 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish).
- **The Eldercare Locator:** 1-800-677-1116

*"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." – Mother Teresa*

## Sharecare Featured Challenge

Join the Eat Right for National Nutrition Month challenge this month. Complete the challenge by tracking your quantity and quality of meals for 21 days from March 1st through the 31st. Join this challenge by going to [mycare.sharecare.com](https://mycare.sharecare.com), and clicking **Achieve → Challenges → Upcoming → Eat Right for National Nutrition Month**. You can enroll in the challenge starting February 22nd.



## Plan ahead...Join us next month for April's health topic: *Financial Wellbeing*