

## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

The World Health Organization (WHO) states, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The WHO constitution defines mental health as an integral part of health.

Most people believe that mental disorders are rare and "happen to someone else." In fact, mental disorders are common and widespread.

Most families are not prepared to cope with learning their loved one has a mental illness. It can be physically and emotionally trying, and can make us feel vulnerable to the opinions and judgments of others.

## WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?

Mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior, resulting in an inability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines.

There are more than 200 classified forms of mental illness. Some of the more common disorders are depression, bipolar disorder, dementia, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders. Symptoms may include changes in mood, personality, personal habits and/or social withdrawal.

## MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

- An estimated 54 million Americans suffer from some form of mental disorder in a given year.
- Mental health problems affect one in every five young people.
- Untreated mental health problems can lead to suicide, which is the sixth leading cause of death for 5 to 14-year olds.
- One in every ten young people age 9 or older, or about 4 million, has a serious emotional disturbance that severely disrupts daily life.



## HOW TO COPE DAILY

**SEEK COUNCIL:** Therapy can help the individual as well as the family. When looking for a mental health professional make sure to interview several candidates and try to get a referral if possible.

**HANDLING UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR:** During treatment a mentally ill person may exhibit socially disruptive behaviors. Talk to your mental health professional to discuss possible ways to cope.

**ESTABLISH A SUPPORT NETWORK:** Seek out self help groups, friends, and family. This can allow you to discuss problems you may be experiencing.

**ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS:** If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental illness prepare yourself by reading or talking to a mental health professional.

**TAKE TIME OFF:** If you are a caretaker of a mentally ill family member you should set aside time for yourself. If you are physically and emotionally healthy this will be essential for you to stay focused.

### MENTAL HEALTH WARNING SIGNS

| ADULTS   | OLDER CHILDREN AND PRE-ADOLESCENTS   | YOUNGER CHILDREN  |
|--|--|---|
| Confused thinking  | Substance abuse  | Changes in school performance                                     |
| Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)               | Inability to cope with problems and daily activities                             | Poor grades despite strong efforts                                |
| Excessive fears, worries and anxieties                       | Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits   | Excessive worry or anxiety (i.e. refusing to go to bed or school) |
| Social withdrawal  | Excessive complaints of physical ailments  | Hyperactivity   |
| Strong feelings of anger                                     | Defiance of authority, truancy, theft, and/or vandalism                          | Persistent nightmares   |
| Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits                | Intense fear of weight gain  | Persistent disobedience or aggression                             |
| Delusions or hallucinations                                  | Prolonged negative mood, often accompanied by poor appetite or thoughts of death | Frequent temper tantrums  |
| Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities | Frequent outbursts of anger  |   |
| Suicidal thoughts  |  |   |

#### RESOURCES

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

For more information:  
[www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com](http://www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com)