

A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown from the chest up, smiling and raising their arms in a celebratory gesture. They are wearing athletic wear like tank tops and t-shirts. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor setting with trees and sunlight.

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May is Mental Health Awareness Month

One in five Americans will experience Mental Illness in their lifetime. Within this large group of individuals, though, the CDC estimates only 60% receive mental health services. The large discrepancy between those that need care and those who receive it is partly due to the stigma and misinformation surrounding mental health issues and treatments. This stigma has grown from misinterpretation of mental illness as a danger to others, rather than as a treatable ailment. To break down this stigma and promote awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health care, May was named Mental Health Awareness Month by Mental Health America.

With over 200 classified forms of mental illness affecting Americans today, it is important to remove the stigma surrounding mental health and spread awareness for the care options available. Below are a few things that you can do to support those struggling with mental health concerns and to promote positive mental health within your own life.

Overpower the Stigma

Though 20 percent of Americans experience a mental illness in their lifetime, the image of mental illness has remained a negative one, focused on fear and misinformation. Millions struggle silently with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia due to fear and shame. While diagnosis and treatments continue to improve, the perception of mental illness continues to remain one of fear. Many struggling with mental illness feel shameful discussing their concerns due to stigmas surrounding even the most common disorders such as anxiety and depression. Overcoming feelings of shame by putting a face to a disorder can make a world of difference for others who have tried to manage mental health

illnesses on their own. Speaking out against misinformation and sharing your own struggles with others can make a great difference in the lives of those suffering in secret.

Encourage Others

While you may feel awkward discussing a potential diagnosis with loved ones, open and honest conversations can guide a family member or friend to seek the help they need. With a staggering 90 percent of suicides occurring due to mental illness, many of which are undiagnosed, communicating with loved ones can offer a support system for someone who is suffering in silence. Whether you approach a friend and just ask how they are feeling, or anonymously leave a flyer for your organization's EAP contact number upside down on your coworker's desk, offering someone a pathway to assistance is the greatest step you can take to guide a loved one toward receiving the care they need.

Acknowledge Body-Brain Connectivity

Your mental health is directly impacted by your physical health. A healthy lifestyle can offer great benefits for those struggling with depression, anxiety and other common forms of mental illness. Staying active, eating a balanced diet and integrating stress-reducing activities into daily schedules can minimize the effects of anxiety and depression. Exercising



regularly and getting enough sleep each night promotes mental and emotional wellbeing, while practicing mindfulness, meditation and yoga can also offer relief to those currently struggling with a disorder. If your loved one is struggling with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental illness, encouraging a healthy lifestyle may be the best way to support them. One way to guide your loved one toward a healthier lifestyle is to ask if they would be your "accountability buddy" to keep you on track. Invite them to yoga classes, ask them to join you for regular walks or runs, and share healthy recipes in casual conversation.

Whether you have a loved one struggling with mental illness or are managing a disorder yourself, caring for your own mental health and spreading awareness of the support services available to those in need can break down stigmas and promote happiness and health in others.

To seek support for mental health concerns, speak with your primary physician or call your EAP to receive in-the-moment counseling and a referral for face-to-face support with a counselor in your area.

To learn more about Mental Health or to reach a Wellness

Expert, contact eni by calling:

1.800.327.2255