



Healthy & Resilient You

Mental Health Awareness

Raising your voice can make a world of difference.



Way back in 1949, the Mental Health America organization established May as Mental Health Awareness Month because they understood the importance of mental health to overall wellbeing. That awareness is equally, if not more, important today, not just in May but all year round.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), around 51.6 million (or 1 in 5) U.S. adults currently live with a formally diagnosable mental health condition.

That means *mental illness* is pretty common. And **mental health** isn't only about whether someone has a mental illness. It's also about regular changes in our mental and emotional state that impact our quality of life and how we interact with the world.

When thought about that way, mental health affects everyone.

Why don't we talk about it?

When we've got a cold or strain a muscle at the gym, we're not afraid to share. We'll easily proclaim, "Ugh. I've got the Martian Death Flu." or, "I pulled a hammy on my 50th power squat!" to anyone who will listen. Then we'll go see a doctor or chiropractor to ask for help.

Mental health conditions may be as common as physical maladies, but we just don't talk about them in the same way. Even though we're becoming more aware that mental health is a universal thing, and despite shifting attitudes, the topic still carries a stigma.

That often stops us from speaking openly about it, because:



We might not understand what's going on or be thinking, "It's all in my head."



We might be embarrassed or fear we'll look weak.

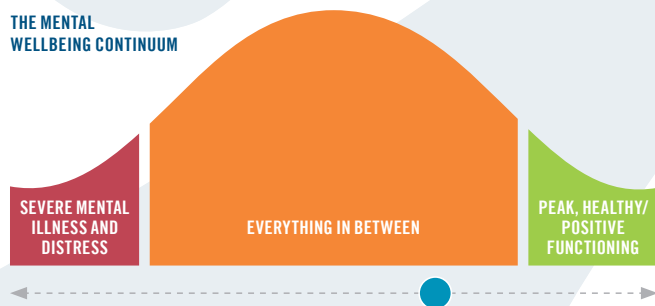


We worry it will put people off, making us feel different or alone.

Why we need to talk about it.

Not talking about our mental health makes us less likely to get help when we need it, and that's not good. Even if we're not clinically mentally ill, that doesn't mean we're completely mentally well. That's an important distinction.

The Positive Psychology movement suggests we visualize mental wellbeing as a linear continuum.



Though there are times when we'll find ourselves on the extreme ends of this line—either experiencing mental distress or positively thriving—most of the time, we're somewhere in between, maybe feeling a little (or a lot) off.

When we're feeling off, it could be a short-term thing due to a night of poor sleep or a passing bad mood. But, if the feeling persists, it could signify something more serious.

Either way, it's important to pay attention because our state of mind directly affects emotional, psychological, physical, and social wellbeing. It quite literally touches all aspects of our lives.

BONUS TIP: Encouraging others to share their mental health experiences is a great way to reduce stigma and find hope and a way forward. If you think a colleague might be going through something, [check out our OCC Program Video](#) for ways to help.

Just Talk About It, Already

An increasing body of evidence shows that opening up about our mental health has many benefits.



It can help us understand – Talking aloud about our feelings helps to define what we're going through. That understanding can make what we're experiencing seem less scary or mysterious.



It can help us feel less alone – Because we don't talk enough about mental health, we can feel different or isolated when we experience a rough patch. When we have regular, honest, conversations about it, though, we find out that others hit those rough patches too. Building a [network of supportive friends](#) is an [important part](#) of taking care of our mental health.



It can make us kinder – Sharing experiences doesn't only help us to understand others and where they're coming from, but it also helps remind us to be kinder to ourselves. Empathy for [ourselves](#) and [others](#) has a positive effect on our state of mind.



It reduces the risk of developing other physical and mental issues – Ignoring our mental health can lead to ailments that are both physical, (sleep disorders, obesity, and digestive problems) and mental, (depression, anxiety, or panic attacks). Talking about our mental health and getting help early on helps to minimize these risks.



It helps us learn to cope – Discussing our mental health gives us a place to start to make positive changes. And, when we talk with a professional or expert, they can provide a formal diagnosis or definition and an appropriate plan of action to help us work toward feeling better.

Best of all, being open about mental health has a profound and positive effect on our lives—strengthening our relationships, building stronger coping mechanisms, and helping us to be more self-aware and resilient.

Remember, Concern is here 24/7 to support mental health. Call **800.344.4222** or visit employees.concernhealth.com.

For customized tools and resources, visit Concern's Digital Platform by logging in to employees.concernhealth.com, and selecting the "Get Services" button in the upper right menu.

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice.

If you find your level of stress is impacting your wellbeing, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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