



## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

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**T**he month of May was Mental Health Awareness Month. This is an important issue that is sometimes swept under the rug. For many, there is a stigma associated with mental health issues. People are embarrassed to admit that they are experiencing problems because of a fear of rejection or isolation. This has

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types of mental disorders. Mental disorders may also be referred to as mental health conditions. The latter is a broader term covering mental disorders, psychosocial disabilities and (other) mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm.

They further state, in 2019, 1 in every 8 people, or 970 million people around the world were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depressive disorders being the most common. In 2020, the number of people living with anxiety and depressive disorders rose significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial estimates show a 26% and 28% increase respectively for anxiety and major depressive disorders in just one year. This number is continually increasing annually.

Childhood and adolescence experience high levels of fear, depression, and anxiety. Peer pressure and social media influences regarding body images and substance abuse affect their mental wellness. Suicidal tendencies impact them significantly. We must make mental wellness a priority for all members of society regardless of race, finances, and your personal beliefs. The challenges that younger adults face have more to do with their careers, academic achievements, and relationship struggles. This group experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Believe it or not, older adults suffer from mental health issues due to relationship conflicts also. Physical health decline and coping with the loss of loved

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caused many people to live in silence rather than address the issues that they are facing. In an attempt to protect themselves from the backlash of people, they mask and hide the fact that they need help, which causes their problem to get worse.

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and complete strangers can experience mental health problems.

The World Health Organization states that mental disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior. It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning. There are many different



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ones can be a challenge to their mental health. Grief support and community and social engagement is needed to support good mental health. You may think that older individuals have it all together, but they too need the support of others to have fulfilling lives.

Just today, I received a call from a veteran who is having mental issues. Due to her battle with PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, she is having problems navigating everyday life. But it's important to know that this mental disorder is not specific to the veteran community. 7-8% of the population will have PTSD at some point in their lives. It can be a result of combat exposure, childhood physical abuse, sexual violence, an accident, or being

threatened with a weapon, to name a few. It may take months or years for PTSD symptoms to appear.

We must try not to categorize individuals dealing with mental illness in a negative manner. More need to be taught about recognizing the signs of mental illness and extend ways to treat it. If you watch the news, you will see how people in the spotlight that you may have thought were "good" are opening-up about their bouts with mental illness. Pageant contestants are turning in crowns for their mental wellness. Athletes are stepping down from competitions to keep their mental status in check. This is not a stain on their reputation or a form of weakness, but it shows the strength they are displaying

by admitting such. Mental well-being and self-help are necessary. Especially in this chaotic society that we live in. So, to my NPMHU family, from my Star Trek favorite, Mr. Spock, "Live Long and Prosper".

