Personal and Professional Mental Health Awareness in the Time of COVID-19

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Objectives of Training

▪ Develop a caring community in which mental health disorders are not stigmatized
▪ Build awareness of the prevalence and causes of mental health problems in the United States, especially related to COVID-19
▪ Distinguish between positive mental health and mental health disorders
▪ Enhance knowledge of signs and symptoms of mental health vulnerability
▪ Develop skills for psychological recovery and wellness
▪ Learn about national mental health resources for referrals for yourself and others
Current Context: COVID-19

The novel coronavirus pandemic is already having a detrimental impact on mental health:

• 63 percent of respondents to a recent McKinsey survey reported feeling anxious or depressed in the past week.

• Suicide hotlines are fielding more and more calls every day.

• Additionally, a recent survey from China showed that over 70% of their health care workforce was experiencing some form of psychological distress.

• As the world faces unprecedented fear and uncertainty, we are seeing increasing rates of PTSD, Depression, Anxiety, Substance Abuse, and Domestic Violence/Child Abuse.
DON’T IGNORE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
What is mental health?

MENTAL HEALTH
IS A STATE OF WELL-BEING
IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS
REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL
COPE WITH NORMAL STRESSES
WORK PRODUCTIVELY AND
CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY

DON'T IGNORE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
Mental health is a continuum

- 50% of all mental health disorders begin by age 14
- 75% appear by age 24
## Defining Mental Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Disorder</th>
<th>Positive Mental Health</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Affects cognitive thinking</td>
<td>• Emotional balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disrupts ability to work and carry out activities</td>
<td>• Strong cognitive functioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Negatively impacts relationships</td>
<td>• Positive peer interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can lead to disability</td>
<td>• Ability to perform well in school, family, and social relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Diagnosable Illnesses</td>
<td>• Flexibility to cope with life</td>
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How Common Are Mental Health Disorders?

- **1 in 5 adults** have a mental disorder in any one year in the United States.
  - Anxiety, depression and substance abuse are the most common.

- **1 in 5 children** ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.
  - Mood disorders, anxiety disorders and conduct disorders are the most common.
What Causes Mental Health Disorders?

- Heredity (genetics)
- Biology
- Environmental stressors
  - Trauma
  - Psychosocial stress
- Poverty
- Oppression
Common Misperceptions

► Mental disorders are signs of weakness.
► If you ignore the problem it will go away.
► Healthy people are not affected by mental illness.
► All individuals respond to the same treatment.
Mental Health Vulnerability During a Global Pandemic: Collective Experiences

- Enormous sense of grief and loss for all
  - Loss of health
  - Loss of loved ones
  - Loss of employment
  - Loss of identity and meaning
- Moral outrage
- Guilt
- Exhaustion
- Time at home and time with ourselves causes us to confront ourselves and see our behaviors and our environment more clearly
Red Flags: Indicators of Mental Health Vulnerability

Not unlike COVID-19, there are underlying risk factors that contribute to a person’s vulnerability to mental illness, trauma response, and lower levels of resilience.

- Individual Attributes
- Social Circumstances
- Environmental Circumstances
Common WARNING SIGNS of Mental Illness

Diagnosing mental illness isn’t a straightforward science. We can’t test for it the same way we can test blood sugar levels for diabetes. Each condition has its own set of unique symptoms, though symptoms often overlap. Common signs and/or symptoms can include:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Trying to harm or end one’s life or making plans to do so
- Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behavior that causes harm to self or others
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that aren’t real*
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

*Various communities and backgrounds might view this sign differently based on their beliefs and experiences. Some people within these communities and cultures may not interpret hearing voices as unusual.
Get Professional Help If You Need It

The 10 Tools

These proven tools can help you feel stronger and more hopeful. Check out each page for specific, easy-to-follow tips.

- Connect with others
- Stay positive
- Get physically active
- Help others
- Get enough sleep
- Create joy and satisfaction
- Eat well
- Take care of your spirit
- Deal better with hard times
- Get professional help if you need it

If the problems in your life are stopping you from functioning well or feeling good, professional help can make a big difference. And if you're having trouble, know that you are not alone: One in four adults in this country have a mental health problem in any given year.

If you or someone you know is feeling especially bad or suicidal, get help right away. You can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.

Of course, you don't have to be in crisis to seek help. Why wait until you're really suffering? Even if you're not sure that you'd benefit from help, it can't hurt to explore the possibility.

A mental health professional can help you:

- come up with plans for solving problems
- feel stronger in the face of challenges
- change behaviors that hold you back
- look at ways of thinking that affect how you feel
- heal pains from your past
- figure out your goals
Personal Skills for Psychological Recovery

- Healthy Connections
- Information and Prioritizing
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Helpful Thinking
- Managing Reactions
- Positive Activities
The Buddy System

1. Find someone with whom to work through the steps of psychological recovery.
2. Create a supportive and empathic partnership, in order to learn new skills and be able to:
   a. Keep going under difficult circumstances
   b. Maintain and improve on already existing strengths
   c. Become “unstuck” and do things more efficiently
   d. Feel comfortable reporting difficulties and challenges
   e. Ask for help
   f. Decrease and try to eliminate doing things that could be destructive or unhealthy
Create Your Own Personal Wellness Kit
For Helpers

● Rely on your theoretical framework
  ○ It’s your guidebook. When we have something that guides us, we know what to do next

● Experiential Wave Framework (Stauffer and Alvarez) offers four points of assessment for shaping the direction of the process:
  ○ Beliefs
  ○ Therapeutic Relationship
  ○ Engagement of the Client
  ○ Physical Setting

● Squiggles are only squiggles if they interfere with progress toward goals. Welcome them, explore them, and assess. They may be more helpful than not.
For Helpers

SYMPTOMS

COGNITIVE

BEHAVIOR

PHYSICAL

From hearing about trauma, you begin to take on symptoms of trauma. We are all affected.

Your reactions change because you care.
Mental Health Resources

• Training resources:
  - Mental Health First Aid: https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/
  - Clinical First Responder: https://peakexperiencetraining.com/
  - Psychological First Aid: https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery/about-pfa

• International Resources
  - Suicide Stop - International Help Center: https://www.suicidestop.com/call_a_hotline.html
  - https://checkpointorg.com/global/
  - https://www.who.int/mental_health/en/

• U.S. Based Hotlines:
  - National Alliance on Mental Illness HelpLine: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  - Crisis Text Line: Text HOME or MHA to 741741.
  - PsychHub: https://psychhub.com/covid-19/

• Telehealth:

• Facebook Groups:
  - TAPG, Adventure Therapists in Private Practice, International Adventure Therapy
International Mental Health Resources

Suicide Stop - International Help Center: [https://www.suicidestop.com/call_a_hotline.html](https://www.suicidestop.com/call_a_hotline.html)

Facebook Groups mentioned during webinar:
- TAPG
- AEE
- Adventure Therapists in Private Practice