

Mental Health

Approximately one in five Americans suffers from a mental disorder in any given year, and two in three adults with a diagnosed mental disorder do not receive treatment. Research shows that one in five Wisconsinites will be affected by mental illness this year.

A mental illness is a health condition that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought, mood, emotion and/or behavior associated with an inability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines. 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 problems can be related to excessive stress due to a particular situation or series of events. As with cancer, diabetes and heart disease, mental illnesses are often physical as well as emotional and psychological. Mental illnesses may be caused by a reaction to environmental stresses, genetic factors, biochemical imbalances, or a combination of these. With proper care and treatment many individuals learn to cope or recover from a mental illness or emotional disorder.

See the sidebar for tips on reducing stress in your life.

If you have concerns regarding depression or other mental health problems, contact:

- Your suicide hotline (if experiencing a crisis, call 9-1-1)
- Your physician or health care provider
- Your health care organization
- Your county mental health center
- Your local outpatient psychiatric clinic
- A hospital (Department of Psychiatry)
- A local family or social service agency
- A private or community based clinic
- An Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- A clergyperson, rabbi, other faith leader, or parish nurse
- A school counselor or teacher

When you're looking for a mental health professional, it's important to ask about therapy options he/she uses and whether he/she can prescribe medications. Among the mental health professionals who are qualified to help are psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other certified mental health counselors. These may include nurses and clergy who are trained in counseling.

Some ways you might try to manage or reduce stress include:

- Exercise
- Deep breathing
- Hobbies
- Meditation/yoga
- Biofeedback (changing certain body activities such as heartbeat rate by conscious mental control)
- Visualization (using mental images to reduce anxious or sad feelings)
- Getting regular sleep
- Managing your time wisely
- Working out your anger
- Adequate nutrition
- Talking out your worries
- Taking a break
- Doing things that help lift your spirits
- Stress management: limit or eliminate your use of alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and barbiturates or tranquilizers
- Journaling

For more information:

Mental Health America, (877) 642-4630, www.nmha.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Wisconsin, (800) 236-2988, www.namiwisconsin.org

National Mental Health Information Center, (800) 789-2647, www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

Wisconsin United for Mental Health, www.wimentalhealth.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, (800) 273-TALK (1-800-273-2433)