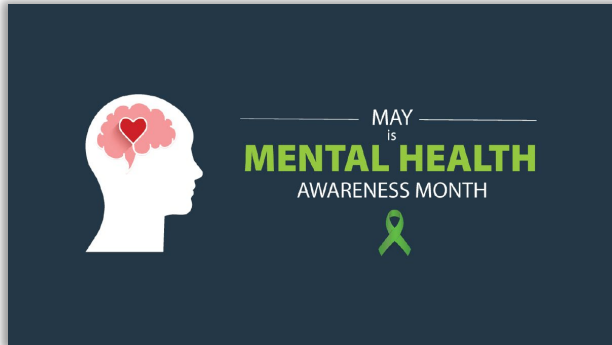




Toolbox Talk: May is Mental Health Awareness Month



Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.¹ Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness.

Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful and overwhelming. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will help you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.

Stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration.
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests.
- Trouble concentrating and making decisions.
- Nightmares or problems sleeping.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, or skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems and mental health conditions.
- Increased use of alcohol, illegal drugs (like heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine), and misuse of prescription drugs (like opioids).

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Take breaks from news stories, including those on social media. It's good to be informed, but constant information about negative events can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV, and computer screens for a while.
- Take care of your body: Staying physically healthy can improve your emotional well-being. Here are some ways to improve your health:
- Eat healthy. Have fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and low-fat or no-fat dairy. Limit foods with unhealthy fats, salt, and added sugars. See Healthy Eating Tips.
- Get enough sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day to help you sleep better. Adults need 7 or more hours per night.
- Move more and sit less. Every little bit of physical activity helps. Start small and build up to 2 ½ hours a week. You can break it into smaller amounts such as 20 to 30 minutes a day.

Week of April 28, 2024



- Limit alcohol intake. Choose not to drink, or drink in moderation on days you drink alcohol.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed. Don't take someone else's prescription. Substance use treatment is available, and recovery starts with asking for help.
- Avoid smoking, vaping, and the use of other tobacco products.
- Continue with regular health appointments, tests, screenings, and vaccinations.
- Make time to unwind.
- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others.
- Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Connect with your community-based or faith-based organizations.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. Also, please utilize SEPTA's EAP Program.

Through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) you can access your Work Life Benefits by going to the following website: www.pennbehavioralhealth.org. It's essential not only for your well-being but as well as your safety our EAP benefits include:

- Free problem assessment and short-term counseling of (6) virtual face-to-face (when possible) sessions per person, per topic with a licensed clinician that can provide personal counseling to your needs and stressors.
- Confidentiality- no information is allowed to be shared with anyone unless you give written permission to the clinician.
- Local availability- access to hundreds of EAP providers in your local area and/or telehealth virtual counseling

