



How Have You Been Feeling?

We are proud to honor Mental Health Awareness Month and remind you that it's okay to talk about your mental health.

Struggling with emotions is common. In fact, at least one in five people experience a mental health disorder each year. Going through a deeply stressful situation is not the exception; it's the norm.

During the month of May, we will share resources on how to seek care for yourself and your team and highlight the importance of promoting an environment free of stigma. Our Caregiver Assistance Program partner, Lyra, has developed many useful resources to help you and your team to connect, learn, and embrace mental health as a part of everyday life.

- Start by downloading this [Mental Health Awareness MS Teams background](#) to use during your meetings during the month of May.
- Order your team Choose Well Encouragement Stickers from the [Marketplace](#).
- Share this *How Have You Been Feeling* flyer with your team.
- Get familiar with our [Mental Wellness Resources](#) that will help support you and your team.

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"Let's Talk"

How to ensure that No One Cares Alone

How do you know when you, a family member, or a team member needs mental wellness support? Feelings and thoughts can be tough to talk about, and, for most people, mental health is a bit of a mystery.

Unfortunately, mental health remains a taboo topic for many people, especially at work. The fear of saying the wrong thing or making someone uncomfortable can deter people from mentioning what they are experiencing. And of course, there's the most common barrier: stigma—negative attitudes toward emotional struggle, including the incorrect belief that people experiencing challenges must have some flaw, weakness, or shameful inability to manage their emotions. ***In fact, a study by the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that stigma associated with mental health prevents 80 percent of workers from accessing the care they need.***

Many people also assume that mental health difficulties affect only a small percentage of the population, and that expert support is relevant only if you're diagnosed with a mental illness, like an anxiety disorder or depression. These beliefs can lead people to wait until they are experiencing significant difficulty, or even a crisis, before getting help. We can all do our part to help eliminate stigma, normalize talking about mental wellness, and ensure that No One Cares Alone. If you, a family member or a member of your team is struggling with a life transition or feeling anxious, down, or even hopeless, we have many sensitive, confidential resources available—without shame or blame.



Suicide Prevention Training for Caregivers

1. LIVE via MS Teams: An interactive presentation with discussion and opportunity for Q & A

2. On-Demand Module via Virgin Pulse: A self-paced, online version

10 Myths About Mental Health

- **Myth #1: It's Uncommon to Struggle.** Mental health struggles are a common part of the human condition. Nearly 20% of people in the U.S. suffer from anxiety, and more than 8% experienced an episode of major depression in 2020 (and this was before the pandemic)
- **Myth #2: Mental health struggles are inevitable, so there's nothing you can do.** Although it's human to struggle at times, you don't have to suffer. If what you're experiencing is keeping you from fulfilling your goals or functioning in daily life, there are effective solutions. For some, professional mental health care is part of the solution. For others, self-care and coping skills can be equally effective.
- **Myth #3: People should be able to handle mental health issues on their own.** Just as you would seek care from a physician for a physical ailment, you should have the same expectation around receiving treatment for a mental health concern. In reality, a wealth of support exists to help you feel better.
- **Myth #4: People with strong support networks don't need therapy.** Therapists provide a different kind of support than friends or family. Both contribute to positive mental health, but in different ways. Professional mental health support is confidential, objective, and skilled.
- **Myth #5: Mental health disorders are a sign of weakness or lack of willpower.** Mental health disorders are medical conditions, just like diabetes, heart disease, and other physical health problems. They are caused by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, and life experiences like trauma. Managing a mental health condition requires strength and resilience.



Stigma can be deeply harmful. Continued stigma causes people to needlessly suffer in silence. These myths may help you to reduce and address stigma with your team.

10 Myths About Mental Health

- **Myth #6: Mental health treatments don't work.** Research has disproven this myth about mental health. Therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Interpersonal Therapy have undergone extensive research and proven effective in helping people improve and ultimately recover from mental health conditions. Research has shown that, by itself, talk therapy can be more effective than medication, and the combination of both is most effective in the treatment of certain mental health concerns.
- **Myth #7: People with mental illness are dangerous.** Sensationalized stories in the media contribute to this mental health myth. But research shows most people with mental health disorders are not violent. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are 10 times more likely to be victimized than the rest of the population, rather than be perpetrators.
- **Myth #8: Mental health care is only for people with severe problems.** Everyone has mental health; that is—psychological, social and behavioral well-being— even if they don't have a diagnosable mental health condition. For those who have been diagnosed with severe conditions, there is no substitute for treatment from a licensed care provider. But even if you're experiencing milder struggles, you can still benefit from mental health support. If therapy isn't the right fit for you, there are many ways to bolster your mental health, such as mental health coaching, self-care apps, and healthy lifestyle habits (like sleep patterns, exercise, and social support).
- **Myth #9: People with mental health conditions can't be successful at work.** While people with severe mental illnesses are less likely to work than those with milder forms of illness, most people with mental health concerns are in fact employed. More than 1/3 of people with serious mental health conditions also work. Most people with mental health conditions want to work, and research shows doing so can improve their health and quality of life.
- **Myth #10: Children and teens don't have mental health needs.** Mental health disorders are easy to overlook in children and teens, but even young kids can show symptoms. A study by JAMA Pediatrics shows half of all mental illnesses develop by the mid-teens, and three-quarters appear by the mid-20s. Only half of these young people get the treatment they need. Getting help early on may reduce the severity of the illness and minimize the risk of secondary problems like substance abuse and trouble in school.



We encourage you to find time in your day to look inward and acknowledge [How You Have Been Feeling](#). Learn about the free and confidential mental wellness resources available to support you and your family members.

3 Things You Can Do To Reduce Stigma In The Workplace

- **It starts with empathy-driven leadership.** Managers can demonstrate empathy and reduce stigma by recognizing that productivity is impacted by distressing circumstances—and that's okay. Respond compassionately by offering flexibility to meet personal obligations. Share mental health awareness campaigns, trainings, or workshops that educate caregivers about mental health, and encourage them to seek support when they need it. Such actions signal that vulnerability is a strength and helps combat beliefs people may have about mental health as unknown or scary.
- **It's important to model healthy behaviors, too.** By doing so, our core leaders can create a space where caregivers feel comfortable and more willing to disclose their struggle, which can ultimately help them get connected to help sooner. This kind of sharing isn't about disclosing intimate or personal details, but more about letting people know it's okay to prioritize their well-being. For example, you might consider emphasizing what you've done to ensure good self-care.
- **Keep conversations open, transparent, and shame-free.** When leaders talk openly about their mental well-being, they send a powerful message to caregivers that they are welcome to discuss their own challenges. Research shows that this type of authentic leadership builds trust and improves performance. Below are a few ways to remove shame from conversations:
 - Talk about the full range of mental health challenges
 - Check in with your teams regularly
 - Choose person-centered language (for example refrain from using the word "addict" and instead use "person with a substance use disorder")
 - Avoid phrases that reinforce stigma
 - Respond quickly to inappropriate remarks



Core Leaders can be a powerful force in overcoming mental health stigma, and the rewards for doing so are great.

How Have You Been Feeling?

The caregiver assistance program offers FREE support for caregivers and household members:

- Mental health therapy and coaching
- Self-guided tools
- Family and work life services

Get Support: mychoosewell.org/mental-wellness



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