

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED HELP

When living with a mental health condition or facing a mental health concern, it's common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. But many people overcome the mental health challenges they face. You aren't alone – help is out there, and recovery is possible.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS CAN BE HARD AND CONFUSING.

It's becoming more and more common to talk about mental health in the open, but there's still a lot of stigma, or judgment, that people have about mental health conditions. If you've seen or heard negativity about the same challenges you deal with, you might internalize those attitudes and feel shame about your experiences. This shame, or self-stigma, makes it difficult to talk about your concerns.

ADMIT TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE STRUGGLING.

Accepting that you might have a mental health condition can be scary – it suddenly feels so real. But it can also put you on a path to getting the help you deserve. Take a mental health screen at mhascreening.org to get an idea of how severe your symptoms are. Having some language to describe what you're dealing with is helpful in doing more research and connecting with peers.

TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

It can be hard to know what to say, but just naming what you're experiencing is a good start. Friends and family can be key supporters as you start your recovery journey – healing is hard to manage alone, and your loved ones can only support you if they know what's going on. Talking in person can feel overwhelming – try writing down what you want to say to gather your thoughts or put everything into a letter to give them and talk about it later.

If you're worried that the people closest to you won't be supportive, try reaching out to other people who seem kind: coworkers, teachers, friends' parents, or that person you haven't talked to in a few years but who posts about their mental health on social media. Can't think of anyone in your life who you are comfortable opening up to? Consider calling a warmline – they are staffed by trained peers who have gone through their own mental health struggles and know what it's like to need help. You can find a list of available warmlines at mhanational.org/warmlines.

TERMS TO KNOW

RECOVERY:

a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential

STIGMA:

negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

SELF-STIGMA:

negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's own mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

PEER:

someone who shares the experience of living with a mental health condition and/or substance use disorder

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL:

a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider

THERAPIST:

a mental health professional trained to help individuals understand and cope with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; may assess and/or diagnose mental health conditions

PSYCHIATRIST:

a licensed medical doctor who has completed additional psychiatric training; can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe and manage medication, and provide therapy

HEALTH INSURANCE:

a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs

SLIDING SCALE PAYMENT:

a payment model providers can use to make treatment financially accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it due to income or lack of health insurance coverage

OUTPATIENT:

treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL.

Finding help can be intimidating. For some people, just the thought of talking to a doctor about your mental health is scary. There might be long wait times or words you don't understand, and how do you even know where to begin? No matter what, you are deserving of help.

Start by reaching out to your primary care doctor. It might feel weird to talk to them about emotional issues, but they can help in many ways. They can ask questions to help you better understand what you're going through, let you know what kinds of support are out there, and recommend lifestyle changes or medication. They can also help connect you to specialized mental health professionals, like a therapist and psychiatrist.

Therapy, medication, and other mental health treatments can be amazing experiences, but for some, the cost just isn't realistic. If you don't have insurance, or if your insurance doesn't cover mental health services, you may not know what to do next.

Options for people without insurance:

Ask therapists about their sliding-scale payment options. Get started by visiting mhanational.org/finding-therapy.

Look into local colleges or universities for an outpatient psychology program. Do a Google search for "outpatient psychology program" followed by the name of a nearby school, or search for "university hospitals" followed by your town or state if you don't know of specific colleges.

Group therapy generally costs about a third of the price of an individual session – a local community center should be able to guide you to a group that fits your needs. Check out your state's Department of Behavioral Health website or this directory of peer-run services at cdsdirectory.org.

Reach out to local nonprofits or resource centers – locate the MHA affiliate near you at mhanational.org/find-affiliate.

THE TRADITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DOESN'T MEET EVERYONE'S NEEDS.

Most of the western health care industry has taken on the medical model of understanding and treating health conditions – focusing on the diagnosis and management of symptoms. Often, the social, cultural, and historical factors that impact the mental health of communities that have traditionally been marginalized are ignored.

Other types of treatment include community care, culturally-based practices, and self-directed care. Learn more about these at mhanational.org/july. You might also want to consider support groups or peer support. These are all valid forms of mental health support – if it works for you, then it works!



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.