May is Mental Health Month

Most of us know that mental health is key to good overall health. Living with a mental health condition can influence how one thinks and feels – and how one functions every day. Statistics show that more than 1 in 5 adults suffer from a mental health condition every year. That's about 40 million people.

Spreading awareness
Mental Health Month helps promote the mental health of all Americans. Talking about these issues can help break the stigma and spread the word that mental health is something everyone should care about.

More support
For support, contact:

- The Ohio Employee Assistance Program (Ohio EAP) at 1-800-221-6327 or oeap@das.ohio.gov. The Ohio EAP can assist employees in coping with personal problems such as family and parenting issues, alcohol, substance use, and emotional concerns (e.g., anxiety, anger, grief, or depression), and more. Personal problems can affect your health and well-being as well as your job performance.

- Your behavioral health benefit, administered by Optum, can provide support, information, and resources to help address issues affecting your personal life, work, and well-being. Specialists are available 24/7. Contact Optum anytime you need help with any of life’s concern by calling 1-800-852-1091. Or, log on to liveandworkwell.com and enter access code: 00832.

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others, call your health care professional, 9-1-1 or a suicide hotline such as 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Or have someone drive you to your nearest emergency department. If you feel that you are in immediate danger of hurting yourself or others, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency services immediately.
The healing power of music

Have you ever played a quiet song to help you relax? Or worked out while listening to high-energy music? Or hummed a happy tune and suddenly realized your bad mood had disappeared? Then you’ve experienced the healing power of music. In fact, music is used as a therapy for some health concerns.

Music therapy is typically led by a licensed professional. Part of the health care team, a music therapist uses all forms of music to work with clients to reach their goals. After performing an assessment, he or she may use singing, playing instruments, listening to music, moving to music, writing lyrics or music, or a combination. Music therapy can benefit people at any age and with a number of health conditions.

Benefits of music therapy
Music therapy may help people with a variety of conditions, from relieving headache and chronic pain, to easing stress before surgery. Music sometimes can be an answer for people who haven’t responded to other forms of treatment. Music therapy may:

- Improve physical function
- Ease stress and anxiety
- Help people relax
- Improve sleep
- Decrease various types of pain
- Boost memory and thinking
- Ease a person’s ability to talk and interact with others

Though evidence is mixed for some conditions, music therapy may be especially helpful for people with:

**Chronic disease and pain.** Music can help lower heart rate and blood pressure. It also can ease stress, a major risk factor for heart disease and diabetes.

**Autism.** Music may help improve focus, as well as relieve anxiety and frustration.

**Parkinson’s disease.** Music, including drumming, dance, and movement groups, can improve the side effects of Parkinson’s disease.

**Depression and mental health issues.** Music can lighten a mood. It also can help people more easily talk about their feelings or make positive life changes.

**Alzheimer’s disease.** With older people who have age-related memory challenges, including Alzheimer’s disease, music may help improve agitation, depression, and quality of life. Sometimes, music is just what the doctor ordered.

By Susan G. Warner
Follow these steps to help take control over your stress and learn how to manage it.

1. Make a list of all the things giving you stress – from the special project at work to your child’s report card to your financial situation
2. Cross off all the things you cannot control
3. With the remaining stress factors, think of ways you can change the situation or reduce the stress. Many times, just identifying one small, doable action will significantly reduce the stress
4. Look at what you can delegate to others, at work and at home
5. Review the items you crossed off the list. Remind yourself these are a source of unnecessary stress, because they are out of your control

Here is an example to help you get started. You may feel stressed about an upcoming project at work. This project has many tasks and you worry you won’t complete it on time. You also worry your supervisor won’t like what you prepare.

Make a list of your stressors
- Completing special project within given time frame
- Supervisor won’t like special project

Next assess what you cannot control. You are not in control of how your supervisor feels or perceives your work. You can meet the standards outlined, but you cannot change how your supervisor feels. What you can do is to be sure ahead of the time you know exactly what your supervisor expects from you.

Brainstorm what you can do to ensure you can complete the project. Breaking it into manageable pieces makes the project less overwhelming and will help reduce some of your stress.

Now you are doing what you can with what you can control.

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How to support a loved one’s mental health

In any given year, only 60% of people with a mental illness get mental health care. As a result, family members and caregivers often play a large role in helping and supporting them.

Millions of people have experienced the thoughts and questions you might be having now. You may be trying to help a family member who doesn’t have access to care or doesn’t want help. Or you may want to learn how to support and encourage someone who has been hospitalized or experienced a similar mental health crisis. In this article are some ideas on how to support a loved one.

**Twelve tips to support recovery**

- Learn as much as possible about your loved one’s condition
- Ask your loved one for permission to interact with the medical team, so you better understand his or her treatment plan
- Encourage your loved one to follow her or his treatment path
- Assign ‘support’ duties to everyone in the family. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI’s) Family-to-Family support group is a good place to start (see educational resources below)
- Be a good listener and try to recognize and acknowledge their feelings as they open up to you
- Make safety a priority. Talk to your loved one about the point at which you would involve the police (i.e., threats to harm oneself or others)
- Don’t push too hard. Remember that recovery takes time
- Stress is easier to handle when shared with people who understand
- Offer verbal encouragements to help them focus on the positive aspects of their life. Let them know you want to help
- Avoid becoming isolated and resume “normal” activities, like going to the movies
- Prepare a crisis plan that includes phone numbers, such as the local crisis intervention team
- Don’t give up. A person with mental illness can benefit greatly from family and group support such as NAMI’s Peer-to-Peer group (see educational resources at the end of this article)

Don’t forget to take care of yourself!

- Reduce stress and exercise daily
- Stabilize your mood by eating healthy, unprocessed foods
- Avoid drugs and alcohol since they worsen stress
- Get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night
- Practice deep breathing and meditation to promote relaxation
- Reach out to others. Supportive groups and online communities that can help include Smartphone Apps like NAMI Air

**Free support education**

**NAMI Family-to-Family** is a free, 12-session educational program for family, significant others and friends of people living with mental illness. It is a designated evidenced-based program. Research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to an individual living with a mental health condition. NAMI Family-to-Family is taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there, and includes presentations, discussion, and interactive exercises. To learn more, visit nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Family-to-Family.

NAMI Peer-to-Peer is a free, 10-session educational program for adults with mental illness who are looking to better understand their condition and journey toward recovery. Taught by a trained team of people who’ve been there, the program includes presentations, discussion, and interactive exercises. Everything is confidential, and NAMI never recommends a specific medical therapy or treatment approach. To learn more, visit nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Peer-to-Peer.

By: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), public domain

**EAP**

Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won’t get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don’t know if it’s burnout, loss of motivation, depression or all three? Late for work too often? Has the use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line, never wonder if your concern is appropriate to contact Ohio EAP. So, if you’ve been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give Ohio EAP a call today.

**Share Your Comments about Frontline Focus**

Your comments are important. Please share your comments about Frontline Focus via Ohio EAP’s confidential email address: oeap@das.ohio.gov. Your comments may be published in a future edition of Frontline Focus.

800-221-6327/614-644-8545   ohio.gov/eap

Beth Kim, Ohio EAP Benefit Manager