

# Your EAP|Here4TN! for you and your family

**PARTNERS**  
**FOR HEALTH**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

## Increase your mental health awareness

*When Karen first shared with her coworker Lori that she was seeing a therapist for a behavioral health condition, Lori was surprised and not entirely sure how to respond. Karen appeared to be doing fine and Lori wondered why someone like Karen was using her behavioral health benefit. Lori didn't have any experience with behavioral health treatment and wasn't sure how to engage her friend around this issue.*

If you don't know much about behavioral health issues other than what's on TV and in movies, you may lack sensitivity toward your co-workers. However, there are some basic steps you can take that will empower you to join others in breaking down the discrimination and stigma surrounding behavioral health.

**Learn about the widespread impact of behavioral health disorders.** Behavioral health conditions (mental health or substance use) affect millions of people every day. In fact, **one in five American adults experienced a mental health issue within the past year.** One in 10 young people experienced a period of major depression. And, one in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression.

**Recognize the proximity of mental health problems.** Given the statistics showing how common mental health conditions are, it's likely that you know someone with a mental health problem and don't even realize it. Many people with mental health problems are active, productive members of the community.

**Arrange for treatment if you or a loved one experience symptoms.** Treatment works, so it's important to obtain an evaluation from a behavioral health professional if you are struggling with your daily activities. Remember that more than **80 percent** of cases of clinical depression can be effectively treated with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both.

**Be supportive of someone with a mental health condition.** If you become aware that someone in your life is dealing with mental health problems, make sure to treat them with respect, understanding, and curiosity—not ridicule.

*In the process of learning more about Karen's lifelong struggle with clinical depression, Lori learned that seeing a therapist, regular exercise and taking medication were all key aspects of Karen's wellness plan.*

Do you realize how prevalent mental health conditions are in the people around you? It's important to maintain sensitivity to the mental health challenges that many others face.

Similarly, if you suffer with mental health problems, recognize that you're not alone. People from all walks of life struggle with mental health disorders (such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders) and substance use disorders (such as alcohol or drug dependence). These are medical conditions that can be successfully treated.

Combatting stigma against mental illness is an ever-present public health priority today. The more that people are aware of the prevalence of mental health symptoms, the more likely it is that those who may have avoided treatment for fear of being seen as "crazy" will now get the help they need.

Contact your ParTNers EAP at **1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)** any time you have questions about emotional health for yourself or a household member.



# Common stigmas toward mental illness

Stigmas can be very damaging. Fortunately, with time, more and more people have come to understand the results of stigma—the prejudice, avoidance, rejection and discrimination directed at people who seem “different.” In fact, stigma related to mental illness causes needless shame and isolation, and can potentially cause people to deny their symptoms, delay treatment and abandon their usual activities.

Here are some still commonly-held stigmas about those with mental illness, along with more accurate truths to the contrary.

- ***We shouldn't really talk about mental illness.*** Some still believe that having mental health problems is shameful and should be kept quiet. However, the less we talk about mental illness, the more of a mysterious “other” it becomes—and the less we're able or willing to support those in the midst of it. Misunderstanding and fear can therefore increase.
- ***Children don't experience mental illness.*** Even very young children can show early warning signs of mental health conditions. These mental health problems can be a product of the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors. In fact, half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns 14 years old, and three quarters of mental health disorders begin before age 24.
- ***People with mental illness are dangerous.*** This is a very commonly held belief—often reinforced by those who claim that, for example, most gun violence is caused by people with mental problems. In truth, most people with mental illness are not violent, and only 3 to 5 percent of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness. People with severe mental illnesses are actually over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.
- ***We're already compassionate enough.*** One prominent study found that 57 percent of adults *without* mental health symptoms believed that people are caring and sympathetic toward people with mental illness. However, only 25 percent of adults with mental health symptoms believed that to be true.
- ***People with mental illness should be able to deal with it themselves.*** Some mental health problems, such as mild depression or anxiety, can respond to self-care and social support. However, if symptoms persist more than several weeks, you should consult with your primary doctor or a mental health professional.

## Facts about mental health

The following truths about mental health disorders may surprise you.

- Approximately 44 million adults in the U.S. suffer with a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year.
- Nearly 60 percent of adults with a mental illness don't receive the treatment they need.
- Some people believe that mental illness results from personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. Instead, it's often caused by biological factors such as imbalances in brain chemistry; painful life experiences such as trauma or abuse; or a family history of mental health problems.
- Approximately 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. It accounts for the loss of more than 41,000 American lives each year—more than double the number of lives lost to homicide.
- Friends and loved ones can make a big difference for someone with mental health problems. Positive steps include reaching out and being available; encouraging the person to seek mental health services; sharing facts about mental health and dispelling negative stigmas; and treating the person with respect.

# Being more inclusive of those around you

Extending understanding to those in your midst can—bit by bit—help empower them and improve their quality of life. Here are tips on promoting inclusiveness of those with behavioral health conditions.



- Take time to get to know individuals dealing with mental illness. Recognize that they are not their diagnosis; they have many gifts and talents to share.
- If someone uses harsh language or perpetuates negative stereotypes about others with disabilities, gently educate them about using words more sensitively.
- Practice the golden rule: treat others, including those with mental illness, with the same dignity and respect with which you want to be treated.
- If you have struggled with mental health issues, talk about your own experience when appropriate. This can help others with mental health challenges overcome shame and secrecy.
- Use people-first language. Do not label. Instead of using negatives such as “a mentally disturbed” or “crazy” person, say that the individual “is living with a mental health condition” or is “a person with a behavioral health disability.” Your language should refer to the kind of condition a person has, not what a person is.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), MentalHealth.gov, JustBetterCare.com.

## Mental health resources

### Your no cost program

If you or a family member need support for a mental health or substance use problem, contact your ParTNers EAP by phone or online. You can obtain confidential assessment, referral and treatment through a professional counselor in your area if needed. Or, you can access counseling by telephone with a ParTNers EAP mental health professional.

Call us today at **1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)**, or visit [www.HERE4TN.com](http://www.HERE4TN.com) for more information and support. On the website you can access the confidential Magellan self-screening system to help you identify depression or substance use issues.

### Other helpful resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness, Tennessee: 1-800-467-3589 or their [website](#).
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Live Online Chat](#).
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at [www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at [www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov).
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services at [MentalHealth.gov](http://MentalHealth.gov).

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