May is Mental Health Month - When to Seek Help for Your Mental Health

If you are in good emotional health, you are in control of your thoughts and behaviors, and you feel good about yourself. That doesn't mean a person with good emotional health won't ever have emotional problems, or even mental illness.

But a person with good emotional health may be more likely to realize when a problem becomes troublesome enough to see a health care provider or a counselor, says the American Academy of Family Physicians.

What distinguishes mental illness from problems of daily living is its severity or persistence over time. Mental illness includes mental disorders of thought, mood or behavior. People with a mental illness may have great difficulty with daily routines and tasks, responsibilities of family, work or school, or personal relationships. Many people with mental illness don't look ill, but others may be confused, agitated or withdrawn, according to the American Psychological Association.

If you have any of the symptoms of mental illness, call your health care provider, mental health professional, or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Everyday problems
People generally seek help mental and emotional problems for three reasons: They notice a significant shift in how they feel about themselves, they become aware of...

People with mental or emotional disorders often:
- Feel depressed or sad for several weeks or more
- Think about or attempt suicide
- Experience extreme mood swings
- Feel helpless or hopeless
- Feel that life is out of control
- Have sudden feelings of panic
- Drink excessively or use illegal drugs
- Are unable to stop destructive behavior, such as gambling
- See, hear or experience imaginary things
- Threaten violence or become aggressive and violent
What is EAP?
The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** service that can assist you and your eligible family members with **ANY** personal concern, large or small.

Why People are Happier on Weekends

When you can decide for yourself what you will do (autonomy), have more time with family and friends (relatedness) and can do things you’re good at (competency), you are happier. That’s why psychologists say both men and women feel better emotionally and physically on weekends.

The weekend effect isn’t the same, however, for those who regularly work on weekends and have other days off. They probably feel they have more autonomy, relatedness and feeling of competence on days like Tuesday and Wednesday. That effect was not part of the study published in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*.

Autonomy, positive relations with co-workers, and feelings of competence make people on the job feel good too.

Story continued from following page...

ongoing difficulties in their close personal relationships, or they have chronic problems getting along with people at work.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I been feeling less happy, less confident or less in control than usual for a period of several weeks or longer?
- Are emotional problems getting in the way of my work, relationships or other aspects of my life?
- Have my own efforts to deal with a problem failed to resolve the situation?
- Do I feel emotionally "stuck" and helpless to change my behavior or circumstances?

If you answer "yes" to one or more of these questions, seek help from your EAP. The EAP can be a tool for change and a source of support when you need it most. Your EAP professionals are experts at making connections and creating solutions.

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**Teens and the Self-esteem Shield**

It’s a powerful weapon in the war against teenage drug and alcohol abuse and it doesn’t cost parents a penny. It’s called the “self-esteem shield.”

It’s simple. Research shows that adolescents who grow up with high self-esteem are far less likely to abuse drugs or drink compared to children who grow up without much sense of self-worth.

"There’s no doubt that kids with a strong sense of self-esteem have an easier time resisting drugs and alcohol," says Howard Goldman, M.D. of Bradenton, FL. Dr. Goldman suggests several steps parents can take to help their children develop self-esteem, including:

- Listen carefully to your teenager when he or she is trying to tell you something – and make it clear that you’re very interested. Also, be sure to praise the child’s efforts to communicate with you, whenever possible.
- To teach self-respect, you must show respect at all times. Speak to your child with respect – even when upset or angry – and never give in to the temptation to shout or demean.
- Focus on the positive. Praise the child’s behavior when appropriate, but don’t exaggerate. For children and especially adolescents, express confidence in their ability.
- Enjoy your teenager while you can. Tap into his or her humor, energy and creative sense of possibility. The odds are high that you’ll get into closer touch with your own youthful side—often with delightfully unexpected results!

For example: Turn off the TV or put down the newspaper when the child speaks to you, and don’t take phone calls during the conversation. This will show your child that you seriously value their input and ideas.

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