



# About Mental Health: The Basics

Understanding mental health disorders, treatment options, and ways to talk about mental health



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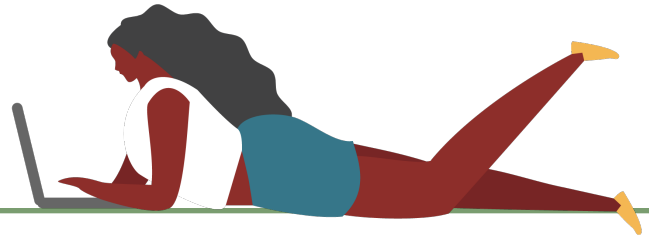
## The Purpose of this Booklet

Centerstone's *About Mental Health: The Basics* is a tool built to provide readers with an understanding of different mental health disorders, treatment options, ways to talk about mental health, and resources for further learning. We hope that this booklet allows you to have more informed conversations about mental health as we work together to eliminate the stigma.

## What is Mental Illness and Who does it Affect?

Mental illness refers to a range of mental health conditions that affect your mood, thinking, and behavior. No one is immune to mental illness and it can impact anyone at any time. Mental illness can be the result of family history, environmental factors, or life circumstances – there is no single cause. On average, one in five adults and one in six youth experience a mental illness each year; yet only 45% of adults and 51% of youth with a mental illness will receive treatment. Even if you don't have a mental illness, you may experience occasional mental health challenges.

At Centerstone, we are committed to fighting the stigma surrounding mental illness and providing treatment options for those struggling. Through our comprehensive continuum of mental health and substance use disorder services, awareness events, health education, legislative advocacy, and more, we work hard to make the world a better place for everyone who struggles with their mental health.



## 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline was launched in the summer of 2022 to provide free, confidential emotional support 24/7/365 for people experiencing thoughts of suicide, a mental health crisis, or emotional distress 24/7/365. By dialing the three-digit number 988, millions of Americans now have access to trained mental health counselors and crisis resources when experiencing issues with suicidal ideation, a substance use or mental health crisis, or if they are concerned about a loved one who may need crisis support.

In addition to calling this easy-to-remember 988 number, people experiencing a mental health crisis can access support by simply texting 988 or accessing chat features through [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat). Crisis services continue to be available through the current Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255 as well.

Centerstone worked alongside legislative groups and other partner organizations to advocate for federal legislation leading to the creation of the three-digit 988 Lifeline telephone number. Access to this Lifeline has resulted in more people getting timely, competent, and caring resources in their time of crisis and sending the message to all Americans that healing, hope, and help are happening every day.

# Talking about Mental Health

## Opening Up

It can be hard to open up about mental health challenges, but talking to a trusted friend or family member about the way you've been feeling can be a great first step to mental wellness. This opens up the opportunity to build a stronger support system which will help you in your daily life. Friends and family may also help you connect with resources for strengthening your mental health, such as professional help.

## Listening and Supporting

When someone opens up to you about a mental health struggle, the first step to supporting them is listening. Avoid interrupting them while they are talking, instead let them finish communicating their thoughts to you.

Once they have told you what's on their mind and indicated that they are finished, let them know if you understand. Tell them that you hear them, and keep the conversation focused on them, not on how you can relate with your own experiences. Let them know that their feelings are valid, and don't show judgment. Ask them to elaborate if needed.

Once the conversation is over, communicate that you are available for them any time they need support. Ask what their needs are, and seek out ways to support them even before they ask. Don't share the information they told you with anyone else or assume that they've told anyone else. Meet them where they are and support them right there.

## People-First Language

One way we can all honor the people in our lives is through our language, whether we're interacting with them or they come up in conversation with someone else. When not used carefully, your words may perpetuate the stigma and discrimination we strive to fight against. That is why it is so important to use people-first language.

People-first language is a manner of speaking that makes a point to acknowledge people as just that – people. Even if that person has an illness or disability, their humanity comes first. This should be reflected in our language.

### **Words that indicate what a person has, not what a person is:**

- People with a mental illness...
- He has bipolar disorder.
- She is a person with a substance use disorder.
- They have generalized anxiety.

### **Words that are limiting**

- The mentally ill.
- That bipolar man.
- She's an addict.
- That anxious person.

# Treating Mental Illness

## When to get help

Minor mental health challenges can be treated on your own in a few ways: exercising mindfulness, as well as finding balance with your physical, social, professional, and academic well-being. But when you feel mental illness controlling your day-to-day life, you may need some help from a mental health professional. Signs that you may need more help are specific to the type of mental illness you may be experiencing, but may generally include problems sleeping, increased irritability, hindered work or school performance, relationship problems, decreased focus, or problems with substance use.

## The good news

Every mental health issue, no matter how severe, is treatable. You can receive mental health help through talk therapy, medication, support groups, guidance for daily living, or any combination of these. At Centerstone, we include you in the decision-making process to find the solution that works best for you. Call us at 1-877-HOPE123 (877-467-3123) or visit [Centerstoneconnect.org](http://Centerstoneconnect.org) to get connected with care.

To identify a mental health or substance use disorder, there are specific criteria that must be met. This is achieved via a diagnostic assessment with a mental health professional. The information below is strictly provided as educational and should not be used to diagnose a mental health condition.

## Anxiety

Anxiety is a mental health disorder that makes you feel an extreme amount of fear or worry whether or not a stressful situation has occurred. More than 18% of people in the U.S. suffer from an anxiety disorder each year, making it the most common mental health disorder. Anxiety disorders cause high levels of stress and can add difficulty to social interactions, school, work, and other areas of life.

### Examples of Anxiety Disorders

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) – displaying excessive amounts of anxiety or worry most days about many things: health, work, social interactions, random negative circumstances, etc.
  - Having trouble controlling worry and fear
  - Frequently imagining worst-case scenarios
  - Feeling restless or on-edge
  - Being easily fatigued
  - Having difficulty sleeping
  - Being irritable
- Panic Disorder – having recurring, prompted or unprompted, sudden episodes of intense fear that arise quickly.
  - A smothering sensation
  - Shortness of breath
  - Accelerated heart rate
  - Trembling, shaking, sweating, and/or choking
  - Fear of losing control or dying

## Depression

Depression is a mental health disorder that is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest. More than 7% of people in the U.S. are affected by depression each year, rising to over 8% when looking only at adult females. It's more than just feeling down because of a bad circumstance. Depression, also known as major depressive disorder, impacts how you think, feel, and approach daily activities like working, eating, and sleeping.

### Symptoms of Depression

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Not being able to function at work or school
- Having headaches, digestive disorders, nausea, or pain with no medical basis
- Crying more than usual
- Having thoughts of death or suicide
- Lacking energy, always feeling tired
- Slowed thinking
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Constantly feeling sad, anxious, worthless, or hopeless

## Substance Use Disorders

A substance use disorder, or addiction, is a serious mental and physical battle that involves the mind and body's reliance on the substance and inability to control the use of it. Over 19.5 million adults in the U.S. are addicted to at least one substance, with 74% struggling with an alcohol use disorder. Addiction is a mental health condition, not a choice. Recovery does not come over night, but rather takes time and hard work. You can develop an addiction to any drug including alcohol, legal/partially legal drugs such as tobacco and marijuana, prescription drugs such as opioids, and illegal drugs such as heroin and methamphetamine.

### Symptoms of Substance Use Disorders

- Feeling that you have to use the substance regularly
- Having intense urges for the substance that leave no room for other thoughts
- Building up a tolerance to the drug, causing you to need more
- Not meeting financial obligations because of the money you spend on the substance
- Ignoring problems that have developed as a result of using the substance
- Stealing to get the substance, or other behaviors started out of desperation
- Having withdrawal symptoms when you try to not use the substance

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that a person can experience after seeing or living through a traumatic event or any situation where there is a perceived threat. An estimated 70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lives, and up to 20% go on to develop PTSD after the event(s). These traumatic events can include tornadoes, plane crashes, murders, school shootings, car accidents, bombings, military combat, the death of a loved one, sexual assault, abuse, and other experiences.

### Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Unwelcome thoughts, mental images, or disturbing dreams about the traumatic event
- Staying away from anything associated with the traumatic event
- Intense alertness and being unable to concentrate
- Constant feelings of worry or fear
- Being easily startled
- Having panic attacks
- Not being able to enjoy activities that were once fun
- Feeling or acting violently, feeling extreme anger, and intense unrest
- Having trouble falling or staying asleep



## Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a mental health disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and ability to carry out tasks. An estimated 4.4% of adults in the U.S. experience bipolar disorder in their lifetime. Bipolar disorder is more than just the ups and downs everyone goes through – it is a shift between extreme lows and highs that affects all daily activities. The duration of these symptoms can vary from person to person.

### Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

#### Mania (extreme high)

- Period of feeling overly and inappropriately happy or outgoing
- Feeling excessively irritable, jumpy, or wired
- Talking fast
- Being easily distracted and restless
- Sleeping little
- Taking on new projects with unrealistic optimism
- Engaging in high-risk activities

#### Depression (extreme low)

- Period of feeling worried, empty, or sad
- Feeling tired and sluggish
- Having problems concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Being restless or irritable
- Loss of interest in activities
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviors (compulsions). Approximately 2.3% of people in the U.S. have OCD, with two-thirds having major symptoms before age 25. More than just having a strong preference for organization, people with OCD have thoughts and compulsions that are all-consuming. They cannot have peace until they do the things their brain is telling them to do.

### Symptoms of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

- Being extremely concerned with germs
  - Obsessively washing your hands
  - Constantly feeling that you are contaminated or will contaminate others
- Checking things repeatedly
  - Having to unplug every outlet in your house before you leave home, and coming right back home to make sure once more that you did
  - Locking all the doors in your house several times in a row
  - Flipping the light switch on and off multiple times whenever you enter a room
  - Constantly counting things
- Repeating phrases
  - Repeating whole sentences before you can move onto the next
  - Saying a certain phrase every time you walk through a door
- Organizing
  - Being unable to sleep until everything in your room is in a perfect spot
  - Hoarding



# Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a severe mental illness that causes people affected to interpret reality abnormally, causing hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking and behaviors. Between 0.25% and 0.64% of people in the U.S. have schizophrenia. It involves a range of problems with thinking, behavior, and emotions and requires lifelong treatment.

## Symptoms of Schizophrenia

- Hallucinations
  - Seeing and hearing things that are not actually there
  - Can involve hearing voices ordering you to do something
- Delusions
  - Bizarre thoughts and fixed false beliefs
  - Difficulty being convinced that these thoughts and beliefs are not real
- Paranoia
  - Obsessive suspicion and fear
  - Can ignite hostile behavior
- Disorganized thinking
  - Impaired ability to communicate effectively
  - Derailing from the original conversation
  - Sometimes putting together meaningless words

## Resources for More Information about Mental Health

**Centerstone:** Centerstone is a nonprofit health system providing mental health and substance use disorder treatments. Services are available nationally through the operation of outpatient clinics, residential programs, the use of telehealth and an inpatient hospital. Centerstone also features specialized programs for the military community, therapeutic foster care, children's services and employee assistance programs. Centerstone's Research Institute provides guidance through research and technology, leveraging the best practices for use in all our communities. Centerstone's Foundation secures philanthropic resources to support the work and mission of delivering care that changes people's lives. Learn more online at [centerstone.org](http://centerstone.org) or by phone at 1-877-HOPE123 (877-467-3123).

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Founded by a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979, NAMI has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, NAMI is an alliance of more than 600 local affiliates who work in communities across the country to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need. Learn more online at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) or by phone at 703-524-7600.

**Mental Health America (MHA):** Founded in 1909 by Clifford W. Beers, MHA is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all. MHA's programs and initiatives fulfill its mission of promoting mental health and preventing mental illness through advocacy, education, research, and services. Learn more online at [www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org) or by phone at 703-684-7722.

**National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):** The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the lead federal agency for research on mental disorders. NIMH is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the largest biomedical research agency in the world. NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Learn more online at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) or by phone at 1-866-615-6464.

**Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):** SAMHSA is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. Learn more online at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).





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