We support healthy choices

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INSPIRED
To Make Healthy Choices

For the most part, we take being mentally healthy for granted. We don't see the impact of symptoms of depression, anxiety or substance abuse on someone's ability to live their life until the illness is very severe.

Did you know:

- One in five adults in America experience mental illness. Of these individuals, two-thirds (66%) never seek treatment.

- Nearly 1 in 25 (10 million) adults in American live with a serious mental illness.

- One half (50%) of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; three quarters (75%) by the age of 24.

- In Georgia, an estimated 1.8 million people suffer from a diagnosable mental illness, and approximately 1.2 million will never seek treatment.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines mental illness as **"a condition that impacts a person's thinking, feeling or mood and may affect his or her ability to relate to others and function on a daily basis. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis."**

Early intervention and support can help reduce the duration of untreated symptoms and potentially curb the severity of the illness. **We wouldn't want to delay access to care for other chronic or debilitating illnesses, yet so many do not access services for mental illness.**

The overwhelming reason why individuals do not seek treatment **is the negative stigma associated with having mental illness.** Stigma sets a person apart by defining them as their illness. Negative attitudes about mental illness **create prejudice which leads to negative actions and discrimination.**

For example, a common misconception or negative attitude is that personality weakness or character flaws cause mental health problems. On the contrary, mental health problems have nothing to do with being weak. **Many factors contribute to mental health problems and may include genetic factors, physical illness, injury, brain chemistry, traumatic events and abuse.** Stigma creates feelings of isolation and shame for the individual already suffering with symptoms, and these effects of stigma can be as painful as the illness itself.

We don't usually think about the services needed to help people with mental illness unless we try to access care or help someone else access care. **Most people who experience symptoms of mental illness struggle alone, in silence, as the illness progresses.**

How can you make a difference? You can become a champion for mental health! **Become aware of our community resources and learn more about mental illness.** In your day-to-day interactions, express compassion and be willing to talk openly about mental illness and substance use. If you know someone who may be struggling in silence, offer them support by being willing to listen, help them access mental health services, treat them with respect, and do not use derogatory labels such as *crazy*. **You probably know someone with a mental health problem and don't even realize it.**

People with mental health issues can get better and many recover completely. Individuals are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities while managing their illness.

For more information: COMBATING MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA www.guideinc.org

Services are available, easily accessible and Recovery *IS* Possible. Let's work together on combating the stigma of mental illness!

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