



## **MAY IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

Since 1949, May has been designated as Mental Health Awareness month. It is a time to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and to reduce the stigma often associated with mental health disorders. The following conditions are among the most common conditions in the United States:

- ⇒ More than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- ⇒ 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year.
- ⇒ 1 in 5 American children, either currently or at some point in their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.
- ⇒ 1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.

Mental health is an important part of one's overall health and well-being, and includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It can also determine how well we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

At Albany Medical Center, we have a variety of programs and services to support employees who may encounter mental health issues.



\*Mental health statics provided by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

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### Q: Why is mental health awareness important?

**A:** Awareness is important for a few reasons. Mental disorders are incredibly common, so it's almost certain that you or someone you know will experience a mental illness at some point in your life. Despite this, stigma remains high. Awareness of how common these conditions are helps to reduce stigma, and may make people feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with others and make them more willing to seek treatment. Even if you yourself have never experienced a mental illness, having some basic familiarity can better equip you to notice if someone is struggling and to have conversations about what might be going on.

### Q: What do you like most about your work?

**A:** I love the variety I have in my work! I split my time between the Department of Psychiatry conducting psychotherapy and the college supporting student and house staff wellbeing. As a therapist, I have the privilege to help people work on a wide range of issues, from relatively mild depression or anxiety to severe personality disorders. My work with students and residents is often more preventative, trying to improve quality of life and connect people with resources here. I have the opportunity to work with many members of the AMC community to develop creative ways to meet the needs of learners here. On any given day, I might be seeing patients, working on research, conducting a wellness group for students, or meeting with residents to discuss burnout and imposter syndrome. All the variety certainly helps keep things from getting boring!

### Q: What do you do for self-care or to unwind after a busy day at work?

**A:** My self-care needs really vary from day to day. Some days what I most need is good food and conversation with friends, other days it's a walk in nature, group fitness class, or a movie at home. I think part of what's important for me is to recognize what I need on a given day, rather than trying to use a one-size-fits-all approach. What I *need* isn't always the same as what I *want*, there are certainly days where I really want to go relax on the couch, but recognize that ultimately working out is what will actually be most beneficial to me on that day. But there are also days where going to the gym feels like one more obligation, and I need to recognize that maybe it's not the right time for me to go.

### Q: What should you do if you think a co-worker or family member is depressed?

**A:** First, in order to take any steps to help, you need some awareness of the symptoms of depression. Depression doesn't necessarily present in the way that many people expect it to, so having familiarity with the symptoms is helpful in identifying what may be going on. Communicate support and a willingness to listen, while being careful not to fall into advice-giving. There is sometimes an urge to try to cheer up someone who is depressed with statements such as "it's all going to be okay!" but that can often feel invalidating to someone experiencing depression. Inquire about safety and whether they are having any thoughts of suicide, including making plans. Finally, encourage the person to seek treatment including therapy and/or medication. Normalize the experience of treating depression as you would any other health condition, and if possible, direct them to resources. Here at AMC, the Department of Psychiatry treats many learners and employees for problems including depression, and offers medication management and individual, couples, and group therapies

**Q: Who has been a major influence in your life or career?**

**A:** I've had a number of influential mentors over the course of my career. While it's not specific to any one individual, I can say that my colleagues at Albany Med have been instrumental in my professional development. As I've worked to build my understanding of student and house staff mental health and wellness, I've had the good fortune to work with so many people who are passionate about these issues and have gone out of their way to nurture my professional development. I love that I'm surrounded by a community where I can both build friendships and consult with colleagues over lunch on a challenging case.

**Q: What is your favorite book or recommend reading?**

**A:** While it's not "wellness" related, I'm a pretty avid science fiction fan. It's nice to take a break from the often dry academic papers I read. It's hard to pick a favorite, but one book I read recently and really enjoyed is "The Three Body Problem," by Liu Cixin.

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## EAP for a Happier You

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The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) addresses personal concerns to support the Albany Medical Center community. EAP guides staff through personal challenges and workplace concerns with compassionate and skilled assistance.

### How the EAP Can Help You

- An experienced and caring NYS licensed Social Worker listens to your concerns, makes an assessment of what is the best way to help you, *and then refers you to a valuable community resource* to help you resolve your situation.
- *Information resources* are available on enhancing *personal growth*, counseling resources, substance abuse, *mental health issues*, stress management, effective communication and much more.
- *Workshops* can be provided to departments to increase morale and communication skills, and reduce personal and workplace stress.

**Call us if you experience any of the following concerns:** *Anxiety*, Addictions to alcohol and/or drugs, *Blended Family stress*, Child abuse, Compulsive gambling, *Counseling referrals for Children/Teens*, Depression, Domestic violence, Elder Care Community Resources, Eating disorders, Grief/Loss, *Financial Pressures/Foreclosures*, Legal Referrals, Marriage counseling referrals.





Time magazine and Scientific American devoted two entire issues to mindfulness. But what is mindfulness?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Mindfulness as: “*The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or **complete awareness** of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis.*”

Cambridge Dictionary defines it as: “*The practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, thought to create a feeling of calm.*”

When we are mindful, our mind is fully engaged to what is happening in the moment, without being reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us. It is an innate human ability.

According to the [American Heart Association](#), “Routine stress, including job strain and long working hours, may contribute to serious health problems, including elevated risk for heart disease and stroke and experiencing depression for the first time.” One goal is to ensure that employees can handle stress, insecurity and uncertainty without becoming overwhelmed. While we often turn to quick external solutions—adding capacity or introducing a new project management tool—building long-term resilience to stress starts from within.

You must acknowledge insecurities about capabilities and deal with them in an action-oriented and skillful way. Resilience requires *authentic confidence* through *emotional flexibility*

- ◆ **Mindfulness.** This means being fully present and aware of our emotions and surroundings or immersing ourselves completely during daily activities. Just a few minutes a day of exercise, meditation or listening to music builds the mental muscle needed for focus and peak performance.
- ◆ **Acceptance.** We often avoid challenges because we fear making mistakes or failing. To become authentically confident, we must face our fears and emotions, consciously step out of our comfort zone, move toward what is important to us, and learn from experiences. When you encounter challenges, accepting and acknowledging fear and observing it in a nonjudgmental way reduces its negative impact dramatically.
- ◆ **Defusion.** This relates to an awareness of factors and thoughts that trigger anxiety—such as an angry board member, a dissatisfied client or a nasty email from a colleague. Defusion is observing our thoughts for what they are and learning how to keep the potential impact of those thoughts at a distance.
- ◆ **Self-in-context.** The ability to look at challenges and yourself from a distance and in context, instead of ignoring them, is an essential skill in developing authentic confidence.

Zooming out helps us understand the causes of our feelings and see ourselves in the broader context of who we are. Renowned educator Ronald Heifetz refers to this perspective as being on the dance floor and the balcony at the same time.

- ◆ **Committed action.** Developing authentic confidence requires us to think through the changes we want to make in our daily lives. This process is not about defining intentions but about creating and integrating a very clear plan with an operating model that supports the behavior change we want to achieve. This is where you bring all the other elements together and embrace challenges.

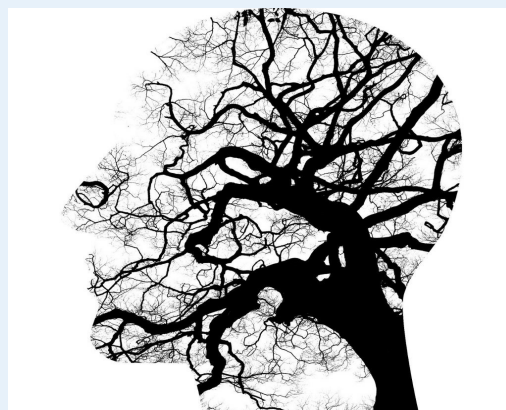
Mastering authentic confidence through emotional flexibility can serve as a critical part of pursuing our professional goals, purpose and values while dealing with fears and anxieties along the journey. By developing this attribute, employees can manage stress in a sustainable way while being freed to achieve better performance and well-being.

Since organizations stand to benefit from a workforce that is better able to handle stress, investing in a culture that emphasizes authentic confidence and promotes emotional flexibility is critical. Modeling supportive behavior in interactions with employees can also help to set the right tone.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-organization-blog/dont-stress-out-how-to-build-longterm-resilience?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck&hlkid=ce8d3fa28f824a2fb16ae5ff159d0ee8&hctky=2109514&hdpid=badefff8-278e-48f3-997b-6fe7539a2c7d>

## MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

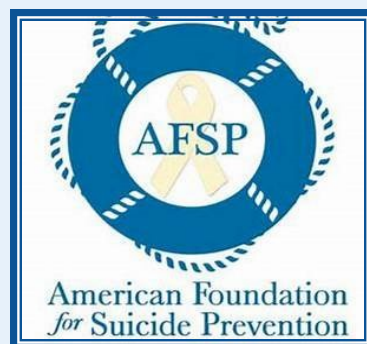
- ◆ Poor mental health increases the risk for long-lasting physical conditions like heart disease, stroke, and cancer.
- ◆ Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being.
- ◆ Half of all mental health illness occurs before a person turns 14 year old, and three-quarters of mental illness begin before age 24.
- ◆ Serious mental illness costs America \$193.2 billion in lost earnings per year.
- ◆ Mental illness is caused by a number of factors including biological factors, stressful or traumatic life events, and long-lasting health conditions such as heart disease or cancer.



## TEN FACTS ABOUT PHYSICIAN SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH

1. Suicide is generally caused by the convergence of multiple risk factors, the most common being untreated or inadequately managed mental health conditions.
2. An estimated 300 physicians die by suicide in the U.S. per year.
3. In cases where physicians died by suicide, depression is found to be a significant risk factor leading to their death at approximately the same rate as among non-physician suicide deaths; but physicians who took their lives were less likely to be receiving mental health treatment compared with non-physicians who took their lives.
4. The suicide rate among male physicians is 1.41x higher than the general male population. And among female physicians the relative risk is even more pronounced — 2.27x greater than the general female population.
5. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the 24-34 age range (accidents are the first).
6. The prevalence of depression among residents is higher than in similarly aged individuals in the general U.S. population — 28 percent of residents experience a major depressive episode during training versus the general population rate of 7-8 percent.
7. Among physicians, risk for suicide increases when mental health conditions go unaddressed and when self-medication occurs as a way to address anxiety, insomnia, or other distressing symptoms. Although self-medicating may reduce some symptoms, the underlying health problem is not effectively treated and this can lead to a tragic outcome.
8. In one prospective study, 23 percent of interns had suicidal thoughts, but among those interns who completed four sessions of web-based Cognitive Behavior Therapy nearly 50 percent fewer had suicidal ideation.
9. Drivers of burnout include work load, work inefficiency, lack of autonomy and meaning in work, and work-home conflict.
10. Unaddressed mental health conditions are, in the long run, more likely to negatively impact one's professional reputation and practice than reaching out for help early.

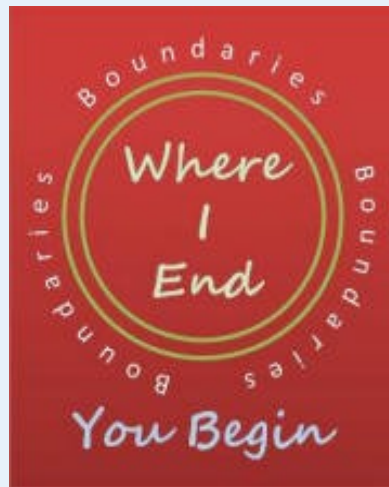
SOURCE: [AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION](#)



## **If you know someone with poor mental health, you can help by:**

- ⇒ Reaching out and letting them know help is available.
- ⇒ Helping them access mental health services.
- ⇒ Learning and sharing the facts about mental health, especially if you hear something that is not true.

## **SELF CARE TIPS**



### **Maintain Your Mental Health**

- \* Take time to relax
- \* Take Quiet Time—meditate, nature walk, quiet reading, listening to music
- \* Vent and Express Yourself
- \* Journaling
- \* Seek Out Support Counseling
- \* Find a Free Support Group—AA, NA, Al-Anon, Co-Dependents Anonymous, etc.

### **Look After Your Body**

- \* Eat small, frequent healthy meals
- \* Exercise regularly
- \* Limit toxins
- \* Get plenty of sleep

## Nurture Your Spirit

- \* Say positive affirmations—“I have everything I need within me”, “Life is moving in the right direction for me”, “I have many blessings in my life”, “I am achieving my goals”
- \* Read positive or inspirational material
- \* Go to religious worship services
- \* Make a dream board to encourage yourself to keep fighting for your dreams
- \* Pass along goodness and kindness to others
- \* Forgive yourself
- \* Learn to let go

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” ~Teilhard de Chardin*





# MENTAL HEALTH EVENTS, RESOURCES, AND TRAINING

## Question, Persuade, and Refer Training (QPR)

This 60-minute online training course can help anyone learn how to help prevent a suicide. After completing the course you will:

- Know some of the causes of suicidal behavior
- Recognize the warning signs that someone needs help
- Know how to connect people with appropriate mental health care

Click on the link to register and complete the course: <https://qprinstitute.com/individual-training>

**safeTALK:** safeTALK is a interactive training that invites participants to become more alert to the possibility of suicide and how to prevent it. By learning to connect friends, family members, colleagues and students with helping resources, safeTALK participants can help save lives in their communities.

**Saturday, June 1st; 9am—12pm; 901 3rd Street, Rensselaer**

**Talk Saves Lives: A Brief Intro to Suicide Prevention:** A community-based presentation that covers the general scope of suicide, the research on prevention, and what people can do to fight suicide.

**Wednesday, May 22; 7-8pm; 901 3rd Street, Rensselaer**

**Just For the Health of It! Health and Wellness Festival:** Albany is bringing resources straight from our communities that address the seven dimensions of wellness: financial, intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional, environmental, and occupational.

**Saturday, June 1st; 12-5pm; Jennings Landing, Albany**

**Interactive Screening Program:** ISP is a safe and secure online screening tool where residents can anonymously take a brief questionnaire for stress and depression. Participants receive feedback and encouragement within 24-48 hours. To take the survey, go to: <https://amc.caresforyou.org>

**Guided Mindfulness Meditation:** Every Tuesday from 12-12:15pm in the Marcelle Chapel; B Basement level of B Building. Free to AMC employees.

**Healing Touch Clinic:** All of Albany Med's employees and students are entitled to visit the Employee Healing Touch Clinic for stress reduction and help with physical, mental, and emotional concerns. The 1 hour sessions are FREE and available up to twice a month. Sign up is available on the calendar posted on the door of the HT clinic, D473C. Leave a name and phone number contact.

*Self-Care is a priority and a necessity—not a luxury—in  
the work that we do...*

**AMC Department of Psychiatry:** The department provides medication management and individual, couples, and group therapies. The Department of Psychiatry is located at South Clinical Campus, 25 Hackett Blvd. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the main desk at 518-262-5511.

**Committee on Physician Health:** The Committee on Physician Health (CPH) is a voluntary program offered to medical personnel who seek assistance for substance use and/or mental health disorders. They may be reached at 518-436-4723

**For additional information, contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness at:**

<https://www.nami.org/mentalhealthmonth>

or

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Raise-Awareness/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Month/>

