HEARTLAND ALLIANCE

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Maintaining good mental health is a critical component to functioning in the world, and mental illness, if left untreated, can have a devastating effect on one's life.

Nearly **1 in 5** Americans suffers from a mental illness each year.

42 million (18.1%) American adults live with anxiety disorders.

16 million (6.9%) American adults live with major depression.

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide.

Approximately **26%** of homeless adults who stay in shelters live with a serious mental illness.

Approximately **10.2 million** adults have co-occuring mental health and addiction disorders (i.e., both at the same time).

Nearly **60%** of adults with a mental illness didn't receive mental health services in the previous year.

90% of those who die by suicide have an underlying mental illness. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES?

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S. Nearly 50% of those diagnosed with an anxiety disorder are also diagnosed with depression. Other common mental illnesses include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

DEFINITIONS

Depression (Major Depressive Disorder): A mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest. More than just a bout of blues, depression isn't a weakness and you can't simply "snap out of it." Depression may require long-term treatment.

Anxiety Disorder: Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?

Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is not known, research shows that many of these conditions are caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors — not personal weakness or a character defect — and recovery from a mental illness is not simply a matter of will and self-discipline. Many mental illnesses run in families, suggesting a hereditary link. Some mental illnesses are linked to an abnormal balance of chemistry in the brain, and others are linked to psychological trauma (e.g., emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; a significant early loss; neglect) or environmental stressors (e.g., death, divorce, dysfunctional family life, substance abuse).

HOW ARE MENTAL ILLNESSES TREATED?

Mental illness, like many chronic illnesses, requires ongoing treatment. Many mental health conditions can be effectively treated or managed with one or a combination of the following interventions: medication, psychotherapy, group therapy, day treatment (also known as partial hospital treatment — an intensive course of treatment for those who do not require 24-hour inpatient care), or therapies like cognitive-behavior therapy and behavior modification to change the patterns of thinking or behaving that are affecting well-being.

Many people diagnosed with mental illness achieve strength and recovery through participating in individual or group treatment. There are many different treatment options available and there is no one treatment that works for everyone. Individuals should work with a mental health professional to choose the treatment, or combination of treatments, that works best.

"I WAS A WRECK WHEN I FIRST CAME TO [HEARTLAND HEALTH OUTREACH]. I WAS A WRECK EMOTIONALLY, MENTALLY. THEY TOOK THEIR TIME. THEY SAT AND TALKED TO ME LIKE I WAS A HUMAN BEING. THEY DIDN'T SHY AWAY FROM ME. THEY TREATED ME LIKE FAMILY." — Peer educator in San Pedro

ABOUT HEARTLAND ALLIANCE

We believe that everyone in society benefits when people who experience disparities in safety, health, housing, education, economic opportunity, and justice are able to exit poverty, heal from trauma, and achieve stability; secure their rights; and shape policies that respond to their needs. Heartland Alliance believes everyone has a right to health care. We are committed to helping individuals living with mental illness receive the right treatment to begin a recovery that will lead them to a more fulfilling life.