



# HELPING HANDS



## Embracing Mental Health Awareness: The Significance of Mental Health Month in May

Mental health awareness is a crucial aspect of our overall well-being. Just like physical health, our mental health requires attention, care, and understanding. May marks Mental Health Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about mental health issues, reducing stigma, and advocating for access to mental health services.

History of Mental Health Month: Mental Health Month traces its origins back to 1949 when the Mental Health America organization (formerly known as the National Association for Mental Health) established Mental Health Week. Over time, this observance expanded to encompass the entire month of May. Mental Health Month in May focusses on the spring's symbolism of renewal and growth.



### Objectives of Mental Health Month:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Mental Health Month serves as a platform to educate the public about various mental health conditions, their prevalence, and their impact on individuals and society.
2. **Combat Stigma:** One of the primary goals of Mental Health Month is to challenge the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness. By fostering open conversations and sharing personal stories, the campaign aims to break down stereotypes and misconceptions.
3. **Promote Mental Wellness:** Mental Health Month encourages individuals to prioritize their mental well-being through self-care practices, stress management techniques, and seeking professional help when needed.
4. **Advocate for Policy Change:** The month provides an opportunity for advocacy efforts aimed at improving mental health policies, increasing funding for mental health services, and expanding access to treatment and support resources.
5. **Support Communities:** Mental Health Month fosters a sense of solidarity and support among individuals affected by mental health challenges. Community events, workshops, and online forums offer platforms for connection and mutual assistance.

May is the month that serves as a vital platform for raising awareness, combating stigma, and advocating for improved mental health services. By fostering open dialogue, promoting self-care practices, and supporting individuals affected by mental health challenges we can reduce stigma and open avenues for people to get help. As we begin dialogue about mental health, let us strive to uphold the values of empathy, understanding, and support, not just during the month of May but every day of the year.

### It Takes Time To Get Better.

Many of the things we experience are situational, which will improve with time as we are able to process feelings (for example, grief after the death of a loved one or a tough break-up). Other times we must adjust to a different environment when we change jobs or move to a new location. Other times we experience a more long-term mental health issue like stress or depression. Mental health issues are common and treatable; however, you may have to try a few different things to find right type of treatment or combination of strategies that works best for you.

### If Someone Talks To You About Their Mental Health



- **Listen.** Let them finish their sentences and complete thoughts without interrupting. After they have finished you can respond.
- **Avoid being judgmental.** Don't tell them they are being weird or crazy; it's not helpful at all.
- **Take them seriously.** Try not to respond with statements that minimize how they are feeling or what they are going through, such as, "You're just having a bad week," or "I'm sure it's nothing."
- **Make yourself available to talk again if needed.** While it can be a big relief for someone to share something they have been keeping secret, mental health struggles usually aren't solved with one conversation. Let the person who has spoken with you know that they can reach out to you again if they are having a tough time. It's ok to let them know if there is a time of day or certain days of the week that you aren't available. For instance, "I'm here for you if you need to talk, but my parents don't let me use the phone after 9 on school nights, so call before then."

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peers do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; however, they are trained to get an idea of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peers will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that address the difficulty you were experiencing.



## IAM EAP Director, District 142

# Paul Shultz

704-907-3563 E-mail: [pshultz@att.net](mailto:pshultz@att.net)

#### Mental Health

##### Definition

-A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual can use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.

-A person's overall emotional and psychological condition.

-A field comprising various professions, such as psychiatry and social work, that deals with the promotion of mental and psychological well-being and the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of mental disorders.