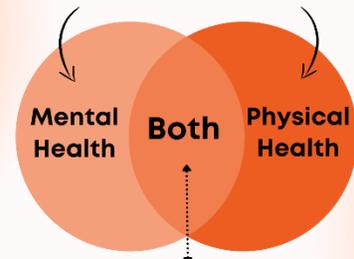


May is Mental Health Month – Introductory Article

Are you aware that America has been acknowledging May as Mental Health month for a number of decades? While many are just now becoming familiar with this movement, the first observation of this awareness campaign was actually in 1949. For 73 years, groups have been working to create awareness and acceptance of sound mental health as a crucial element of overall health. People have been suffering from the stigma of experiencing a mental health disorder for centuries. However, in the last dozen years or so, acknowledgement of the importance of mental health as a major component of overall health has grown exponentially. Today, mentions of mental health in daily, ordinary conversation and in the media have – shall we say – ‘gone mainstream?’ Many believe that recent changes that we have seen mean that mental health is losing its stigma!

Somehow, good mental health has frequently been equated with a ‘strong mind’ and an ability to solve one’s mental health issues by oneself. Today, scientists are discovering on a near-daily basis new knowledge of how that most intricate of organs, the brain, actually operates. And it turns out that brain function has a major impact on our mental health, often with different parts of the brain working together and also in subtle ways. What we’re finding is that many parts of the brain are responsible for and interact with other parts of the brain to create the state we call ‘mental health.’ Expecting someone to suddenly overcome a mental health issue is the equivalent of expecting a broken leg to heal correctly without assistance. An important realization is that we cannot always solve our problems on our own. Although this approach has been lauded for many years, we are realizing that there are more effective ways to solve personal and mental health concerns.

What Is More Important?



Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall well-being and are deeply connected to one another.

Here are some of the factors that have led to an increase in mental health awareness:

- Focus on good mental health has become more prevalent in our society today, and are openly discussed at a level not previously seen, in good part due to the effect that the Covid pandemic has had on our daily lives
- By increasing our focus on mental health, we help elevate the importance of good mental health and that recovery from mental health concerns takes time
- Our language is changing around mental health matters, with the goal of increasing sensitivity to and respect of mental health concerns as legitimate concerns
- The prevalence of telemedicine and other forms of electronic communications to support mental health, such as relaxation and meditation apps, has increased and is more readily available to those in need
- Celebrities and other famous individuals have been forthcoming about their personal mental health struggles, which has increased the perception that it is 'ok' to talk about our own internal struggles.

In the weeks that follow, we will present additional information in weekly articles about mental health for women, for men, and for children and families. We hope you take the opportunity to familiarize yourself with these practical tips!

Sources: Better by Today: Mental health: Hove we've improved and where we need to do better in 2020
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<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/messages/2021/one-year-in-covid-19-and-mental-health>

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