

MARCH 2024

BENCO NEWSLETTER

A newsletter for Benco Staff



MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT

Although May is the official National Mental Health (MH) Awareness month, Benco feels that it is important to highlight help for those who might be struggling with MH issues now. This month, the DOP (Misty Sorte) is raising awareness to promote and protect everyone's mental health as a universal human right.

Treating people with dignity and respect is a core value for Benco. This standard is not just one we apply to working with those we support but in all our interactions. We never know the struggles that someone else is facing and so in every interaction we have: we show empathy and use kind words, we are gracious and grateful regardless of the circumstance, we demonstrate patience and grace and we assume good intent. **We never know what someone is going through, so be kind. There is room for kindness in all we do.**

One in five American adults experiences some form of mental illness in any given year. And across the population, 1 in every 20 adults is living with a serious mental health condition such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or long-term recurring major depression.

"We don't come from places. We come from time. From traumatic moments that cannot be undone." Caroline Kepnes

Mental health is critically important for everyone, everywhere, and goes beyond the mere absence of a mental health condition. It is integral to well-being, enabling people to realize their full potential, show resilience amidst adversity, be productive across the various settings of daily life, form meaningful relationships and contribute to their communities. Good mental health is vital to our overall health and well-being.

Myths about Mental Illness

Myth: Mental health problems are a sign of weakness.

Fact: Mental illness has nothing to do with strength or weakness. It is a medical disorder that needs treatment in the same way an infection, high blood pressure, or broken bone needs treatment. If you need help with a mental issue, you are not weak. Many factors are involved in mental health

Myth: Mental illness only impacts a small portion of the population.

Fact: Mental health problems are very common. About 1 of every 5 people will experience a mental health issue in a given year. One of every 25 has a serious mental health disorder. These include anxiety, major depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

Myth: Therapy is a waste of time.

Fact: Research has shown that therapy is very effective in treating mental illness. It's usually most effective when used in combination with medicine. Studies found that 70% to 90% of people reported an improvement in their symptoms when both were part of their treatment plan.



Why saying “It will all be fine. Don’t worry.” is not the answer.

Misty Sorte

I wanted to share a piece of an article that talked about a daughter struggling during COVID. She was worried about her parents. (<https://hbr.org/2020/11/its-okay-to-not-be-okay>)

My world had just collapsed. My father has underlying health conditions and, with both of them being ill, I did worry. How would they get the care they needed to recover? How could I not feel despair? I spent the day reaching out to relatives in their area and making frantic calls to friends who wouldn’t mind listening to my deepest anxieties. I was met with pep talks and positive affirmations:

- *“Just try to put positive energy into the world.”*
- *“Focus on the good things in your life.”*
- *“It could be so much worse – be grateful.”*
- *“This too shall pass.”*

One response stood out: “It’s okay to feel this way right now.” When I heard that, I could finally take a breath. I needed to know that it was okay to feel how I was feeling in the moment – rather than bury my emotions and pretend they didn’t exist.

So much of the time we are asked, how we are doing with the assumption that we answer that we are ok or fine. I am here to tell you, sometimes, “If I’m honest, I’m not doing well” and guess what? It’s ok, to not be ok. This month I want to make it clear that Mental Health is an issue we are bringing out of the darkness. It is not something to hide or refuse to address. Mental health does not improve on its own. Someone said to me the other day, “how are you supposed to get better if you are too afraid or ashamed to ask for help or you don’t know things can get better.”

Remember that no emotion is permanent. Anger and sadness, just like happiness and joy, come and go. We need to let ourselves experience painful feelings if we ever want to truly let them pass through us. By hiding your discomfort, you’re only adding fuel to fire.

“The more we avoid internal discomfort, the more isolated we can become, the more anxious we can get, and the more depressed we can feel,” said Dr. Zuckerman a clinical psychologist in Pennsylvania who specializes in, among other things, anxiety disorders and self-esteem. We need to not only feel, but also acknowledge our legitimate emotional responses to situations. Efforts to avoid or ignore them can isolate us during times of need.

Toxic Positivity

Toxic positivity not only invalidates your emotional state, but also increases secondary emotions.

According to Dr Zuckerman, “The inherent problem with this concept is that we assume that if a person is not in a positive mood (or whatever we think a positive person should look or act like), then they are somehow wrong, bad, or inadequate. The problem is that, when we invalidate someone else’s emotional state – or in this case, when we tell someone that feeling sad, angry, or any emotion that we consider ‘negative’ is bad – we end up eliciting secondary emotions inside of them like shame, guilt, and embarrassment.”

In so many words, we are saying to them that they should feel ashamed of being sad or that they should feel embarrassed for being afraid.

“Efforts to avoid, ignore or suppress emotions that are appropriate to context can isolate someone in their time of need, thereby perpetuating the stigma that mental health issues equate to weak-mindedness,” Dr. Zuckerman explained.

It really is OKAY to not be okay. “Not only is it okay to not feel ‘okay,’ it is essential. An abnormal emotional response to an abnormal situation IS normal. We cannot simply pick the emotions we want to have. It just does not work that way,” Dr. Zuckerman said. To learn more go to: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/toxic-positivity-during-the-pandemic>

Suicide prevention

Each year in Linn and Benton Counties combined approximately 55 people die by suicide, and 70% of those people tell someone or give warning signs before taking their own life. Studies have shown that over 90% of people who die from suicide have one or more psychiatric disorders at the time of their death. Luckily, there are ways to treat and control these disorders and potentially prevent suicide.

Did you know that...

- 70% of people who die by suicide tell someone about it in advance, and most are not in treatment.
- Those who have made serious attempts are at much higher risk for actually taking their lives. Between 20% and 40% of people who die by suicide have previously attempted suicide.
- Nearly 50% of suicide victims have a positive blood alcohol level.
- Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed.
- Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often is expressed instead as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that were once enjoyable.
- Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away forever.

Answer the questionnaires at the bottom of the page to find out if you or someone you know needs help.

Learn how to recognize the warning signs

Learn how to recognize the warning signs in order to reach out and help. If you suspect a friend, family member, or co-worker is considering suicide, ACT Now: Acknowledge, Care, Treatment

ACKNOWLEDGE

Your friend may have told you that they are considering suicide, or you may have recognized the signs and symptoms on your own. Either way, it is important that you take these warning signs seriously, and tell your friend that you care about them, and that you are concerned. Because suicide is so often linked with mental illness, your friend may not be able to get the help they need without you. Here's how to ACT to help a friend, co-worker or loved one that you are concerned about.

- Do take it seriously. 70% of all people who die by suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- Do be willing to listen. Even if professional help is needed, your loved one will be more willing to seek help if you have listened to them.

CARE

- Do voice your concern. Take the initiative to ask what is troubling your loved one, and attempt to overcome any reluctance on their part to talk about it.
- Let the person know you care and understand. Reassure them that they are not alone. Explain that even if it seems hard to believe right now, suicidal feelings (although powerful) are only temporary, and that the usual cause (depression) can be treated.
- Ask if the person has a specific plan. Ask if a suicide plan exists, and if so, how far have they gone in carrying it out? (Please note: asking about suicide does not cause a person to think about (or decide on) suicide. This is a myth!)

TREATMENT

Do get professional help immediately.

Call 988

Bring them to a local emergency room or community mental health center. Your friend will be more likely to seek help if you accompany them.

Contact their primary care physician or mental health provider.

And if all else fails... call 9-1-1

Helpful Resources

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/>

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Individuals-with-Mental-Illness>

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

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/learning/publichealthburnoutprevention/default.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950> <https://linnbenton.libguides.com/c.php?g=1241283&p=9083680>

<https://www.stlukeshealth.org/resources/get-started-with-deep-breathing-to-reduce-anxiety>

988 TEXT or TALK crisis line

Benton County Crisis line: 1-888-232-7192

Metline Employee Assistance Program (available to all staff)

1-888-319-7819

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month:

This year's theme is a World of Opportunities

Learn more about how you can spread awareness at

www.https://nacdd.org/ddam1/



Why do we keep talking about Self-Care?

By DOP Misty Sorte



You might think self-care and mindfulness are just buzz words or fads, but there is substantial scientific research that validates its importance. Think of it as preventative health care. Stress can decrease our brain functioning (impacting our memory and decision making abilities), increase blood pressure (can lead to hypertension, strokes, and heart attacks), impact our immune system (making us more susceptible to viruses), lower our ability to handle conflict professionally, and put our jobs or relationships at risk. Self care refers to the actions that restore balance in our personal and professional lives. Like a dripping faucet can eventually cause a flood, little bits of stress add up and result in big health impacts. Self care is like taking some of that water out of the sink. Implementing regular activities that help lower stress is a simple but powerful formula. Healthy habits+taking care of minor and long term conditions=self care. A little less inactivity, a few positive activities (30 more minutes of sleep, adding fruit and vegetables, drinking water instead of caffeine, spending 10 minutes outdoors, laughing more, meditating 5 minutes a day, stretching...) result in a healthier body and mind.

The DOP is visiting all programs this month to discuss this more and give everyone their own self-care kit. In the meantime, feel free to reach out to the DOP for more information or support.

March Dates to Remember



Happy Anniversary

March 2
Lillian V.
March 7
Micha F.
3/10
Matthew W.
3/19
Andres S.
3/20
Alberto B
Cedar Kaplenk
3/24
Justin B.
3/25
Jesse W.
3/26
Garrett M.
Ian M.
3/28
Cliff R.
3/29
Courtney R.

1 year Benco-versary
Michael M.
3 year Benco-versary
Emma N and Julia W.
4 year Benco-versary
Aleen H and Patricia M.
7 year Benco-versary
Courtney R.
8 year Benco-versary
Andrea H.
17 year Benco-versary
James S.
21 Year Benco-versary
Monika N.

Congratulations!

Cedar Kaplenk, Employee of the year 2024!
Iolanda Wa'a, January Employee of the month
4th quarter Bravo drawing winners
Jesse W. and Jodi H
PC of the Quarter: Patricia M.
Welcome baby Ryland Paul born 2-23-24
Welcome baby Cora Joy born 3/11!

Don't forget:

Sprout Film Festival March 29th 3 and 7 PM Majestic Theater
Walk 'n Roll event on Friday, March 29th at 11:00am with the ARC
Ice Cream Social at the Benco Admin office March 19th from 4-6PM