



# IT'S UP TO US

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans.



Edition Four | Summer 2011

## About the Campaign

The "It's Up To Us" campaign is designed to empower San Diegans to talk openly about mental illness, recognize symptoms, utilize local resources and seek help. By raising awareness, educating the community and providing easy access to local resources, we can initiate change in perception, inspire wellness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health challenges.

Recovery is possible and help is available. It's Up To Us to make a difference in the lives of San Diegans experiencing mental health challenges by offering support and providing opportunities.

This campaign is developed through the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, and funded by the Mental Health Services Act. Visit our Web site to learn more!

## Read Up: Students' Mental Health

### HECTIC LIFESTYLE CAN THREATEN STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

College can be an exciting time of self-discovery, independence and realizing dreams for the future. Yet the challenge of balancing school, sleep, work and play can be stressful. And for many students, this struggle takes its toll on their mental health.

Mental illnesses often emerge in the late teens or early 20s. In fact, about one in five adults between 18 and 24 have diagnosable mental health challenges.

Compounded with additional worries on the "to do" list, it's no surprise that more than 50 percent of college students have felt so

depressed at some point that they could not function.

For a variety of reasons, only about one in four students said they would seek help for these problems, according to data from the 2006 mtvU College Mental Health Study.

Among the key reasons given for not seeking help: embarrassment, not taking symptoms seriously and not wanting to admit that there is a problem.

Mental illness is real, common and treatable. One may believe that determination and will power can eliminate the problem, but it is important to seek help – the sooner the better.

When properly diagnosed and treated, most people with mental health challenges can recover, pursue a career and realize their dreams.

Most college campuses offer access to onsite counseling and other mental health services. For more information, visit [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org).



[www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org)



Need help immediately?

**SD CRISIS HOTLINE**

**(800) 479-3339**

Community Resources

**2-1-1**

Mental illness has many possible causes, but factors that can intensify the symptoms include stress and a lack of sleep. A recent poll of college students conducted by ULifeline found that 57 percent had slept three hours or less the night before. Getting enough sleep is one simple way you can help yourself feel better.

For more information and resources specific for college students, please visit:

[www.Up2SD.org/yourlife](http://www.Up2SD.org/yourlife)

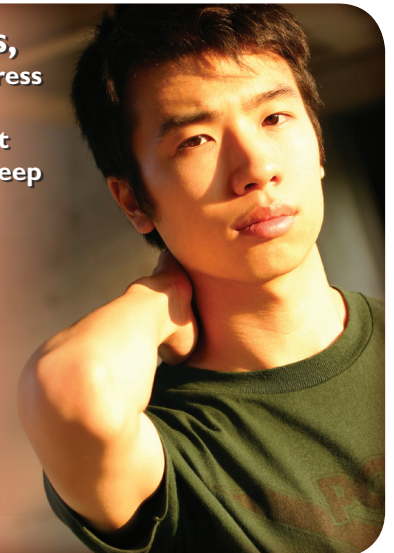
[www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)

[www.halfofus.org](http://www.halfofus.org)

[www.activeminds.org](http://www.activeminds.org)

[www.liveyourlifewell.org](http://www.liveyourlifewell.org)

[www2.sprc.org/collegesanduniversities/index](http://www2.sprc.org/collegesanduniversities/index)



## Did You Know:

Symptoms of mental illness often emerge in the late teens or early 20s. Despite the availability of effective treatments, too often there are long delays before people seek help. (Source: [www.NAMI.org](http://www.NAMI.org))

# Listen Up: STORIES OF STRUGGLE, PERSEVERANCE & HOPE

Stories of struggle, perseverance and hope are shared by countless San Diegans. Facing stigma and discrimination, overcoming hardships such as abuse, homelessness and traumatic memories can be difficult, but it can get better. Finding inner strength and connecting with the right people or local programs can make all the difference. Visit [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org) to view personal story movies created by San Diegans to inspire, offer hope and challenge stereotypes.

*“When I was in college I loved life and was working hard to achieve my dream of becoming an attorney. I was also active in my church, and I had my own apartment and owned a car.*

*I was working a full-time job and pulling all-nighters to keep up my grades to get into law school. I loved the feeling I got from being recognized for my hard work.*

*Then I began sleeping less and less. I started having lots of creative ideas – jumping from one to another without completing any. And I was not able to keep my focus. I also did strange and impulsive things.*

*My family took me to a doctor and eventually I was told I had bipolar disorder. At first I didn’t take my*

*diagnosis seriously, and went on with my life. But with time I realized that ignoring it did not make the problem go away – in fact it took years off my life, not getting the help I needed.*

*Today I have an 8-year-old son. I finished law school and I am studying for the California Bar exam. I am still realizing my dream, but also taking care of myself.”*



– Michelle Shirley

Watch Michelle’s story at: [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org)

## Link Up:



## Ten Tools to Live Your Life Well:

To learn more, visit MHA’s websites:  
[www.mhasd.org](http://www.mhasd.org) • [www.liveyourlifewell.org](http://www.liveyourlifewell.org)  
Phone: (619) 543-0412

MHA of San Diego County promotes mental health through advocacy, education, research and service. MHA offers information on local resources, events and training. It also provides treatment options for various mental health disorders, and tips to live a well-balanced life.

A Self Help Directory of more than 600 groups in San Diego County, known as “the little yellow book,” can be ordered through the MHA website.

- Connect with Others**: Fight stress with friendship. Learn how to strengthen old bonds and build new ones.
- Stay Positive**: Changing your thinking can change your life. Take steps to increase your optimism.
- Get Physically Active**: Exercise can make you happier. How to get active, stay active and more.
- Help Others**: You may feel better serving soup at a shelter than sipping martinis at Happy Hour.
- Get Enough Sleep**: Being tired can hurt your health and your relationships. Advice for better sleep.
- Create Joy and Satisfaction**: Feeling good is good for you, so have a laugh, find a hobby or just kick back.
- Eat Well**: The right foods can fuel your mind, boost your mood and fight disease.
- Take Care of Your Spirit**: Praying, meditating or just connecting with your deepest self can enrich your life.
- Deal Better with Hard Times**: Coping tools can help you through a rough patch. Consider these tips.
- Get professional help if you need it**: Don't hesitate to seek professional help. Learn about therapy, medication and more.



## Shine A Light On... Bipolar Disorder

**This often misunderstood disease is treatable**

Bipolar disorder is a medical condition that causes a person to experience extreme highs (mania) as well as extreme lows (depression). It typically begins during late adolescence.

During a manic episode, a person's mood is excessively high, irritable, or aggressive, and he or she may engage in unusually risky or impulsive behavior.

During a depressive episode, a person may feel sad, withdraw from friends and family, and lose interest in previously enjoyable activities.

While bipolar disorder may have genetic causes, symptoms may be triggered by extreme stress, sleep disruption, or drug and alcohol use.

In addition to counseling and medication, successful management of bipolar disorder includes a healthy lifestyle of exercise, sleep and good nutrition. Effective coping skills and a support network are also beneficial.

Courtesy of ULifeline ([www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)) and the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance ([www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org))

## Growing Up:

### MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT RESERVED FOR ADULTS

Severe mental illness often starts before age 21, and can take both the teenager and the parents by surprise. You can stop the progression of the illness, however, by learning how to recognize symptoms and getting early treatment.

Early warning signs include:

- Feeling something "just isn't right" or that the mind is playing tricks.
- Inability to do school work, or perform on the job.
- Uncharacteristic behavior.
- Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch.
- Belief that they have special powers.

Providence Community Services, who operates the Kickstart Program, shares the story of a 12-year-old girl who was a good student, active in dance, and spent time with several friends.

*Almost out of nowhere she started failing math, repeatedly asked to stay home from school, stopped spending time with friends and started to let go of attention to her hygiene.*

*Through early assessment, it was discovered that she was having a difficult time because she felt like people were watching her and that she thought her mind was playing tricks on her.*

*She said that at times she saw strange shadows and heard knocking sounds. At school she also mentioned that math just became too difficult, and that she wasn't able to process what the teacher was saying.*

*Through treatment and education, she and her family learned how to change her home life to help minimize her symptoms. Several months after treatment, she showed significant improvement.*

*Through the attention and efforts of families, teachers and community members, youth can get identified early.*

**Maria Morgan**

**Program Director, Providence Community Services**

The clinical team at Kickstart provides confidential assessment and early assistance for young people, ages 10 to 25, in San Diego County who are at risk for a serious mental illness. Their team is available for educational training and presentations. Details: [www.kickstartsd.org](http://www.kickstartsd.org)

  
**kickstart**

Call Us Today  
**619 481 3790**



# Get Up & Participate!

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers these tips to raise awareness about mental illness and recovery on campus. These suggestions, however, work just as well in neighborhood settings.

- **Display posters with statistics or personal stories.** Place posters in high-traffic areas on campus or in popular neighborhood settings such as your favorite eatery or the local library.
- **Write a letter to the editor of your school or community newspaper.** Time your letter at finals time, when stress is highest; or write at the beginning of the year, when new students arrive. You can also time your article with Mental Health Awareness Month in May or Suicide Prevention Month in September.
- **Get your message on the airwaves.** Ask your campus radio station, favorite local station or DJ to highlight mental health issues by airing a public service announcement (PSA).

- **Host a movie night to initiate a conversation about mental health issues.** Make sure to show a movie that depicts reality, not one that buys into the stereotypes. Movies to consider: *Girl, Interrupted*; *A Beautiful Mind*; *Bennie and Joon*; *Ordinary People*; and *Shine*. Each year, the Entertainment Industries Council and SAMHSA recognize films and television programs that accurately depict mental illness and its prevention, treatment, and recovery. Visit their site to read the list of awardees ([www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org)).

- **Organize a run/walk.** Every year, Active Minds on Campus works with colleges around the country to sponsor mental health runs ([www.activeminds.org](http://www.activeminds.org)). Or you can consider forming a team to support an existing event in San Diego such as the Save A Life Walk on November 13th, 2011 ([www.savealifewalk.kintera.org](http://www.savealifewalk.kintera.org)) or the annual NAMI Walk ([www.namisaniego.org](http://www.namisaniego.org)).

For additional tips, visit [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org) or SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote Acceptance at [www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/publications/collegelife.aspx](http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/publications/collegelife.aspx).



**Get people involved with a fun event that raises awareness too!**

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COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO



**HHSA**  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
Funded by the Mental Health Services Act