



It's Up To Us[®]

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans.



Edition Seven | Spring 2012

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 and providing access to local resources, we aim to inspire wellness, reduce stigma and prevent suicide.

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 supports the County's "Live Well, San Diego!" plan to promote a community that is healthy, safe and thriving.

Up2SD.org[®]
LINK UP FOR INFORMATION AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Access & Crisis Line
(888) 724-7240

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
2-1-1

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
HHSA
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
Funded by the Mental Health Services Act

Read Up: Stress— Once a Life Saver, Now a Serious Threat to Our Health

Stress is what we feel when we have to handle more than we are used to. When we are stressed, our body responds as though we are in danger.



It makes hormones that speed up our heart, make us breathe faster and give us a burst of energy. But when it happens too often or lasts too long it takes a toll on our body, both physically and mentally.

As explained by the American Institute of Stress:

"The nature of stress for us today is not an occasional confrontation with a saber-toothed tiger or a hostile warrior but rather a host of emotional threats like getting stuck in traffic and fights with customers, co-workers, or family members, that often occur several times a day. Unfortunately, our bodies still react with these same, archaic fight-or-flight responses that are now not only not useful but potentially damaging and deadly."

Once a life saver, stress has now become the threat itself: Short-term stress can keep us awake at night and make us feel irritable, moody, tense and edgy. Chronic stress can weaken the immune system, cause high blood pressure and digestive problems, and is linked to health conditions such as depression, heart disease and asthma.

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Take a Deep Breath!

1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.

Did You Know: About 40 million American adults are affected by anxiety disorders each year. That's about 18% of the adult population.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health

Listen Up: Stories of Struggle, Perseverance and Hope

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 to view personal story movies created by San Diegans to inspire, offer hope and challenge stereotypes.

“My sister Cherry made such a difference in my life and the lives of others. She was a great sister, daughter, mother and listener. I didn't realize the deep sadness and pain she was suffering. Since her suicide I have been able to survive by having a supportive group of friends and family, meeting with groups like Survivors of Suicide Loss and Grief Share, and getting involved in helping others at church and in the community. Suicide impacts so many more people than the one that died. It is so easy for people to judge. It's this fear of judgment and of what others will think that prevents people from talking about their loss and ultimately healing. As a community we need to understand mental illness and suicide. Survivors of suicide need to be able to grieve as openly as others. Healing is possible. Help and support is available. And now we are able to remember and celebrate her life.”

Watch Annabelle's story at: www.Up2SD.org

– Annabelle Camba-Jones



Liven Up Your Health: How Pets Improve Our Health

Pets have always played a special role in humans' lives. The Egyptians were commonly seen alongside dogs, cats and monkeys on tomb walls, dating as far back 3500 B.C.. According to a study released by the American Psychological Association, pets serve as important sources of social and emotional support for humans. In all cases in the study, pet owners were happier, healthier and better adjusted. Why you ask? When you pet your dog, your body releases feel-good hormones, and at the same time reduces the amount of damaging stress hormones—this can mean lower blood pressure, less anxiety and even a boost in immunity.

Source: American Psychological Association and www.WebMD.org



Shine a Light On... Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of worry and usually occurs as a normal response to stress. In most cases, this feeling disappears as soon as the stressful event is over.

Sometimes, however, this worry occurs out of proportion to what's going on, or is impossible to control. It can feel so overwhelming that it affects a person's ability to work, study, interact with others or follow a daily routine, resulting in an inability to relax; they may constantly worry that something bad is about to happen.

People who experience extreme fear and worry that doesn't go away may have an anxiety disorder. There are numerous anxiety disorders and each has its own specific symptoms. For example, panic disorders cause sudden, uncontrollable feelings of terror, whereas obsessive compulsive disorders are characterized by repeated, unwanted thoughts that cause anxiety and ritualized actions that relieve that anxiety. There are many reliable therapies and treatments for anxiety disorders. For more information about anxiety disorders, symptoms, and treatment visit: www.nami.org or www.nimh.nih.gov.

Information Courtesy of National Institute of Mental Health and www.ToughTimesSD.org

Growing Up: A Silent Cry for Help

The act of deliberately injuring oneself is a puzzling (and for parents frightening) behavior to understand, and is known to be much more common than previously thought, especially among adolescents. Deliberate self-harm can involve cutting, burning, head-banging, hitting or other behaviors, and almost always occurs when people experience overwhelming distressing feelings. Repeated self-harm behaviors are often connected to a previous trauma (very often sexual abuse), bipolar disorder, or other serious emotion problems. For kids it is often a silent cry for help, a way of controlling their emotional pain. “Many are sensitive, perfectionists or overachievers and the self-injury begins as a defense against what’s going on in their family and in their lives. They have failed in one area of their life and this is a way to get control,” says Wendy Lader, Ph.D.

“Self-harm occurs among as many as 75% of individuals with borderline personality disorder” explains Milton Z. Brown, Ph.D, Associate Professor at Alliant University. “Many experts believe that personality disorders are much more effectively treated when a person is young before the problems become habitual and engrained. The most effective therapies for self-harm are problem-solving therapies, such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), that aim to alleviate the sources of emotional distress.”

What to look for:

- Unexplained cuts (small and linear) and scratches, especially when they appear regularly
- Mood changes, out of control behavior, changes in relationships and school performance

What to do:

- Let your kid know you are aware of this, that you are not going to punish them, but that you are concerned. Let them know you are going to get help together.

Article contributed by Milton Z. Brown, Ph.D.

Read Up: Stress—Once a Life Saver, Now a Serious Threat to Our Health

...continued from front page

Here are three tips for reducing stress that will take less than five minutes:

Laugh out loud.

Every time you laugh, increased oxygen flows to your organs, blood flow increases and stress evaporates. In fact, just thinking about having a good laugh is enough to lower your stress hormone levels. Another way to increase oxygen flow is to breathe deeply, exercise or to take a short walk.

Sniff a lemon.

The act of deep breathing sends oxygen surging through your blood, helping calm your body. Combined with aromatherapy it is a quick stress buster. Japanese researchers found that linalool, a substance found in lemons, has anti-inflammatory properties and may reduce the flight-or-fight stress response. You can also try basil, juniper and lavender scents for relief.

Prioritize.

Make a list and be realistic by assigning how much time each task will take. If the list will take more time than you have, prioritize. Check off each task as you complete it. A key strategy is to finish your most dreaded duties first!

If stress has become the norm rather than the exception it might just be time to consider a long-term lifestyle change. Identify your sources of stress and make a plan to address them. This may require significant changes in your daily routine, lifestyle and expectations. As a starting point, try the Mayo Clinic’s stress assessment. (Visit www.mayoclinic.com and search for stress assessment.) For more information about stress and tips visit: www.liveyourlifewell.org, www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/, and www.stress.org.

Information courtesy of the American Institute of Stress and webmd.com

⚡ Risk Factors

- ▶ Previous suicide attempt
- ▶ Mental illness and/or substance abuse
- ▶ Recent losses (e.g. job or loved one)
- ▶ Access to lethal means
- ▶ Barriers to care

⚠ Warning Signs

Call 9-1-1 or seek immediate help from a mental health provider when you hear or see any one of these behaviors:

- ▶ Someone threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- ▶ Someone looking for ways to kill themselves: seeking access to pills, weapons or other means

If you are concerned about someone because their behavior has changed and they are exhibiting any of the warning signs of suicide listed below, seek help by calling the Access & Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240.

- ▶ Withdrawing from family and friends
- ▶ Acting reckless, feeling hopeless, angry or anxious
- ▶ Increasing their use of alcohol or drugs

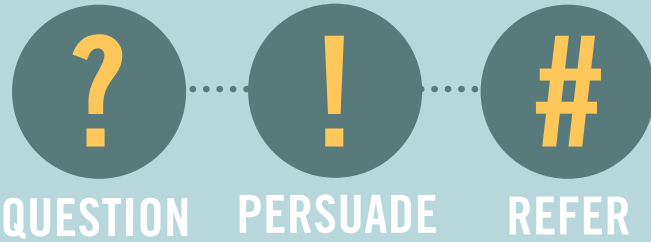
💡 What to Do

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- ▶ Do not leave the person alone
- ▶ Remove any firearms, drugs, alcohol or sharp objects that could be used in an attempt
- ▶ For life threatening emergencies or immediate response, call 9-1-1
- ▶ Contact the Access & Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240

Learn QPR to Prevent Suicide!

QPR, which stands for Question, Persuade and Refer, is an emergency intervention to help a person who is considering suicide. In a one-hour training, individuals learn to recognize warning signs, what questions to ask and how to offer hope and help. Anyone who is in a position to recognize the signs that someone may be considering suicide is encouraged to sign up. This includes parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, ministers, doctors, nurses, office supervisors, caseworkers, firefighters and many others.

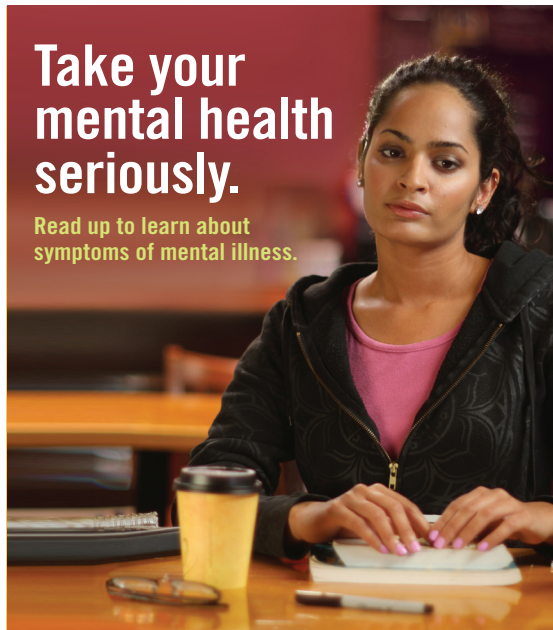


QPR trainings are offered at no cost in San Diego. To schedule a training, contact Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) at: (858) 609-7967 or bruland@sdchip.org.

Also an online training is available for \$29.95 at www.qprinstitute.com

Take your mental health seriously.

Read up to learn about symptoms of mental illness.



Need help immediately?
Access & Crisis Line
(888) 724-7240

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
2-1-1

