



It's Up To Us[®]

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans.



Edition Eight | Summer 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: What Causes Mental Illness?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines mental illness as a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood and ability to relate to others, and as being associated with distress or impaired functioning. The most common forms of mental illness are anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar and other mood disorders, eating disorders and schizophrenia.

It is important to understand that there is no one underlying cause for mental illness; it is caused by a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors. What we do know is that it is not a character flaw or caused by personal weakness.

BIOLOGICAL: Susceptibility to mental illness can be passed on in families through genes, but this does not mean that a person who has a mother with bipolar disorder or an uncle with depression will experience the same fate. Mental illness occurs from complex interactions of multiple genes and other factors—such as stress, abuse or a traumatic event—which can influence, or trigger, illness in a person who has an inherited susceptibility to it. Some mental illnesses have been linked to a chemical imbalance of neurotransmitters, to infections, poor nutrition and exposure to toxins, such as lead.

PSYCHOLOGICAL: Some of the factors that might contribute to development of a mental illness include severe psychological trauma as a child such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse; the loss of a parent; or neglect.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Certain factors such as death of a loved one, divorce, a dysfunctional family life, a stressful job or substance use by a person's parents can trigger symptoms in a person who is susceptible to mental illness. This might also include social or cultural expectations; for example, a society that associates beauty with thinness can be a factor in the development of eating disorders.

No matter what the cause, mental illness is not something one can just "snap out of." There are many treatments for mental illness, including but not limited to medications and therapy. Good nutrition, regular exercise, adequate sleep, supportive friends and meaningful paid or volunteer activities contribute to overall health and wellness as well.



Test Your Mental Health IQ

Did you know that these famous people were all diagnosed with a mental illness? Match the person with the description on the right.

PERSON

- 1) Abraham Lincoln
- 2) John Nash
- 3) Buzz Aldrin
- 4) Carrie Fisher
- 5) Lionel Aldridge

ILLNESS

- a. Winner of Nobel Prize in Economics (SCHIZOPHRENIA)
- b. Famous astronaut (BIPOLAR DISORDER)
- c. Played Princess Leia in Star Wars (BIPOLAR DISORDER)
- d. Sixteenth President of the United States (DEPRESSION)
- e. Legendary football player with Green Bay Packers (SCHIZOPHRENIA)

Answers: 1) d 2) a 3) b 4) c 5) e

Did You Know: Although treatment for a mental illness is effective and recovery is possible, just over half (58.7%) of adults in the United States with a serious mental illness receive treatment.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health, 2008

Listen Up: Stories of Struggle, Perseverance and Hope

Struggling with hardships such as abuse, stigma and discrimination, homelessness, or traumatic memories can be difficult. But life can get better. Connecting with the right people, finding inner strength and tapping into local programs can make all the difference. Visit Up2SD.org to view personal story movies created by San Diegans to inspire, offer hope and challenge stereotypes.

“I met my husband while serving in the Navy in Florida. He always had a smile on his face and a spring in his step. Little did I know the pain he was hiding inside. In retrospect there were signs I didn't recognize. He was making outrageous purchases: expensive tools and a motorcycle that we couldn't afford. He became sad and withdrawn. He talked about items he wanted different people to have after he died.

As a young widow with a baby, I have encountered many different reactions to Jared's suicide. Some didn't want to acknowledge his life or his death; others judged his suicide and minimized our grief. I now use my own experience to help wounded service members, widows and family members that have lost someone to suicide.”

For information about suicide prevention and local resources, visit: Up2SD.org.

– Jennifer



Growing Up: How to Cope with Children's Fears

Is there a parent who hasn't experienced their child asking to keep the light on at night, expressing fear of a monster in the closet, of strangers, dogs and insects or of just being alone?

As explained by KidsHealth, the nature of anxieties and fears change as children grow and develop: Babies experience “stranger anxiety”; toddlers experience “separation anxiety”; children ages 3 through 6 often have worries about things that aren't based in reality, such as monsters and ghosts, as well as a fear of the dark; while kids ages 7 through 12 often have fears that reflect real circumstances that may happen to them, such as bodily injury or a natural disaster. Most of the time children outgrow their fears, but sometimes anxieties persist and can interfere with the child's daily life.

Ask yourself these questions if you are concerned:

1. Is the fear typical for your child's age?
2. What are the symptoms of the fear, and how do they affect your child's personal, social and academic functioning?
3. Is your child experiencing any of these symptoms?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming clingy, impulsive or distracted | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous movements, such as temporary twitches | <input type="checkbox"/> Accelerated heart rate and breathing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems getting to sleep and/or staying asleep longer than usual | <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach aches |

TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH FEARS AND ANXIETIES:

- **Recognize that the fear is real.**
- **Teach kids how to rate fear.** A child who can visualize the intensity of the fear may be able to “see” the fear as less intense than first imagined. Younger kids can think about how “full of fear” they are, with being full “up to my knees” as not so scared, “up to my stomach” as more frightened and “up to my head” as truly petrified.
- **Discuss, talk, read about or draw out a fear.** Drawing a monster can help a child express fears and learn to distinguish the fear from the reality.
- **Use dramatic play to help give your child control over the situation.** You might encourage your child to help the teddy bear become friends with a stuffed dog the bear is afraid of.
- **Teach coping strategies.** Using you as “home base,” the child can venture out toward the feared object, and then return to you for safety before venturing out again. Breathing can help as well: encourage children to take slow, deep breaths to reduce the physical reaction to fear. Holding their hand or giving them a hug will make them feel more secure.

Liven Up Your Health: Tips to Stay Active and in Good Spirits

While we may intuitively know that a good walk can help clear heads and calm minds, multiple studies outlined in “A Review of Literature: The Mental Health Benefits of Walking and Bicycling” published by Portland State University found a positive association between exercise and the alleviation of symptoms of depression and anxiety. One study indicated that exercise can treat mild to moderate depression as effectively as antidepressant medication. And while it is not exactly clear why exercise boosts our mood, Mental Health America suggests exercise relieves pent-up muscle tension, stimulates feel-good hormones, burns off stress hormones and increases blood flow to the brain.

Courtesy of Mental Health America and www.helpguide.org



This summer, try these “daily doubles” to break up your exercise into manageable increments:

- Use 10 minutes of your lunch break to briskly walk around the block and get your daily dose of sunshine and vitamin D. Skip the elevator!
- Make it a routine to spend 20 minutes before or after dinner as a family. Take a walk or bike ride, play catch, shoot hoops, get out the Wii or turn on music and dance. Take turns deciding what to do!
- Dedicate one daily sitcom to stretching, sit-ups and weight lifting (even 2 pound or 3 pound weights that can be bought at almost any sports store will do the trick). During commercials try walking in place, doing leg lifts or punching the air.



Shine a Light On... Co-Occurring Disorders (or Dual Diagnosis)

In the United States, approximately 8.9 million adults have a substance use condition and mental health problem occurring at the same time. Substance abuse and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety are closely linked, but one does not directly cause the other. If a person is abusing alcohol or drugs, the effects could be masking symptoms of a mental health problem, which, if untreated, can worsen the substance abuse problem. Alcohol or drugs are often used to self-medicate the symptoms of depression or anxiety but in the long run end up worsening the very symptoms they initially numbed or relieved.

Recovery is possible and depends on treating both disorders. For more information about symptoms and treatments visit: www.helpguide.org/mental/dual_diagnosis.htm. For local resources visit: Up2SD.org.

Courtesy of SAMHSA and www.helpguide.org

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

Try Laughter Yoga This Summer!

Laughter yoga is a simple exercise program that combines stretching, breathing, laughter and relaxation. According to San Diego laughter yoga instructor Dr. Funshine, "Laughter yoga focuses on a combination of breathing, stretching and playful exercises that help us relax and, as a result, lowers our stress, improves our health and leaves us feeling great!"

Started by Dr. Madan Kataria in Mumbai India in 1995, laughter yoga is now popular around the world and it's available in several locations in San Diego. One of its great advantages is that everyone can do it. Many classes combine young and old. A good sense of humor or even a good mood is not necessary—surprisingly, putting the body through a series of laughter exercises can create the same health benefit as genuine laughter.

For a list of free groups in San Diego visit: www.laughtermatters.org/freegroups.html.



Just one friend can make a difference.

Link up and support a friend experiencing mental illness.



Need help immediately?
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COMMUNITY RESOURCES
2-1-1

