

## Mental Health Awareness Month: #YouAreNotAlone

Each year, at least 47 million of us nationwide live with a mental health condition. During May, we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month and join with [the National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) and many other organizations across the country to raise awareness, offer support and resources, and change the way the world sees mental illness. This year's theme, "You Are Not Alone", underlines the critically important message that no one should feel alone or live without the information, support and help they need.

Since the pandemic began in Spring 2020, statistics have consistently shown a dramatic increase in mental illness over pre-pandemic times. In March 2021, the most recent reporting period, [35 percent](#) of U.S. adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder – a whopping 3.5x increase over the pre-pandemic statistic of 1 in 10 adults.

[Some factors](#) that have made mental health worsen during COVID include:

- Loneliness and isolation – 2 of the top 3 factors contributing to worsened mental health in [70%](#) of people with moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.
- Decreased closeness in relationships, financial uncertainty, and the death of loved ones
- Discrimination -- reported by more than [44%](#) of people of color as a significant source of stress in their life.

Although millions more of us are struggling with mental health concerns, the statistics for receiving support and treatment are dismal, despite the existence of effective treatments for many mental health conditions:

- The average delay between onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is [11 years](#).
- [Fewer than half](#) of the adults who experience mental illness end up getting the help they need.
- People of color are even less likely to receive mental health care than whites. [For example](#), in 2015, among adults with any mental illness, 48% of whites received mental health services, compared with 31% of Blacks and Hispanics/Latinx, and 22% of Asians.

What explains the disparity? There are some common barriers in our country to seeking mental health support and treatment, including: the cost of mental health care and lack of insurance; the [stigma](#) that many individuals, families, cultures and communities attach to mental illness and receiving care; prejudice and discrimination; lack of access to culturally competent therapists; and lack of trust in the medical profession due to significant damage inflicted on marginalized communities.

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# Frontline Employee Newsletter

Here are [some common signs that indicate mental health support is needed](#):

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Trying to harm or end one's life, or making plans to do so
- Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behavior that causes harm to self or others
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that aren't real
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

If you are experiencing any of these signs, is there something stopping you from reaching out for help? If so, know that [EAP](#) offers confidential support that is expert, caring, and culturally competent --- all at **\*no charge\*** to you and adult family members in your household. EAP is committed to welcoming and serving people of all cultures and communities and is actively working to dismantle oppression within their program and services. Now, more than 30% of EAP counselors identify as Black, Indigenous or other People of Color (BIPOC). Everyone deserves to have a safe space in counseling, and you are encouraged to ask for a counselor who identifies as a person of color—EAP will make every effort to accommodate your request.

Here are some additional resources you might find helpful:

- [Infographics and fact sheets](#) from [NAMI: mental health statistics](#), [suicide prevention info](#), [how to help a friend](#), [the ripple effects of mental illness](#)
- Information about [racial trauma/race based traumatic stress \(RBTS\)](#)
- [Quiz to combat mental illness stigma](#) – “test your mental health IQ”
- [Personal stories](#) from real people from different cultures and communities who are experiencing mental health conditions
- [For parents re: your child's anxiety](#): how to tell the difference between when your kids are feeling anxious vs. experiencing symptoms of an anxiety disorder

If you're struggling, we hope you'll reach out to EAP for support, at 1-877-313-4455 or [online](#). We are here for you.

## Upcoming Live Webinar

### Orientation to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Presented by: Kari Uhlman, MA, LMHC- EAP Counselor

- Wednesday, May 19, 2021 9:00am – 9:30am [Register](#)

