



US FAMILY
HEALTH PLAN

HealthMatters



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May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

This month is dedicated to the importance of caring for your mental health. Your mental health impacts how you think, speak, and act. It can also play a huge part in how we manage stress, choose healthy behaviors, engage in relationships, partake in daily activities, and take care of ourselves. Mental health is important for all stages of life from childhood to adulthood.

A part of caring for your mental health can include treating a mental illness. 1 in 5 adults in the US live with a mental illness. Meanwhile, 1 in 25 US adults live with a severe mental illness (e.g.: major depression).

It is important to prioritize your mental health every day through daily behaviors and potential treatments. In this newsletter, USFHP will share some articles to uncover helpful ways you can care for your mental health.



1 in 25

U.S adults live with a severe mental illness

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

Letter from our Chief Medical Officer

Happy Spring!

Some of you may be aware that May is Mental Health Awareness month. It was first recognized in 1949. Mental Health Awareness is to bring attention, awareness of and educate the public about mental illnesses. Studies show that there are approximately 18.1% of Americans who suffer from depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. It also serves to educate others about the realities of living with these conditions, and strategies for attaining mental health and wellness. It also aims to draw attention to suicide, which can be triggered by some mental illnesses. Additionally, Mental Health Awareness Month strives to reduce the stigma (negative attitudes and misconceptions) that surrounds mental illnesses.

We at USFHP are excited to support this initiative, and we value all aspects of health for our members, both physical and behavioral. We encourage our members to take an active role in making sure they engage in self-care, and as always, follow your doctor's orders!! If you don't have a doctor, we can help you find one.

Stay well,

Roberta McNeill, MD, Chief Medical Officer

How to Take Care of You – Try a New Hobby!

A hobby can be fun and helpful for your mental and physical health. Whether it's hiking, baking, reading, or gardening, engaging in activities outside of work or school can provide many health benefits.

Studies show that those who engage in hobbies, compared to those who do not, cited improved health, more happiness, fewer symptoms of depression and greater satisfaction in life.

Although this was an observational study, it shows that picking up a hobby where you're able to be creative, show self-expression, and relax could help with stress and overall mental health. Hobbies can also involve you in communities, which may lessen any feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Hobbies may also enhance your physical well-being. People who participate in leisure activities report lower blood pressure, cortisol levels, and

an overall better perceived physical function than those who do not engage in these activities. Having a hobby is a great way to take a break from work and relieve your stress.

Take time this spring to try a new hobby - it's good for the mind and body!



Sources:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/having-a-hobby-tied-to-happiness-and-well-being>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2863117/>

Depression Education Toolkit

This is an informational tool kit to guide you, or a loved one, in caring for mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression.

Facts about depression

Depression is a major mood disorder that can impact how you feel, think, and go about your daily activities. Depression is an illness just like any other illness. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is noted as the most disabling disorder world-wide. However, when depression is diagnosed and treated, the symptoms are manageable and there are strategies you can incorporate into your daily life to help you feel your best.

Signs and symptoms

The signs and symptoms of depression can look different for people. Some people experience only a few symptoms while others have many. It can be expected to feel one or more of these symptoms on occasion, but when depression is suspected, physicians typically look for groupings of symptoms that interrupt your daily life. Symptoms may include, but not be limited to, the following:

Feelings

- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Moodiness
- Restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities

Thoughts

- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty remembering
- Thoughts of self-harm
- Thoughts of being a failure, worthless and burdensome

Behaviors

- Distancing from people
- Substance abuse
- Missing out on activities / commitments
- Trying to self-harm



Physical Issues

- Tiredness / fatigue
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Changes in appetite
- Digestive problems
- Weight loss
- Weight gain
- Changes in sleep

Causes and risk factors of depression

The causes and risk factors of depression, among other mental illnesses, are a combination of a person's genes and their environment. Some factors may include, but not be limited to, the following:

Personal Factors

- Brain chemistry
- Personality
- Serious medical illness
- Drug and alcohol use
- Family history

Life Circumstances

- Stressful life events
- Trauma or grief

Depression Education Toolkit (continued)



Different types of depression

There are a few different forms of depression, and they can vary in seriousness.

- **Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)**
This is clinical depression. It is a mood disorder described by low and / or loss of desire and pleasure in activities. “Major” depression is identified if someone experiences 5+ symptoms of depression impacting their daily life over a 2-week period.
- **Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD)**
This is a milder form of depression which can last for 2+ years. The symptoms are like MDD, but less severe and longer lasting.
- **Melancholic Depression**
This is a serious form of depression backed by a complete loss of pleasure in almost everything. This form of depression can lead to slow and/or irregular movement. This depression tends to be worse in the morning and some major symptoms can include lack of appetite and weight loss.
- **Perinatal Depression**
This is a major depression that happens during pregnancy or within a year after delivery (postpartum). Women can experience mild mood changes during or after pregnancy but may need treatment if they become severe. Symptoms can include extreme sadness, anxiety, exhaustion and trouble bonding with the baby.

According to the WHO, **depression** is noted as the **most disabling disorder** worldwide.

- **Psychotic Depression**
This form of depression can occur when someone with a depressive disorder is out of touch with reality and undergoes a kind of psychosis (symptoms that impact the mind, leading to a loss of reality).
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**
This form of depression can take place during the fall and winter months when less natural sunlight is present. Symptoms can include social withdrawal, increased sleep, weight gain, and hopelessness.
- **Treatment-resistant depression (TRD)**
This is a form of depression that does not respond well to treatment and / or symptoms could improve but come back.
- **Situational Depression**
This is a short-term type of depression that can come from a stressful life event such as divorce, retirement, loss of job, or death of a friend or family member.



Anxiety Education Toolkit

Facts about anxiety disorder

Anxiety disorder is a mental condition linked to thought patterns like obsessive thinking, excessive worrying, fear of a specific event, and extreme stress. These are related to real or perceived threats, which can cause avoidant behaviors and physical symptoms. Just like depression, once diagnosed and treated, anxiety symptoms are manageable and there are strategies you can incorporate into your daily life to help you feel your best.

Signs and Symptoms

There are a few common symptoms of all anxiety disorders, which may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Physical: panic attacks, nausea, racing heart, tightening of the chest, quick breathing,
- Psychological: extreme fear, worry, and / or obsessive thinking
- Behavioral: avoidance of situations that can cause anxiety

Causes and Risks Factors

The causes and risk factors of anxiety are a combination of a person's genes and their environment. Some factors may include, but not be limited to, the following:

Personal factors

- Personality
- Drug and alcohol use
- Family history
- Physical health problems

Life circumstances

- Long-term difficulties
- Life events
- Trauma or grief

Different Types of Anxieties

The 6 most common types of anxiety are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Specific Phobia
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress / Acute Stress Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Rather than feel anxious about a specific circumstance or situation, those with GAD have constant worry surrounding most areas of their life. It becomes difficult to control the feeling of worry. GAD can last for 6 months or longer and is typically in connection with 3 or more of the following symptoms:

- Feeling restless
- Feeling fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Tenseness in muscles
- Difficulty sleeping

Social Anxiety Disorder

Those with social anxiety disorder have a constant fear of being judged by others and typically become avoidant of activities to not be negatively judged by others.



Anxiety Education Toolkit (continued)



Specific Phobias

Phobias consist of disorders where individuals have constant fear of a specific object, animal, or situation and try to avoid the object / situation.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

People with OCD have recurrent, excessive fears that something horrible could happen. Some examples of common obsessions may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Feeling dirty despite bathing or washing often
- Worrying the stove or kitchen appliance was left on even after checking to see it was turned off
- Worrying about accidentally harming someone

Panic Disorder

Those with panic disorder have sudden, unexpected anxiety attacks / panic attacks that include 4 or more of the following symptoms:

- Rapid heart beats
- Extreme sweating
- Shaking
- Shortness of breath
- Feelings of choking
- Chest pain / discomfort
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Feelings of that things surrounding you seem atypical
- Feelings of losing control
- Fear of dying
- Numbness
- Chills / hot flashes

Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD) and Acute Stress Disorders (ASD)

These anxiety conditions can happen after someone experiences a traumatic event where their life / safety feels threatened. ASD symptoms can overlap with PTSD. An ASD diagnosis can be shown in the first month following a trauma, while PTSD cannot be diagnosed until symptoms lasted more than one month. People with PTSD and ASD may avoid circumstances that remind them of the trauma, suffer from emotional paralysis, and feel physically anxious, or on-edge.

Just like depression, once diagnosed and treated, anxiety **symptoms are manageable and there are strategies you can incorporate** into your daily life to help you feel your best.



Treatment Options for Anxiety and Depression to Help You Feel Better

Psychotherapy

Also known as “talk therapy,” this is a type of treatment that involves communications between an individual and a mental health professional in a confidential and comforting space. This type of treatment allows you to discover your behaviors, beliefs, thoughts, triggers, and emotions to better your coping skills and relationships.

A few examples may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Cognitive - Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

Medication

In some cases, your healthcare provider may suggest a medication treatment plan, sometimes along with psychotherapy.

Antidepressants, mood stabilizers, and antipsychotic medications are commonly used to treat anxiety and depression.

Lifestyle Changes

Along with any psychotherapy and / or medications, it is always helpful to add healthy lifestyle changes to better your mental health and manage your stress.

These healthy behaviors will not only improve your physical health, but can also help control depression and anxiety symptoms.

- Stay active
- Eat nutritious meals
- Practice meditation
- Prioritize sleep
- Limit alcohol use
- Try a hobby

Taking a depression self-assessment

Taking the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) can help you discover your feelings, thoughts, or behaviors and to see if what you’re experiencing is depression. This tool is not a replacement for a doctor’s evaluation but is simply a guide to help you.

Turn to page 10 to fill out the PHQ-8 questionnaire.

Setting goals and expectations

A treatment plan with goals and expectations can help you manage symptoms and build skills to respond to situations.

When developing certain goals, it could be useful to think about the following:

- What is important to you?
- What are your hopes and dreams?
- What do you want to do more of?
- What does being happy mean to you?
- What part of life would you like to improve?

Turn to page 11 to write down some of your goals for 2024!



Source: <https://depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/community-education/depression-toolkit/want-stay-mentally-healthy/goal-setting>

Preventing Suicide in Military Families

Talking about it Can Save a Life!

For immediate assistance call or text 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

If a friend or family member shares any thought about harming themselves, please take it seriously. Mental health conditions are illnesses that need support and treatment immediately.

Both active-duty members and their families are at risk of suicide. Combat experience aside, more than half of military suicides include soldiers who have not been deployed. According to the 2020 Annual Suicide Report from the Department of Defense, the family member suicide rate was 7.7 per 100,000 military family members.

We at USFHP want to help you feel supported and educated with resources to turn to. These are important conversations to have. Talking about suicide can decrease someone's risk and creating connections may protect them from suicide.

How to recognize when someone might be experiencing a suicidal crisis and what to do?

- **Trust your gut**
If someone you know is saying or doing things out of character, particularly for an extended period, address them openly and directly. Express worry and ask if something is wrong.
- **Keep a gentle yet direct tone**
Try saying something like, "I am worried about some things you have said and are doing. I am worried you might be thinking about suicide?"
- **Be an active listener**
If the answer is "yes," listen to that person and let them feel heard. Try to explain to them the importance of getting others involved to make sure they are safe.
- **Ask if they have a plan**
It may seem scary, but it is important to understand if the person has a specific date or location. Discuss with them their access to lethal means, including firearms, or drugs, and help remove them.
- **Offer them help**
Encourage them to get support and explain that there are many confidential hotlines where they can speak to a trained counselor.

These conversations are important.

Talking about suicide can decrease someone's risk and creating connections may protect them from suicide.



Preventing Suicide in Military Families

Talking about it Can Save a Life! (continued)

Suicide Warning Signs

If a person **talks** about any of the following things, have them seek help immediately:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

If a person shows any of these **moods in a severe way**, have them seek help immediately:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Agitation
- Rage

If a person is showing any of these **behaviors**, especially in relation to a painful event, loss, or change, have them seek help immediately:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Trying to find ways to kill themselves – whether searching online for materials or other ways
- Not engaging in activities
- Distancing from family and friends
- Visiting or calling people to say “goodbye”
- Giving away important possessions
- Aggression

Care Management Program at USFHP

At USFHP, we have a comprehensive care management program. Our care managers can help you address your behavioral health needs, including a specialized suicide prevention care management program.

If you want to speak to a USFHP behavioral health care manager about our free care management program or how to access your behavioral health benefits through Magellan Health, call (800) 241-4848.

Sources:

<https://afsp.org/preventing-suicide-in-military-families/#military-suicide-prevention-resources>

<https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/CY20%20Suicide%20Report/CY%202020%20Annual%20Suicide%20Report.pdf?ver=0OwlvDd-PJuA-igow5fBFA%3D%3D>

5 Steps to Help Someone in Emotional Pain



Ask

Ask if someone is thinking about killing themselves.



Keep Them Safe

Reduce a suicidal person's access to lethal items.



Be There

Listen carefully and understand what the person is thinking/feeling.



Help Them Connect

Contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for help.



Stay Connected

Stay in touch with the at-risk person after a crisis.

If you're in a crisis, call or text 988 or text TALK to 741741

Name of Resource	Number to Call
Military and Veteran Crisis Line	(800) 273-8255. Press 1 for Military and Veterans
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	Call or Text 988. Press 1
VA's Caregiver Support Line	(855) 260-3274
Military OneSource	(800) 342-9647

Safely Store Your Guns - It Can Save Lives!

Research shows that most people in suicidal crisis who don't have access to lethal methods won't find another way to harm themselves. Removing access allows for time and for someone to help with lifesaving support. **If you're in a crisis, call or text 988 or text TALK to 741741.**

<p>Store Firearms and Ammunition Separately</p>	<p>Talk to Your Kids and Their Caregivers</p>	<p>Get Rid of Firearms You Don't Need</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Store unloaded firearms and ammunition in separate locked places (examples: cable locks, gun cases, lock boxes, etc.). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secure all firearms with child-resistant gun locks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Explain to children the difference between firearms on television / video games and in real life. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teach children never to touch a firearm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If you decide you don't need a firearm in your home, contact local law enforcement on how to safely get rid of it.

Personal Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8)

Please fill out this self-report assessment honestly. Circle one number on each line. If you score greater than or equal to 10, consider outreaching Magellan Health, the care management team, or your primary care provider for additional support.

How often during the past 2 weeks have you been bothered by...	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Little Interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
Feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure, or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
Moving or speaking so slowly that other people have noticed. Or the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3

Scoring Your Personal Health Questionnaire

Your score is the sum of the 8 questions.

Source: Self-Management Resource Center, selfmanagementresource.com

We encourage you to share your survey score with your physician.

Mental Health S.M.A.R.T Goal Setting

When working towards a mental health goal, it's good to practice S.M.A.R.T goal setting, which considers the following:

Specific

Goals should be as specific as possible. Think of the 5 W's.

- Who is involved?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- Where will it be done?
- Why am I doing this?

Measurable

Goals should be trackable so you can measure your progress and the outcome.

- Does the goal you're setting include how much or how many?

Achievable - Goals should be difficult but also achievable.

- Is your goal achievable?

Relevant - Goals should be important and helpful to you.

- Is your goal worthwhile?

Time-based - All goals should have a time limit. Deadlines can keep you feeling encouraged.

- Does your goal answer "when" it could be accomplished by?

Other tips and tricks for goal setting:

- Take your goals step-by-step
- Consider setting a series of smaller goals to show your progress and keep you feeling motivated
- Find an accountability partner to keep you on track
- Track and share your progress
- Keep a positive attitude and believe in yourself!
- For individual counseling, seek out USFHP's Care Management Services

S.M.A.R.T Goal Planning Form

Use the space provided below to write out your S.M.A.R.T goals for 2024.

Specific	Measurable	Achievable
Relevant	Time-based	

Source: <https://depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/community-education/depression-toolkit/want-stay-mentally-healthy/goal-setting>

Get to Know Your Mental Health Care Professionals

There are several types of mental health care professionals who can help you reach your health care goals. These professionals can work inpatient (e.g. general hospital) or outpatient (e.g. private practices) and serve an important role in the care of your mental health.



Here is a list of mental health care professionals:

- **Psychiatrists**
Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors (MD or DO) who have finished psychiatric training. These individuals can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe, and manage medications while providing therapy.
- **Psychologists**
Psychologists have doctoral degrees in psychology or another specialty (Ph.D. or Psy.D) – including counseling or education. These individuals are trained to assess a person’s mental health using clinical interviews, psychological evaluations and testing. Psychologists can diagnosis and provide therapy.
- **Counselors, Clinicians, and Therapists**
These individuals are all master-level health care professionals (M.S. or M.A.) who are trained to assess a person’s mental health and use of therapeutic techniques. They can help with symptom reduction and cultivate new ways of thinking, feeling, and living.
- **Clinical Social Workers**
Clinical social workers have the training to assess someone’s mental health and use of therapeutic techniques for specific programs. Clinical social workers are also trained in case management and advocacy services.

Source: <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals>

The Science Behind Food and Mood

Our brains crave nourishing food, and rightfully so. The brain never shuts off; whether you're awake or asleep, your brain is working 24/7. What we eat can directly impact our brain's functioning and mood.

Your brain performs its best when it's being fed high-quality foods that have lots of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Meanwhile, diets full of processed or refined foods can harm your brain; it can increase inflammation. Studies have shown a correlation between diets in refined sugar and poor brain functioning, in addition to increased symptoms of mood disorders (e.g.: depression).

How does food impact your mental health?

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in managing sleep, appetite, mood, and pain. Interestingly, 95% of your serotonin is formed in your gastrointestinal tract which is lined with millions of nerve cells (neurons).



So, your gastrointestinal tract not only helps you digest foods, but it also impacts your emotions. The production of serotonin is impacted by the “good” bacteria that makes up your intestinal microbiome. The “good” bacteria have many roles – create a strong barrier against toxins, reduce inflammation, enhance how you absorb nutrients from food and kick start neural pathways that travel between the gut and brain.

What can I do?

Eating nutrient-dense foods such as fresh produce, complex carbohydrates, and lean protein is a great way to take care of your mental health. Try to pay attention to how different foods make you feel. Maybe explore what it's like removing all processed foods and sugar for a week or two and notice the difference!

Whether you're awake or asleep, **your brain is working 24/7.** What we eat can directly impact our brain's functioning and mood.



Source: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/nutritional-psychiatry-your-brain-on-food-201511168626>

Social Media and Youth Mental Health

Social media is almost universally used by young people. Around 95% of those aged 13-17 state they use a social media platform. Meanwhile almost two thirds of young adults say they use social media every day, with one third using social media “almost constantly.” Social media has a major presence in our everyday lives, and there is a fine line between the potential benefit and potential harm from social media use.

Reports from the U.S. Surgeon General found that children and adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media are confronted with double the risk of mental health problems. Issues may include symptoms of depression and anxiety.

How can WE take action?

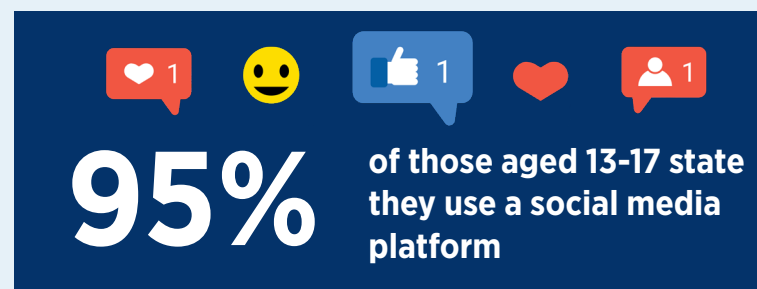


Children and Adolescents

- **Ask for help.** If you, or someone you know, is being negatively impacted by social media, ask a friend, trusted adult, or professional for help. **For immediate help, call or text 988.** This is a resource for a mental health crisis.
- **Make boundaries.** It is important to find a healthy balance for yourself. Some social media platforms, such as Instagram, have time limits. Try to set a daily time limit that works for you.
- **Be intentional.** It is important to be selective with what you post and share and who your audience is. When information is released online it can be public and stored permanently. Keep this in mind when you log onto social media.
- **Protect against cyberbullying.** If you see any form of cyberbullying, don't keep it a secret. Tell others to stop and report the offensive content.

Parents and Caregivers

- **Make tech-free spaces in your home.** Motivate both children and adolescents to create in-person friendships. Consider keeping family mealtimes device-free and limiting any electronics to at least one hour before bedtime.
- **Teach responsible social media behaviors.** Educate children and adolescents about social media and encourage them to be responsible online participants.



Source: <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/social-media/index.html>

Mental Health Phone Apps Available to You for FREE!

USFHP is excited to share news about mental health apps available to you for free! All apps have no cost to download, and do not collect any of your personal information. They are privacy-respecting mental health apps created by the US Department of Veteran Affairs National Center for PTSD.

There are many apps available to you, covering a variety of mental health topics, filled with self-help educational resources and support backed by scientific research.

Here is some information on the top 3 most popular apps:



Mindfulness Coach

Assists you with the practice of mindfulness meditation, which can help reduce stress and better the management of certain mental health conditions



PTSD Coach

Provides you with facts and self-help strategies for managing symptoms related to PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) backed by research



Insomnia Coach

Helps you manage insomnia and improve sleep, backed by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) research



Scan the QR codes above to download any or all of the available mental health apps.

HealthMatters

Exclusively for
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St Vincent Catholic Medical
Centers of New York

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New York, NY 10018



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May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is a month that brings our attention to mental health awareness, but we at USFHP are always working to support our beneficiaries in improving both emotional and physical wellness. Research demonstrates that how we feel physically and manage our emotions impacts our stress levels, work, and our relationships. Our Behavioral Health Care Managers and Social Workers are available to assist in navigating behavioral health benefits through Magellan Health, connecting to behavioral health providers, and connecting you to community resources as needed. Please feel free to reach out to the plan with any questions or to be connected with someone on the Behavioral Health Care Management Team.

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