

# Rock County Equity Brief

May 2023

## OBSERVE

### *Mental Health Awareness Month*

Mental Health Awareness Month was first celebrated in 1949. It was commemorated by the Mental Health America organization, which was then known as the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and later as the National Mental Health Association before it became its current name. Clifford Whittingham Beers founded the association. Beers, born in 1876 in Connecticut, was one of five children in his family who suffered from mental illness and psychological distress. All of them also went on to spend time at mental institutions. From the hospital admittance, he discovered that the mental health field had a notorious reputation for malpractice, maltreatment, and immense bias. Gaining popularity and support from medical professionals, Beers founded the National Committee for Mental Hygiene. Beers and his colleagues at the association wanted to find ways to ensure that mental health patients received the right care and did not feel alone in their fight against mental diseases.

#### **May Day(s) Group, Culture, or Cause Recognized**

All Month	National Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
All Month	Haitian Heritage Month
All Month	Indian Heritage Month
All Month	Jewish-American Heritage Month
All Month	South Asian Heritage Month
All Month	Personal History Awareness Month
All Month	Speech and Hearing Awareness Month
All Month	Older Americans Month
4	<a href="#">Star Wars Day</a>
5	Cinco De Mayo
8–9	Time of Remembrance and Reconciliation for those who Lost their Lives
21	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
29	Memorial Day



For more information on Mental Health Awareness Month: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm>



## RECOGNIZE

*Lorenzo Lewis*

As a child, Lorenzo Lewis spent endless hours in a barbershop owned by his aunt. It was the cornerstone of the Black male community, a combination of a beloved social club, lounge, and salon. In his late 20s, Lewis worked as a case worker with troubled teens. Many African American males suffered from trauma, depression, and other mental ills linked to their rough childhoods. Still, almost none of them had received any treatment before their encounter with the law. Lewis devised a novel idea: Since African American boys and men had little access to therapy, why not bring it to them? The ideal setting for that therapy, he decided, was the barbershop, a “safe, non-judgmental space” where men could let down their guard and talk about anything. In 2016 he founded The Confess Project, a nonprofit based in Little Rock that trains barbers to be frontline counselors for clients who are depressed, traumatized, or even considering suicide.

Source: <https://www.goodgoodgood.co/articles/the-confess-project>

# LEARN

## What is mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, poor mental health and mental illness are not the same. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person diagnosed with a mental illness can experience periods of [physical, mental, and social well-being](#).



## Why is mental health important for overall health?

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like [diabetes](#), [heart disease](#), and stroke. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness.<sup>2</sup>



## Can your mental health change over time?

Yes, it's important to remember that a person's mental health can change over time, depending on many factors. When the demands placed on a person exceed their resources and coping abilities, their mental health could be impacted. For example, if someone is working long hours, caring for a relative, or experiencing economic hardship, they may experience poor mental health.

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

1 in 5

## How common are mental illnesses?

Mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States.

- More than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year.<sup>4</sup>
- 1 in 5 children, either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.<sup>5</sup>
- 1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.



## What causes mental illness?

There is no single cause for mental illness. Several factors can contribute to risk for mental illness, such as

- Early adverse life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)
- Experiences related to other ongoing (chronic) medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
- Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Having feelings of loneliness or isolation



There are still many harmful attitudes and misunderstandings around mental illness, which may make people ignore their mental health, fuel stigma, and make it harder to reach out for help. Take the following quiz and see if you can separate the myths from the facts.

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

# ACTION

## 8 Ways to take action on Mental Health Action Day

Action is essential in maintaining your mental health but when it comes to prioritizing wellness, it can be difficult to know where to begin. With that in mind, here are 8 easy ways you can take action on the first Mental Health Action Day, Thursday, May 20. It's important to remember that action looks different for everyone, so we encourage you to pursue whatever actions feel best for you.

<b>Check In With Yourself:</b> As you navigate through the business of your day-to-day life, it is so easy to forget to take care of yourself and not acknowledging your thoughts and feelings can be detrimental to your mental health. Ensure you regularly check in on yourself and assess your wellbeing. <a href="#">Mooditude</a> , an app that offers data-driven, personalized mental health plans, is free for the entire month of May.	<b>Reach Out to a Friend:</b> When you are struggling to care for your mental health, it can often feel isolating and the idea of talking to a loved one in your life about what you are experiencing can seem like a daunting task. But reaching out can make all the difference, as we all need support and encouragement as we navigate through difficult times.
<b>Get Outside:</b> Spending time in nature is a fantastic way to relieve stress and increase your energy. Plus, fresh air literally sends more oxygen to your brain, which can elevate your mood. You only need a few minutes to escape the daily grind and practice a bit of mindfulness.	<b>Drink a Glass of Water:</b> Nearly <a href="#">80 percent of Americans aren't drinking enough water</a> on a daily basis and believe it or not, that lack of hydration can have a massive impact on your mental health. Drinking water can improve your mood and emotions, and <a href="#">a study even found</a> that people who drink more water had a lower rate of anxiety and depression than people who drink less water.
<b>Start a Meditation Practice:</b> <a href="#">Research shows</a> that meditating can have a profound effect on a person's mental health. Through meditation, you can improve mindfulness and self-esteem, while reducing stress and anxiety. Meditation is a simple way to clear your mind and escape the nonstop distraction of your daily life. Journaling can also serve as an effective form of meditation, as you examine your thoughts and create a space for reflection and mindfulness.	<b>Schedule Your First Yoga Class:</b> Practicing yoga has proven to positively affect both your physical and mental health. In fact, studies have shown that yoga can <a href="#">help with stress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD</a> . There are several different styles of yoga, so you can find the class that best suits your needs.
<b>Join a Peer Support Group:</b> If you're overwhelmed and don't know where to start, consider <a href="#">finding a peer support group</a> . With regular meetings, these groups specifically rely on shared experiences, creating a natural sense of community that lends itself to open and empathetic communication.	<b>Find a Therapist:</b> Finding a therapist should be easy and encouraging. <a href="#">Mental Health Match</a> is a free service that matches people to therapists and counselors who best meet their needs. Another option is the <a href="#">Anxiety &amp; Depression Association of America's Find-a-Therapist platform</a> that allows you to search for therapists by location, treatment options, and disorders treated.

Source: <https://www.mentalhealthishealth.us/x-ways-to-take-action-for-your-mental-health/>

### Mental Health Resources & Contacts

#### 2-1-1 United Way (serving Rock County)

Dial 2-1-1 or 877-947-2211

Free, confidential, 24-hour information on community, health, and social services.

#### Crisis Lines

Dial 9-1-1 or (608) 757-5025

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (800) 273-TALK (8255). Your call will be routed to the crisis center nearest your area.

#### HOPELINE Text Line

Text "HOPELINE" to 741741

HOPELINE is the Emotional Support Text Line in the State of Wisconsin.

#### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Rock County

120 N. Crosby Ave.  
Janesville, WI 53548  
800-608-0104  
[Website](#)

# BRIEF RECAP: April 2023

## OBSERVE

### Autism Acceptance Month

In 1972, the Autistic Society established National Autistic Children's Week as part of its efforts to educate people about the autism spectrum and how to support autistic people. This evolved into a month-long observance known as Autism Awareness Month, which became widely observed throughout the autism community.

## RECOGNIZE

### Lei Wiley-Mydske

Lei Wiley-Mydske is an autistic activist that promotes autism acceptance, social justice, disability rights, and neurodiversity. Lei is the director and founder of the Ed Wiley Autism Acceptance Lending Library. Wiley-Mydske is also the community outreach coordinator of the Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN).



Lei Wiley-Mydske

## LEARN

### What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits. The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities.

# TRAINING

### Rock County DEI Training

All employees must complete two DEI training per year. There are a variety of diverse topics and training formats provided to all employees. Please note that one of the trainings must be from the County DEI list to fulfill your County DEI requirement, and one training can be from a community partner or outside DEI training (if it meets the DEI training requirements). New employees are only required to participate in one equity training within the year of their hire.

### FAQ's

*How can I check my training completion status or submit outside training certificates?*

Email all questions and submissions to - [equity@co.rock.wi.us](mailto:equity@co.rock.wi.us)

*When is the last date to submit 2023 training information?*

December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023