

## May National Health Observance

"A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and behavior that results in the inability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines," explains Carol Wozniowski, Mental Health Association in Illinois (MHA) executive director. "There are more than 200 classified forms of mental illnesses, all of which can be triggered by a variety of causes: genetics, biochemical imbalances, a particular situation or series of events, an illness, or any combination of those factors."

Read more: [http://www.dailyherald.com/special/mentalhealth/2006/article\\_5.html](http://www.dailyherald.com/special/mentalhealth/2006/article_5.html)

### **CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

If someone you love has mental illness, it is important for you, your loved one, and your loved one's healthcare team to work together. You may also want to get other members of your family involved. Learn all you can about your loved one's illness, and understand coping techniques and tips. Healthcare professionals may be able to offer suggestions and tips on how to control frustration, clearly communicate with your loved one, set boundaries, and more.

Mental illness can be disabling for your loved one, especially during an episode of depression, mania, or psychotic behavior. While these episodes are occurring, you may also benefit from professional healthcare assistance.

Read more: <http://www.strengthforcaring.com/daily-care/caring-for-specific-conditions-mental-illness/caring-for-a-loved-one-with-mental-illness/>

### **RECOGNIZING A SAD LOVED ONE**

Does the person in your care feel blue when the dark days of winter approach? Do you see your loved one slowing down or having difficulty waking up in the morning? Do you see pounds beginning to creep up even though you're helping your loved one pay attention to his or her diet? If so, you may be caring for a SAD person—one of millions of people worldwide who are suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). This condition is now widely accepted by the medical community and the public.

Seasonal affective disorder is a syndrome characterized by recurrent depressions that occur annually at the same time each year—it could be any season, but winter is the most researched and common season. SAD has been shown to be related to seasonal variations of light. During the winter, the number of hours of natural sun exposure is fewer than in other months, which is one reason that more people with SAD seem to be affected during winter months.

Read more: <http://www.strengthforcaring.com/daily-care/caring-for-specific-conditions-mental-illness/recognizing-a-sad-loved-one/>

### **STRESS AND THE MIND BODY CONNECTION**

Stress is one factor that affects both mental and physical health. You can't always control the amount of stress in your life, but you can control how you handle it. Following are some things to consider: eat right, get regular sleep and exercise, limit alcohol and caffeine, get regular check-ups, stop smoking, take five when you need to, do an activity you enjoy, prioritize your workload, take one thing at a time, learn to say "no," don't expect perfection, compromise, go easy on criticism, and talk your problems out. Also, listen to the physical messages your body is sending to you and, if necessary, walk away from the stressful situation until you feel mentally capable of handling it. The message: Both mental health and physical health go hand in hand and are crucial for living productive and happy lives.

Read more: <http://www.abilenementalhealth.org/MHM-05-18-05.htm>

## **DEPRESSION**

“Depression, essentially, is a disease which causes people to give up hope,” says Dr. Andrew Elmore, psychotherapist and assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. “It inhibits and limits a person’s activities, mentally and physically,” he says. And that, according to Elmore, interferes with what makes life worth living.” For the layperson or caregiver,” Elmore says, “it is important that they get around the common assumptions about illness and aging and begin to sort through the stereotypes associated with depression.”

Read more: <http://www.strengthforcaring.com/daily-care/caring-for-specific-conditions-mental-illness/understanding-depression/>

## **BIPOLAR DISORDER**

Bipolar disorder, or manic-depressive illness (MDI), is one of the most common, severe, and persistent mental illnesses. Bipolar disorder is characterized by periods of deep, prolonged, and profound depression that alternate with periods of an excessively elevated and/or irritable mood known as mania. The symptoms of mania include a decreased need for sleep, pressured speech, increased libido, reckless behavior without regard for consequences, grandiosity, and severe thought disturbances, which may or may not include psychosis. Between these highs and lows, patients usually experience periods of higher functionality and can lead a productive life. Bipolar disorder is a serious lifelong struggle and challenge.

Read more: <http://www.emedicine.com/med/topic229.htm>

## **SCHIZOPHRENIA**

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe, and disabling mental illness. It affects men and women with equal frequency. People suffering from schizophrenia may have symptoms that include delusions, false personal beliefs held with conviction in spite of reason or evidence to the contrary, not explained by that person’s cultural context; hallucinations, perceptions (can be sound, sight, touch, smell, or taste) that occur in the absence of an actual external stimulus (Auditory hallucinations, those of voice or other sounds, are the most common type of hallucinations in schizophrenia.); disorganized thoughts and behaviors; disorganized speech; and catatonic behavior, in which the affected person’s body may be rigid and the person may be unresponsive.

The term schizophrenia is Greek in origin, and in the Greek meant "split mind." This is not an accurate medical term. In Western culture, some people have come to believe that schizophrenia refers to a split-personality disorder. These are two very different disorders, and people with schizophrenia do not have separate personalities.

Schizophrenia and other mental health disorders have fairly strict criteria for diagnosis. Time of onset as well as length and characteristics of symptoms are all factors. The active symptoms of schizophrenia must be present at least 6 months, or only 1 month if treated.

Read more: [http://www.emedicinehealth.com/schizophrenia/article\\_em.htm](http://www.emedicinehealth.com/schizophrenia/article_em.htm)