

Road to **WELL**fluent™

Embrace better health.

May is Mental Health Month: What Can You Do to Help Erase Stigma?

By: Caroline Carney – CMO Magellan RX Management

Why is there still a stigma around seeking help or treatment for mental health concerns?

Dr. Carney: I think we first need to talk about what stigma is, and where it comes from.

Unfortunately, people with mental illness have been stigmatized by others, and even by themselves. Mental illness is often still perceived as an indulgence, a sign of weakness, or as a character weakness. You also may find people who believe mental illness is something that is scary, or to be made fun of. So many myths exist about mental illness, including that it is the result of bad parenting.

Further, self-stigmatization is a huge driver for this. Self-stigmatization occurs when shame and secrecy override even the most extreme of symptoms, preventing people from getting the help they need. Few people recognize how prevalent mental illness is. We don't talk about depression. We don't talk about our own perceived failures. We don't talk about how tough life can be, and often suffer through it in silence.

Further, the symptoms themselves, whether depression, anxiety or psychotic disorders, often contribute to a sense of isolation. In the time of Facebook and Instagram, we are led to believe that everyone lives a happy and interesting life every day. If you feel you don't measure up to what is shown on social media, it can then be perceived as a failure. This is especially true for adolescents, teens and college-aged kids. I've spoken recently to a young person who was afraid to talk to her best friend and to her mentor about her feelings of depression and loneliness. She was afraid they would think that she was weak and flawed—therefore not



worthy of being a good friend. Instead, she suffered in silence, further worsening the symptoms until suicide became part of her daily thoughts. Most people around her would never recognize this incredible kid regularly thinks of suicide. This, unfortunately, is an all too common scenario.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

What can friends, family and coworkers do to help lessen that stigma and encourage people to seek help?

Dr. Carney: I think the biggest step is to support and withhold judgement. Family and friends need to be upfront about symptoms or conditions they've had in their own lives. I often advise that it is a normal, common thing to get treatment—it should be considered no different than getting treated for any medical condition. In some cases, friends and family may find themselves helping someone access treatment at a mental health provider or a primary care physician. Emphasizing that mental illness isn't a sign of failure, and can actually be treated, is critically important. As a doctor, I have often counseled the loved ones of my patients that it can be frustrating to take care of a person in the thick of an episode of mental illness. The symptoms of depression, for instance, dampen ones motivation, support beliefs of hopelessness, and take away energy. It should be no surprise, then, that the person suffering from mental illness doesn't want therapy. Don't give up on them—understand that the disease itself influences getting treatment.

Treatment for mental illness doesn't happen overnight—it can often take weeks or even longer for a response to occur. Family, friends, coworkers, and providers shouldn't give up. Look for incremental change, not overnight cures.

What is the biggest misperception about mental illness?

Dr. Carney: The biggest misperception is that mental illness isn't an illness—that is something one brings upon oneself. Mental illness is caused by biological, genetic, and environmental factors.

Can you live a life of recovery?

Dr. Carney: Absolutely! Because mental illness is a medical condition, it's important to know about different mental conditions and their associated treatment options. A common myth is that the illness will go away if a stressor is removed, or time passes, or a person just thinks positive thoughts or prays. Think about a physical illness such as diabetes. Diabetes won't go away with positive thinking, and neither will a condition like depression. Mental illness can be treated, and the earlier treatment is initiated, the better the chances of recovery. Finding licensed, trained providers is essential. Using social supports like faith or your peers can be an extension of, not a replacement for, treatment. Importantly, having an episode of depression or an anxiety disorder may only occur once in a lifetime. If the root causes are uncovered, cognitive distortions are addressed, and if appropriate, medication used correctly, the morbidity of mental illness can be markedly reduced, and may never come back. Even people with serious persistent mental illness, such

as schizophrenia, can live a life of recovery with the right supports and treatment.

But I also think it's essential that we need to educate people that the illness may return. This doesn't mean that a person with mental illness failed. It means that the illness may be chronic, but the symptoms can still be treated.

The most vital concept to remember is that recovery is possible, and can be permanent. When it's not permanent, treatment can be ongoing and very successful.

What can providers/clinicians do to help reduce stigma?

Dr. Carney: I think there are a few ways that everyone – not only providers or clinicians – can help counter stigma around mental illness.

- Know the facts about mental illness—read about mental illness from expert and advocacy groups like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the National Institute of Mental Health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and other sites. Rumor and innuendo never serve the facts.
- Continue to reinforce that this is an illness, and not a sign of weakness or failure.
- Take a look at your own attitudes and how you think about mental illness—whether your own, in someone you care about or the stranger you see on the street. Understand that no one would ever want to be depressed, or be troubled by hallucinations. Mental illness is an illness, no less than heart disease or cancer.
- Choose your words carefully—Often we refer to someone who has diabetes as a diabetic, or a person with schizophrenia as a schizophrenic. People are more than their disease, whatever it may be. We need to preserve personal dignity by recognizing that our words matter—use terms like “he is a man with schizophrenia,” and be mindful of common phrases like “crazy” or “nuts.”
- Provide support by keeping your loved one or friend safe from harm. Participate in therapy when asked. Avoid passing judgement, especially about how quickly someone's recovery may be progressing, and continue to support the receipt of treatment.
- Take an honest look about what environmental factors may be contributing to the illness. Evaluate short-term and long-term stressors. Just like we would monitor the diet for someone with diabetes, we should recognize that environmental factors contribute to mental illness, just as they do to physical health.
- Never accept or foster stereotypes.

Source: <https://magellanhealthinsights.com/2017/05/01/525/>

HOW TO BE A SKIN CANCER HERO

The AAD (American Academy of Dermatology) also encourages everyone to be their own Skin Cancer Hero by taking steps to prevent skin cancer and detect it early, when it's most treatable.

Source: <https://www.aad.org/public/spot-skin-cancer/learn-about-skin-cancer/prevent/how-to-select-a-sunscreen>

SAY YES TO SUN PROTECTION SAY NO TO SKIN CANCER

SKIN CANCER IS THE MOST COMMON CANCER IN THE U.S.

ONE in FIVE Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, and one person dies from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, every hour.



THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SUNSCREENS:

Since exposure to the sun's harmful UV rays is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer, protect your skin by:



- SEEKING SHADE
- WEARING PROTECTIVE CLOTHING
- GENEROUSLY APPLYING SUNSCREEN



PHYSICAL SUNSCREEN

This sunscreen **WORKS LIKE A SHIELD**; it sits on the surface of your skin, deflecting the sun's rays.

Look for the active ingredients **ZINC OXIDE** and/or **TITANIUM DIOXIDE**.

Opt for this sunscreen if you have **SENSITIVE SKIN**.



CHEMICAL SUNSCREEN

This sunscreen **WORKS AS A SPONGE**, absorbing the sun's rays.

Look for one or more of the following active ingredients: **OXYBENZONE**, **AVOBENZONE**, **OCTISALATE**, **OCTOCRYLENE**, **HOMOSALATE** and **OCTINOXATE**.

This formulation tends to be **EASIER TO RUB INTO** the skin without leaving a white residue.



If you have concerns about certain sunscreen ingredients, use the information above to choose an alternative that works for you. As long as it's **BROAD-SPECTRUM**, **WATER-RESISTANT** and has an **SPF 30 OR HIGHER**, it can effectively protect you from the sun. Make sure you reapply it every **TWO HOURS**, or after swimming or sweating.



If you have questions about how to protect your skin or choose a sunscreen, talk to a board-certified dermatologist or learn more at [SpotSkinCancer.org](https://www.spot-skin-cancer.org).

Copyright © by the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Academy of Dermatology Association.

18-575-0000



HEALTH & WELLNESS GIFTS FOR MOM

On this Mother's Day, give Mom the gift of health, fitness and well-being. No matter what age group the moms on your Mother's Day list fall into, those gifts never go out of style and are always the best ways to appreciate any mom on any day of the year -- especially Mother's Day. Here's a list of gifts to give any and all moms. Visit: <https://www.menshealth.com/fitness/g19875740/mothers-day-fitness-healthy-gifts/>

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6th and ends on May 12th, Florence Nightingale's birthday. She set an example of compassion, commitment to patient care and diligent and thoughtful hospital administration. This year's Nurses Week, we honor the noble profession of nursing not only in the United States, but across the world. This week, like every week, more than 20 million nurses will be practicing the time-honored nurses' values of caring, compassion, community and courage.



MAY EVENTS

Date	Time	Event	Location	Description
Saturday May 4, 2019	6 am	Florida Sprint and Olympic Triathlon	Jensen Beach Park, 4191 NE Ocean Blvd., Jensen Beach, FL 34957	Located off the coast of Martin and St. Lucie counties, Hutchinson Island is a barrier island bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Indian River on the west. https://www.floridaolympic.com/
Saturday May 11, 2019	7:30 am	2019 ALS Lou Gehrig 10K Run & 5K Run/Walk	Coconut Grove City Hall, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove, FL 33133	The ALS Lou Gehrig's Disease 10K and 5K Run/Walk is one of the most enjoyable courses in all of South Florida. Running through Coconut Grove and Coral Gables allows the runner to have complete shade as you pass under the giant Banyon Trees! The proceeds from this year's race go to the ALS Recovery Fund! https://alsrecovery.org/
Saturday May 11, 2019	8 am	K9s United 9K For K9s Jacksonville	Metropolitan Park 1410 Gator Bowl Blvd., Jacksonville, FL US 32202	RUN FOR FREE! If you raise \$100 or more through our fundraising portal, you get to run in the race of your choice for free! 100% of the proceeds will benefit K-9s United an organization that is committed to supporting and honoring K-9 law enforcement officers who detect, protect and serve our communities by giving them the best equipment, amenities, and quality of life during and after their service, and memorializing those who give the ultimate sacrifice. https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Jacksonville/K9sUnited9kForK9sJacksonville?afft_token=vkmwDmweQ4iCYn8otSOOnKQ3vC08bu0w
Saturday May 18, 2019	7:30 am	The Color Run Fort Lauderdale	Huizenga Park 32 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301	Less about your 10-minute mile and more about having the time of your life, The Color Run is a five-kilometer, un-timed race with an epic Finish Festival. Thousands of Color Runners are doused from head to toe in different colors at each kilometer and finish with a larger than life party with music, dancing, and massive color throws. https://thecolorrun.com/locations/fort-lauderdale/

AvMed complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-882-8633 (TTY: 711).

ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 1-800-882-8633 (TTY: 711).

A Wellness Newsletter for AvMed Members



Road to **WELLfluent**TM

Embrace better health.

May 2019