

# Headspace Seminar

January 23, 2022

## Week One Overview

**Summary:** Mental health has long been stigmatized as something taboo and the result of personal or religious failings. The truth is, each of us exist on a continuum of mental health and unhealth, in the same way that we exist on a continuum of spiritual and physical health and unhealth. Our mental health can be affected by our biology, experiences, and circumstances and is certainly not something to avoid or feel ashamed about. Join us as we break down the various type of support available, how to help yourself, and what to do when helping yourself doesn't work.

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- **What is Mental Health**
  - Mental health is the overall wellness of how you think, regulate your feelings and behave. A mental health disorder may affect how well you:
    - Maintain personal or family relationships
    - Function in social settings
    - Perform at work or school
    - Learn at a level expected for your age and intelligence
    - Participate in other important activities

Every one of us exists on a continuum of mental health and unhealth, just as we exist on a continuum of physical and spiritual health and unhealth. Not acknowledging or identifying mental illness/unhealth does not change the fact that it exists.

### **Cultural norms and social expectations also play a role in defining mental health disorders.**

- Social norms are a broad set of prescriptions, both explicit and implicit, that dictate behavior in particular situations. They vary from culture to culture and often change over time. Breaking norms can result in a formal punishment, such as being fined or imprisoned, or an informal punishment, such as being stared at or shunned by others.
- Norms can change based on subculture and setting. For example, desirable behavior among a group of friends is not necessarily desirable behavior in the workplace. When a behavior or practice significantly deviates from a social norm, it may be classified as taboo.
- Perceived social norms are an important contributor to an individual's social distance to those with mental illness.

### **The Stigma of Mental Health**

- For people who don't experience it directly, stigma can be difficult to notice. However, whether they realize it or not, most people interact with sources of stigma on an almost daily basis.
  - **Lack of education/ignorance.**
  - **Media.**
  - **Language.**

### **Eight types of stigma occur with mental health problems:**

1. **Public Stigma:** This happens when the public endorses negative stereotypes and prejudices, resulting in discrimination against people with mental health conditions.
2. **Self-Stigma:** Self-stigma happens when a person with mental illness or substance use disorder internalizes public stigma.
3. **Perceived Stigma:** Perceived stigma is the belief that others have negative cognitions about people with mental illness.
4. **Label Avoidance:** This is when a person chooses not to seek mental health treatment to avoid being assigned a stigmatizing label. Label avoidance is one of the most harmful forms of stigma.
5. **Stigma By Association:** Stigma by association occurs when the effects of stigma are extended to someone linked to a person with mental health difficulties. This type of stigma is also known as courtesy stigma and associative stigma.
6. **Structural Stigma:** Institutional policies or other societal structures that result in decreased opportunities for people with mental illness are structural stigma.
7. **Health Practitioner Stigma:** This takes place any time a health professional allows stereotypes and prejudices about mental illness to negatively affect a patient's care.
8. **Cultural stigma.** Every culture has a different way of looking at mental health. For many, there is growing stigma around mental health, and mental health challenges are considered a weakness and something to hide. This can make it harder for those struggling to talk openly and ask for help.

Factors affecting mental health: Biology/Genetics/Brain Chemistry, Experiences, Circumstances/Environment

### ***Systemic and health implications***

- Mental illness affects an entire family. (Mobile example)
- \$193-\$210 billion in lost earnings per year.
- Digestive disorders, heart disease, obesity, and chronic pain are just a few of the possible physical ramifications of untreated anxiety and depressive disorders. Other conditions associated with anxiety and depression include **sleep disorders, substance abuse disorders, respiratory illnesses, and thyroid problems.**
- Anxiety disorders can **cause rapid heart rate, palpitations, and chest pain.** You may also be at an increased risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. If you already have heart disease, anxiety disorders may raise the risk of coronary events.

### **What is the difference between Acute/Situational vs. Chronic Mental Illness?**

#### **How to help yourself**

First, evaluate yourself on the **Six Major Pillars of Health:**

1. Nutrition
2. Exercise
3. Social Relationships/Health
4. Spiritual Health

5. Sleep Quality
6. Time Outdoors

### **When is therapy or counseling appropriate?**

Each mental health condition has its own signs and symptoms. In general, however, professional help might be needed if you experience:

- Marked changes in personality, eating or sleeping patterns
- An inability to cope with problems or daily activities
- Feeling of disconnection or withdrawal from normal activities
- Unusual or "magical" thinking
- Excessive anxiety
- Prolonged sadness, depression or apathy
- Thoughts or statements about suicide or harming others
- Substance misuse
- Extreme mood swings
- Excessive anger, hostility or violent behavior

**Avoid the temptation to self-diagnose or to use mental health diagnoses flippantly.**

### **When is medication appropriate?**

- Medication is only one part of treatment for mental illness.
- Medications that are used to treat mental illness are called *psychotropics*. These are drugs that act on the brain and nervous system.
- You might already take medication for a physical condition like asthma or heart disease. In the same way, medications are used to treat mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and psychosis. Medication can make you feel better and help you to get on with your life.
- In some cases, medicines can reduce symptoms so other methods of a treatment plan can be more effective. For example, a medication can ease symptoms of depression like loss of energy and lack of concentration, allowing an individual to engage more in talk therapy.
- predicting who will respond to what medication can be difficult because different medications may work better for one person than for another.
- In some cases, psychiatric medication may be a short-term aid taken only for a few months. In others, medication may be long-term, or even lifelong. Some people are afraid that taking a medication will change their personality, but most find that medication allows them to take charge of their lives.

### **Expectations of therapy/counseling**

- Expect the length/duration of treatment to vary by person
- It's not a Magic Pill; therapy takes time
- Every therapist is different; Therapist-Client fit is critical to treatment success.

- Therapy can be exhausting; emotional labor is draining and many people (1) feel tired after therapy; (2) Subconsciously avoid the real issues or arrive late; (3) may get worse before they get better
- Therapists will not (or should not) work harder than the client.

### What do in a crisis

What qualifies as a mental health crisis?: A mental health crisis is any situation in which a person's actions, feelings, and behaviors can lead to them hurting themselves or others, and/or put them **at risk of being unable to care for themselves or function in the community in a healthy manner.**

- Call 911, **go to the nearest emergency room** or follow the emergency instructions provided by your doctor, mental health professional or care team. If your community has a mental health car, you can call 911 to request it.
- Pawnee Crisis Stabilization Unit – 1558 Hayes Drive, Manhattan

How can you help if someone you know is in a crisis?

- If someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, being present and non-judgmental can be helpful. Make it clear that you are there to listen to them and help them and let them tell you how you can best support them.
- You can start a conversation with, “It seems like things have been difficult lately. How can I help?” or “If you ever feel like life is getting to be too much, I am here for you.”
- Here are some other ways that you can offer support:
  - Encourage them to stay connected with supportive family and friends.
  - Encourage them to stay on a regular daily routine.
  - Support them in continuing any treatment that they are already on until they can see their healthcare provider.
  - Offer to take them to appointments or pick up medications if needed.
  - Help with childcare if needed.
  - Suggest that they see a healthcare provider as soon as possible.
  - When supporting someone, remember, their experience is unique to them. So there are things that you should also avoid saying or doing, such as:
    - Don't assume that you know what they are thinking or feeling.
    - Avoid telling them that they are lying or exaggerating.
    - Don't dismiss their thoughts or feelings.
    - Avoid making them do what you say.
    - Avoid putting yourself in any situation where you might be physically harmed.
    - For some people, faith-based communities provide an important source of support during crises. Both religious beliefs and a supportive faith-based community have been found to be helpful. If your loved one belongs to a particular faith, you can see if they'd be open to attending services and/or speaking to a spiritual leader.

## **Week Two Overview:**

**Summary:** Nearly 1 in 5 adults and children will experience mental illness at some point in their lives, resulting in a staggering \$193-\$210 billion in lost earnings per year. Anxiety and depression have become a modern-day epidemic.

- America ranks among the highest rates of anxiety and depression worldwide.
- Why are we so anxious and depressed?
  - Poor sleep habits
  - Trauma/Neglect
  - Early and frequent adverse life events
  - Overstimulation
  - Social Media
  - Busyness/Long work hours/Focus on Productivity and Success
  - Decreased stigma/Underreporting in the past
  - Movement toward individualism/Increased isolation and loneliness
  - Movement away from family and church

### What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. The first day of school, going to a job interview, or giving a speech may cause most people to feel fearful and nervous. It can be motivating and/or protective at best and debilitating at worst. "Normal" anxiety is referred to as state anxiety.

But if your feelings of anxiety are extreme, last for longer than six months, and are interfering with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are the most common form of emotional disorder and can affect anyone at any age.

### What are types of Anxiety Disorders?

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) - you may feel extreme and unrealistic worry and tension — even if there's nothing to trigger these feelings. Most days, you may worry a lot about various topics, including health, work, school and relationships. You may feel that the worry continues from one thing to the next. Physical symptoms of GAD can include restlessness, difficulty concentrating and sleeping problems.
- Panic Disorder - If you have a panic disorder, you get intense, sudden panic attacks. These attacks often feature stronger, more intense feelings than other types of anxiety disorders.
  - The feelings of terror may start suddenly and unexpectedly or they may come from a trigger, like facing a situation you dread. Panic attacks can resemble heart attacks. If there's any chance you're experiencing a heart attack, go to the emergency room. It's better to err on the side of caution and have a healthcare professional check you.
  - During a panic attack, you may experience:
    - Sweating.

- Heart palpitations (feeling like your heart is pounding).
  - Chest pain.
  - Feeling of choking, which can make you think you're having a heart attack or "going crazy."
  - Panic attacks are very upsetting. People with panic disorder often spend a lot of time worrying about the next panic attack. They also try to avoid situations that might trigger an attack.
- Phobias - Phobias are an intense fear of certain situations or objects. Some of these fears may make sense, such as a fear of snakes. But often, the level of fear doesn't match the situation.
  - Like with other anxiety disorders, you may spend a lot of time trying to avoid situations that may trigger the phobia.
  - A specific phobia, or a simple phobia, is an intense fear of a particular object or situation. It may cause you to avoid everyday situations. Some specific phobias include fear of:
    - Animals, such as spiders, dogs or snakes.
    - Blood.
    - Flying.
    - Heights.
    - Injections (shots)
    -
  - Social Anxiety Disorder - (Previously called Social Phobia) - You may have overwhelming worry and self-consciousness with daily social situations. You may worry about others judging you or you may be anxious that you'll embarrass yourself or open yourself up to ridicule. People with social anxiety disorder may avoid social situations entirely.
  - Agoraphobia - If you have agoraphobia, you may have an intense fear of being overwhelmed or unable to get help. Usually, you have a fear of two or more of these environments:
    - Enclosed spaces.
    - Lines or crowds.
    - Open spaces.
    - Places outside your house.
    - Public transportation.
    - In severe situations, a person with agoraphobia may not leave the house at all. They're so terrified of having a panic attack in public that they prefer to stay inside.
- Separation Anxiety - This condition mostly happens to children or teens, who may worry about being away from their parents. Children with separation anxiety disorder may fear that their parents will be hurt in some way or not come back as promised. It happens a lot in preschoolers. But older children and adults who experience a stressful event may have separation anxiety disorder as well.

Anxiety feels different depending on the person experiencing it. Feelings can range from butterflies in your stomach to a racing heart. You might feel out of control, like there's a disconnect between your

mind and body. Other ways people experience anxiety include nightmares, panic attacks, and painful thoughts or memories that you can't control. You may have a general feeling of fear, dread, and worry, or you may fear a specific place or event.

An **anxiety attack** is a feeling of overwhelming apprehension, worry, distress, or fear. For many people, an anxiety attack builds slowly. It may worsen as a stressful event approaches.

Anxiety attacks can vary greatly, and symptoms may differ among individuals. That's because the many symptoms of anxiety don't happen to everyone, and they can change over time.

Common symptoms of an anxiety attack include:

- feeling faint or dizzy
- shortness of breath
- dry mouth
- sweating
- chills or hot flashes
- apprehension and worry
- restlessness
- distress
- fear
- numbness or tingling

### **Who is at risk for anxiety disorders?**

- A mix of genetic and environmental factors can raise a person's risk for developing anxiety disorders. You may be at higher risk if you have or had:
  - Certain personality traits, such as shyness or behavioral inhibition — feeling uncomfortable with, and avoiding, unfamiliar people, situations or environments.
  - Stressful or traumatic events in early childhood or adulthood.
  - Family history of anxiety or other mental health conditions.
  - Certain physical conditions, including thyroid problems and heart arrhythmias (unusual heart rhythms).
  - Anxiety disorders occur more often in women. Researchers are still studying why that happens. It may come from women's hormones, especially those that fluctuate throughout the month. The hormone testosterone may play a role, too — men have more, and it may ease anxiety. It's also possible that women are less likely to seek treatment, so the anxiety worsens.

### **What is Depression?**

Most people feel sad or depressed at times. It's a normal reaction to loss or life's challenges. But when intense sadness -- including feeling helpless, hopeless, and worthless -- lasts for many days to weeks and keeps you from living your life, it may be something more than sadness.

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home.

Depression symptoms can vary from mild to severe and can include:

- Feeling sad or having a depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite — weight loss or gain unrelated to dieting
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue
- Increase in purposeless physical activity (e.g., inability to sit still, pacing, handwringing) or slowed movements or speech (these actions must be severe enough to be observable by others)
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- A constant sense of hopelessness and despair
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Symptoms must last at least two weeks and must represent a change in your previous level of functioning for a diagnosis of depression.

It's not uncommon for people with depression to have physical signs of the condition. They may include joint pain, back pain, digestive problems, sleep trouble, and appetite changes. You might have slowed speech and movements, too. The reason is that brain chemicals linked to depression, specifically serotonin and norepinephrine, play a role in both mood and pain.

Doctors haven't pinpointed exact causes for depression. They think it may be a combination of things, including:

- Brain structure. People with depression seem to have physical differences in their brains from people who don't have depression.
- Brain chemistry. Chemicals in your brain called neurotransmitters play a part in your mood. When you have depression, it could be because these chemicals aren't working the way they should.
- Hormones. Your hormone levels change because of pregnancy, postpartum issues, thyroid problems, menopause, or other reasons. That can set off depression symptoms.
- Genetics. Researchers haven't yet found the genes that might be responsible for depression, but you're more likely to have depression if someone you're related to has it.

What Triggers Major Depression?

- Some common triggers or causes of major depression include:
- Loss of a loved one through death, divorce, or separation
- Social isolation or feelings of being deprived
- Major life changes -- moving, graduation, job change, retirement

- Personal conflicts in relationships, either with a significant other or a superior
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse

### How to help those struggling with anxiety and depression

- Learn the symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Be aware of your own biases
- Encourage treatment
- Identify warning signs of depression/anxiety
- Stay alert for warning signs of suicide
- **Provide support**
  - Remember that your loved one's depression/anxiety isn't anyone's fault. **You can't fix it or take it away!**— but your support and understanding can help.
  - What you can do for your loved one:
    - Encourage sticking with treatment.
    - Be willing to listen.
    - Avoid advice giving and platitudes
    - Help someone who is anxious to temper their thinking
    - Offer support, but don't take over
    - Give positive reinforcement.
    - Offer assistance.
    - Help create a low-stress environment.
    - Encourage participation in spiritual practice
    - Make plans together.
- What should you **not** say to someone with anxiety/depression?
  - "Stop worrying about it"
  - "You're an anxious person"
  - "Calm down"
  - "It's not a big deal"
  - "Why would you be anxious about that?"
  - "Just don't think about it"
  - "Try harder"
  - "But you don't look depressed."
  - "You don't seem sad."
  - "Have you tried \_\_\_\_\_?"
  - "It's all in your head"
  - "What do you have to be depressed about?"
  - "It could always be worse"
  - "Just give it to God"
  - "Just have faith. Keep praying."