

### Understanding Mental Health Today and How VITAL WorkLife Can Help

By Marsha Molinari, MSW, LICSW

The month of May has been recognized as **Mental Health Month** every year since 1949.

According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#), 1 in 5 people live with a diagnosable mental illness each year. And 1 in 7 children or teenagers have this illness as well. **Every day**, approximately 123 Americans die by suicide.

An individual's mental health impacts every part of their life including their work, relationships and well being. It may be surprising to know that there are more than 300 different conditions that are identified as mental illness.

Unfortunately, there continues to be stigma attached to mental illness, causing discussions around this topic to be kept secret or even nonexistent. That's why hundreds of organizations are focused on providing information to raise awareness on this important issue.


The following information is meant to help bring awareness to what has become an epidemic in our country and educate you about how your VITAL WorkLife Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help.

#### What are some of the factors that contribute to mental illness?

- Life experiences, such as stress or having a history of childhood abuse
- Chemical imbalances in the brain
- Having a traumatic brain injury
- An exposure to viruses or toxic chemicals during pregnancy
- Family history and genes

#### Common warning signs of mental illness

- Days or weeks of extreme sadness or lowness
- Problems with concentrating and/or focus
- Excessive worrying or fear
- Mood changes including feelings of depression, euphoria, anxiety or uncontrollable highs
- Increased irritability or anger
- Isolating and/or withdrawing from friends and social activities
- Changes in sleep habits or feeling unusually fatigued
- Changes in eating habits -weight gain or weight loss
- Difficulty perceiving what is real
- Physical ailments that do not have an obvious cause

A blue speech bubble containing a quote by Glen Close.

**“What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation.”**  
– Glen Close

- Extreme self-consciousness
- Thoughts of suicide or self-injurious behaviors

## Getting Help

Help is only a phone call or message away and there's no stigma when you use your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources because it's confidential. We owe it to ourselves and to the ones we love to get help. Reach out to your VITAL WorkLife EAP to ensure that you and your loved one is getting the help that you/they deserve.

As part of your EAP, you have access to **in-the-moment behavioral health support (phone counseling)** and **face-to-face or virtual counseling** that can help you navigate whatever challenges, experiences or stressors you are going through. *Your counseling benefit is available on a per incident basis, which you means you can access it now, and again in the future for another issue.*

Contact us at **800.383.1908**, through your **VITAL WorkLife App** or send a message to us [here](#).

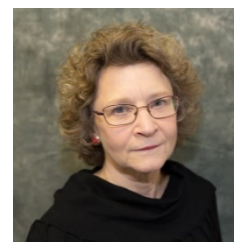
Your EAP includes a wealth of **information to support your mental health and well being** and is available at **no cost** to you or your family members. **You do not need to be alone in this.**

## Additional External Resources

- The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **If you or someone you know is in a crisis, call now at 800.273.8255 or dial 911.** For more information, visit their website at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** <https://nami.org/Home>. Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800.950.6264 for immediate help
  - More resources from NAMI on Mental Health Awareness Month: <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>
- **2021 Mental Health Awareness Calendar:** <https://sacwellness.com/mental-health-awareness-calendar/>

## About the Author: Marsha Molinari, MSW, LICSW

Marsha Molinari (Minnetonka, Minnesota) is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and has been a Senior Consultant with VITAL WorkLife since 2014. She began her work as a nurse and went on to receive her master's degree in Social Work from the College of St. Catherine in Minneapolis. After 20 years of work in various behavioral health settings, Marsha started her own private practice while still working for the Hennepin County Day Treatment Program and Pre Admission Screening. In 2000, she became the owner and CEO of Changing Lifestyle Counseling Center where she continues to work today.



She has extensive experience assisting those with workplace challenges, as she conducts onsite counseling to employees of a large healthcare system three days a week. Marsha specializes in individual and couples therapy, grief/loss, compassion fatigue, conflict resolution, LGBTQ+, trauma, alcohol and drug assessments and crisis intervention services. She provides both in person and telehealth services.