

Myths about Behavioral Health



Here are some common myths about behavioral health and mental illness, & the truths behind them.

Myth: Mental illness is not a real medical problem.

Truth: Mental illness is just as much a medical problem as cancer or heart disease. Like other medical illnesses there are often natural or internal causes for mental illness. Through counseling and sometimes medication, mental illness can be properly treated.

Myth: People with a severe mental illness are dangerous and violent.

Truth: Studies show that the chance of violence in people who have mental illness is not much higher than it is with those who don't have an illness.

Myth: Depression has nothing to do with changes in brain chemistry.

Truth: Depression is not a choice. Being depressed does not mean you are lazy or weak. Depression can be the result of a change in the way your brain works. A provider can help you decide if counseling and/or medication will be right for you.

Myth: Depression is normal for older adults, but not for children and teens.

Truth: Depression can show up at any age. In the U.S., 14.8 million people suffer from major depression. Many are not receiving the treatment they need. When anyone shows signs of depression it is important to recognize the problem and seek help. Signs of depression include loss of interest in activities, too much or too little sleep, loss of appetite and loss of energy. Anyone talking about suicide or hurting themselves should be taken very seriously.

Myth: Mental illness will go away on its own if you ignore it. Talking about your problems just makes them worse.

Truth: When mental illness is not treated problems can get worse. You can't just make a mental illness go away because you want it to or by ignoring it. Serious mental illness requires professional help. You and your provider can choose the right treatment plan for you. Treatment may include counseling, medicine, or a variety of other supportive services.

Myth: People with addictions lack will power or are just "bad."

Truth: Addiction is a disease that generally results from changes in brain function. It has nothing to do with being a "bad" person.

Myth: People with mental illnesses are "crazy."

Truth: There are many mistaken beliefs about mental illness. Many successful people live with a mental illness. They see providers to overcome their everyday problems.

Myth: If I go to counseling, will they lock me up or take away my children?

Truth: Counselors and other providers are there to listen and to help you. They are bound by strict agreements to keep information you give them private. There are some types of information that must be disclosed by law, but this would be explained to you at the beginning of treatment and usually involves information that is shared that could or has caused harm to another person.

Myth: If I go to counseling, they will put me on medication.

Truth: No, counselors can't provide medication. A counselor will listen to you and your needs. If needed, they may suggest a visit to a doctor, but the decision to take medication is your own.

Myth: Medication will turn me into a zombie (can't feel or react to anything) or will I gain weight?

Truth: Some medications can have side effects, but advancements have been made. If you feel you are having side effects from medication, call your doctor before you stop taking your medication. Likely adjustments can be made to counteract these negative side effects.