



Los Angeles County  
Office of Education

Employee Assistance  
Service for Education

May is

MAY 2021 |

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

## CONNECT WITH EASE

*Employee Assistance Service for Education*

### Overview:

*Reducing The Stigma  
Around Mental Health*

*Supporting Employee  
Mental Health | L.E.A.D.  
Approach*

### EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

#### CONNECT WITH EASE:

**(800) 882-1341**

**Free confidential professional  
help for  
district employees and family  
members:**

Family troubles. Emotional distress.  
Job stress.  
Anxiety. Drug/alcohol use. Grief.  
Loss.  
Life transition issues.

Professional counselors are ready  
to help.  
Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7  
assistance.

## MESSAGE FROM EASE

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**, a time when we spotlight the importance and impact that mental health has on our emotional, physical, and overall well being. This is also a time when we raise awareness of those who are living with mental and/or behavioral health issues and help reduce the stigma that many often experience. A stigma happens when something or someone is seen in a negative way by society. Mental health stigma is real and pervasive. These belief systems and cultural/societal messages need to be reframed. Over the past year, the pandemic has had a profound impact on so many of us. Now more than ever, it is critical to address and reduce stigma around getting support for mental health struggles. It is that stigma, that prevents people from making the first step towards seeking help.

Seeking therapy is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. Think of it as a gift to yourself- the gift of wellness. It is long overdue for us to live in a world where mental health and physical health are viewed as equally important. Seeking help for a mental health challenge should equate to going to the doctor for a sore throat, or other physical condition. Taking care of your mental health should not be seen as any different from managing diabetes, nutrition, or any other aspect of wellness. We need to advocate for the idea that seeking counseling or therapy is a part of healthy self-care — it's not only for people experiencing a crisis.

We know that mental health problems can affect energy levels, concentration, thinking ability, outlook, and so much more. We see how mental health affects students as they learn and teachers, staff, and administrators as they work and teach. Ensuring good mental health is critical to our overall well-being. Self care is an important component of resilience and good mental health. Consider self care to be a layer of prevention- it can serve as a buffer when life's challenges happen. Sometimes, self care is just not enough, and reaching out for mental health support is needed in order to get through a difficult time. For this reason, EASE is available for free and easily accessible counseling services. If you are struggling with your mental health, please know that you are not alone and we are here to support you. If you would like to learn more about our counseling services, please contact us for information.

# Reducing The Stigma Around Mental Health

Established in 1949, every May we observe **Mental Health Awareness Month**, a time to acknowledge and discuss the importance of mental health and well-being. Now more than ever, it is important to connect with each other, improve understanding of mental health, promote access to services, and reduce the stigma of struggling with a mental health condition. According to Mental Health America (MHA), more than half of individuals do not receive help for their condition. Some people delay or avoid seeking treatment due to fear of being judged or treated differently by friends, family, and society in general. Stigma surrounding mental health has served as a barrier for individuals living with a mental health condition. At some point in their lives, these individuals may have been judged, avoided, discriminated, made fun of or blamed for their condition.

Although the pace of progress to reduce stigma has not been fast enough, there are ways we can help to stop the stigma and fight discrimination surrounding mental illness and health. **Seek help for yourself or loved ones.** Seeking treatment is essential to bring relief, reduce symptoms and improve daily functioning. Seek counseling and support from others if you are struggling with your mental health. **Be careful with your words.** Be mindful about the language you are using. Words can be harmful and can contribute to stigma and discrimination. **Educate yourself and others.** Seek out reputable sources about treatment options, symptoms, and mental health conditions. Share your knowledge as a way to dispel rumors and inaccuracies surrounding mental illness. **Speak up.** Help promote change by sharing your thoughts about seeking support and educate others respectfully. This May, for **Mental Health Awareness Month**, pledge to talk about mental health. Replace silence with questions and understanding. Choose to help stop the stigma by speaking up. Spread the word that struggling with a mental health condition can be treated and cared for just like any other health condition.

## Tips for Staying Healthy and Managing Stress

- Make certain you're getting enough rest and eating healthy and nutritious meals.
- Pause to clear your mind when you enter your workspace or before beginning a work day. Take several slow deep breaths to help center you. Do this several times throughout the day to build your energy and stamina.
- Clear your head with mini breaks. Think about what's calming for you and take time to engage in that activity.
- Maintain your physical and emotional wellness by moving for a minimum of 30 minutes per day.
- Stay connected by interacting with those in your household, friends, family or colleagues. Schedule time to connect with your loved ones and disconnect from the pressures in the workplace.

<https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/features/coronavirus/returning-to-work/mental-health-and-coping>  
<https://healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/news/2021/stop-stigma.php#:~:text=May%20is%20Mental%20Health%20Awareness,people%20living%20with%20mental%20illness.>

## Mental Health Facts

- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.
- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year.
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.
- 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10-34.

<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/mental-health-month/>

## Supporting Employee Mental Health

### L.E.A.D. Approach

Center for Workplace Mental Health

#### Leadership

- Reassure, Acknowledge and Validate
- Model Good Behavior & Show Empathy
- Make Mental Health Visible

#### Effective Communication

- Make It Routine
- Be An Active Listener
- Be A Trusted Source

#### Adapt to Change

- Realign Organizational Policies and Practices
- Be Willing to Modify Leadership Style
- Create Employee Connections

#### Double Down on Access to Care

- Share Mental Health and Well-Being Resources with Employees
- Focus on Strengthening Prevention Efforts that Support Mental Health and Well-Being
- Increase Employee Engagement with Your EAP (i.e., EASE) and Learn About Approaches Being Using To Connect With Employees
- Improve Access to Timely, Affordable and Effective Mental Health & Substance Use Care

<https://workplacementalhealth.org/Employer-Resources/Employee-Mental-Health-Well-being-During-Beyond-COVID-19/>

# TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.  
(800) 882-1341

YOU ARE  
**NOT**  
ALONE

