

MHA NEWSLETTER

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

In recognition of National Mental Health Awareness month several events are planned locally throughout the month of May:

- A series of articles will run in the Cortland Standard to inform and educate about Mental Health.
- The Cortland County Mental Health Association (MHA) will hold the annual **"May is Mental Health Dinner"** on May 2nd at 5:30 PM. With speaker Dr. Paula Lynn Zebrowski presenting "Living a productive life with a mental health diagnosis." For more information call 756-5992, ex 117.
- Food for Thought - **Understanding Children with Problematic Sexual Behaviors** on May 10th from Noon to 1:00 PM. Family Counseling Services is one of six sites in NYS trained in this nationally recognized, evidence-based treatment modality (PSB-CBT) for children with problematic sexual behavior. Staff from Family Counseling Services will present on: What is problematic sexual behavior; Normal development and play vs. sexually acting out; and What to do if you suspect or have awareness of a child displaying problematic sexual behaviors and more.
- The Cortland County Mental Health Department is teaming up with **Pet Assisted Wellness Services of Central New York (PAWS)** to focus on Veterans' mental wellness on May 20th. See page 3 for more details.
- **"May is Mental Health Month Walk"** will be on May 24th. The walk starts at United Presbyterian Church (UPC) on the corner of Church Street and Central Ave. Doors open at 11:30 AM with a resource fair put on by local health organizations. The walk includes a stop at the Cortland Free Library to learn how the library supports people with mental health challenges, then it will proceed on to Main Street, ending back at the UPC with a light lunch. In 2016, more than 150 people participated. The walk is free and open to the public. Participants that register by May 1st will also receive a free t-shirt to wear on the walk. Go to www.sevenvalleyshealth.org to register. If you miss the May 1st deadline, you can still participate in the walk and lunch, you just wont get a t-shirt. I hope to see you all there!

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"MENTAL HEALTH" SCREENING

Warning signs and signals let us know when something is amiss. Smoke alarms alert us so we can get to safety in the event of a fire. Many of us have learned how to identify signs of a stroke because we know that quick intervention is the key to recovery.

Early detection is essential in all areas of medicine. Whether a person faces a physical or behavioral illness, receiving prompt, professional care can greatly improve long term, positive outcomes. Some 90% of people who struggle with mental illness recover. Whereas of those diagnosed with high blood pressure, only an 80% are able to manage without long term medications. (American Heart Association).

Mental Health America has launched a new screening tool. "Mind Your Health" is a short quiz, which screens for nine, separate conditions. To take the quiz visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/whatstoofar. A greater understanding of mental health conditions and symptoms can lower the fear of seeking help, improving a positive outcome.

Cortland County utilizes the Early Recognition Screening process, partnering with doctors, schools, and families to complete a short questionnaire to help identify warning signs of mental health issues in children. Once completed, Family Counseling Services (FCS) will help educate and guide the family toward mental health services options. Both FCS and Cortland County Mental Health Department offer same day/ next day access and ensure safe and professional options when you or a loved one needs help.

Mental illnesses are common and many people recover and lead fulfilling lives. By starting conversations in our homes, schools, work places and elsewhere we can help to build a stronger community. If you need help, ask – if you see someone who needs help, ask if you can help them. Help is always only one question away.

By Alexandra Huntington-Ofner, Cortland County Mental Health Department



App(s) of the Month: Buddha Board

Master the art of “letting go”. Buddha Board is an app inspired by the Zen concept of living in the moment. It lets you “paint” virtually, using your fingers, on the surface of your mobile device. Once you’ve “painted” your design, watch as it slowly disappears. Allow yourself to “let go” and not be concerned with each outcome - live in the moment and try to enjoy.

iPhone: <http://apple.co/2opt0Bi>

Android: N/A



WORKSITE STRESS

Everyone who has ever held a job has felt the pressure of work-related stress, even if you love what you do. Employees will sometimes experience stress, because of the pressures to meet a deadline or fulfilling a challenging obligation, but when this work related stress becomes chronic it can be harmful both physically and mentally.

Long-term stress is very common, and many studies have shown that the workplace is a major source of stress in American adults. According to the American Psychological Association’s (APA) annual Stress in America Survey, 65 percent of Americans cited work as the top source of stress in 2012. The APA lists the most common workplace stressors as:

- Low salaries
- Excessive workloads
- Lack of social support
- Few opportunities for growth or advancement
- Working on too many things at the same time
- Deadlines
- Lack of control

When we are under chronic stress, meeting deadlines and making important decisions becomes more difficult. As our stress levels increase, our productivity and performance decrease.

Unfortunately work-related stress does not disappear when you leave work; it can persist and follow us home to our family life. Many workers tend to be in the grey zone both at home and work. The grey zone is when you are thinking and worrying about work while you are at home or during your day off, or you think about your private life while you are at work. Being in the grey zone makes it hard to focus or even get a good night’s sleep.

Treating depression saves companies \$2000 annually per employee through improved health & productivity (includes mental health costs).

- Source Partnership for Workplace Mental Health

Work related stress can contribute to headaches, stomachaches, sleep disturbances, short temper and difficulty concentrating. If stress persists and becomes chronic it can result in anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system. Depression, obesity and heart disease are also commonly seen health conditions related to work stress.

While you cannot always avoid tensions and stressors that occur on the job, you can take the right steps to manage work related

stress. Many people try to resolve stress in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes, or abusing drugs and alcohol. Many people work through their lunch break, which is also not healthy or productive. Taking a midday break away from your desk has many advantages.

Exercise is a proven way to reduce stress. Taking a lunch break to work up a sweat will help you deal with approaching deadlines or difficult coworkers. When we exercise our brains produce more serotonin, a chemical which acts as a mood stabilizer and helps relieve depression and stress. Not only does exercise help relieve stress but it also improves our cognitive performance, helping us to solve tricky problems at work.

Other ways to relieve work-stress include:

Take A Deep Breath. If you are feeling overwhelmed or have just come out of a tense meeting, take a few minutes to clear your head. Try deep breathing and inhale for five seconds, hold and exhale in equal counts through the nose.

Learn to say “no”. Being overbooked and overworked will lead to stress. Many of us feel obligated to say “yes” to everything especially to our boss. But you can say “no”, just explain that another project may reduce the quality of your work.

Resolve your Concerns. If you are stressed about a project, consider who could help you clarify the required tasks.

Hang with a great crowd. Try to avoid hanging around co-workers who are constantly stressed and always complaining. Choose to hang around the ones who are supportive and relaxed.

Disconnect over the weekend. Find a good balance between work and home. Try staying away from work and offline; do you really have to check your work email over the weekend? If you have a cellphone for work, leave it at work or put it on silent.

Get some support. Accept help from trusted friends and family members. Your employer may also have stress management resources through an employee assistance program (EAP), such as online information, counseling and referral to mental health professionals.

Don’t let stress hold you up; manage it effectively so you can be happier, healthier and more productive. Reach your ultimate goal of a balanced life between work, relationships, relaxation and fun.

By Mary Baughman, Community Health Intern at Seven Valleys Health Coalition



PETS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The companionship that a pet offers is a great way to reduce anxiety and stress. A pet can be a great source of comfort, companionship and motivation for their owners. In many ways, pets can help us to live mentally healthier lives.

Pets are also a great motivator for people. Dogs especially are great at encouraging owners to get exercise, and this can be beneficial for those suffering from depression. Pets can also have calming effects on their owner. Just by stroking, sitting next to or playing with a pet can give owners a chance to relax and calm their minds. Caring for a pet also gives your day purpose and reward, and a sense of achievement. It also helps you feel valuable and needed.

Walking a dog often leads to conversations with other dog owners and this helps owners to stay socially connected and less withdrawn. People who have more social relationships and friendships tend to be mentally healthier.

A pet is great companion. They give owners company, a sense of security and someone to share the routine of the day with. Pets can be especially valuable company for those in later life and living alone.

People in later life experiencing typical life stresses can be comforted by a companion pet. It is thought that a dog can be a stress buffer that softens the effects of adverse events on a person. With an animal in the home, people with Alzheimer's are thought to have fewer anxious outbursts.

Children with ADHD can benefit from working with and keeping a pet. Taking charge of the jobs on a pet care schedule, such as feeding, walking and bathing, helps a child learn to plan and be responsible.

Pets need to play, and playing with a pet is a great way to release excess energy. Your child can burn off energy walking a dog or running around with a kitten, making them more relaxed later in the day and calmer at night. Fresh air and good circulation from aerobic exercise increases oxygen-filled blood flow to a child's brain, therefore increasing their ability to concentrate.

Children with ADHD are used to their parents trying to calm them down or reprimanding them. A pet is a great listener, and offers unconditional love and will not criticize a child for having too much energy. This can aid a child's self-confidence.

Sensory issues are common among children with autism. Sensory integration activities are designed to help them get used to the way something feels against their skin or how it smells or sounds. Dogs and horses have both been used for this purpose. Children with autism often find it calming to work with animals.

It has been claimed that in the case of people with autism, animals can reduce stereotyped behavior, lessen sensory sensitivity, and increase the desire and ability to connect socially with others. Further research into this area needs to be carried out however.



We are a volunteer Board of Directors that act to initiate and promote advocacy services, educational presentations, prevention programs, and information and resource referrals.

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To learn more about the Cortland MHA visit:
<http://www.mhacortland.com>
or contact:
mhacortlandny@gmail.com

From the Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/p/pets-and-mental-health>

PAWS COMES TO CORTLAND



According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, nearly 1 in 4 active duty military show signs of a mental health issue and an estimated 18-22 veterans die by suicide each year. To raise awareness and help to improve services for our veterans, Cortland is sponsoring Pet Assisted Therapy. This is a veteran focused event that will be held at Beaudry Park on Saturday May 20th from 2pm to 4pm. Pet-Assisted Wellness Services (PAWS) of CNY is a provider of animal stress reduction, wellness and therapy. PAWS will be stationed under a tent at Beaudry Park for those who would like to receive the benefits of interacting with a therapy animal.

The event will include a resource fair that emphasizes veterans' services that are available locally and other county wide agencies, programs, and groups that provide mental health oriented services. For more information on PAWS or the Cortland event please contact Sue Vaughn at svaughn@pawsofcny.org

Would your dog or cat make a good therapy pet? If you are interested in volunteering with PAWS of CNY, please visit <http://pawsofcny.org/apply/> to complete an application. In order to be eligible for pet therapy, pets must be at least one year of age and must have lived with you for 6 months prior to evaluation. If your application indicates that your pet meets PAWS initial requirements, you will be contacted within two weeks to schedule an initial evaluation and to begin the certification process. You can also email info@pawsofcny.org for more information.

By Lexy Davis, MSW Intern at Cortland County Mental Health

Addressee

Questions, comments, or feed-back on the MHA Newsletter?
We appreciate your thoughts!

EMAIL OPTION:

If you'd like to receive the MHA Newsletter electronically in
color as a PDF, please send your full name and email to:
erin@sevenvalleyshealth.org

Community Events & Support

May is Mental Health Month Activities

May 2: Mental Health Assoc. Dinner

5:30 PM, CRT 24 Port Watson St.

For more info: edavis@ccocc.org/756-5992, x 117

**May 10: FFT-Understanding Children with
Problematic Sexual Behaviors**

Noon - 1:00 PM, Cortland Elks Lodge

RSVP to: 756-8970, x 260/foodforthoughttrsvp@gmail.com

May 20: Veteran's Affairs/PAWS event

2:00 PM, Beaudry Park

For more info: ahuntingtonofner@cortland-co.org

May 24: May is MH Month Walk

11:30 AM, UPC 25 Church St.

For more information and to register:
sevenvalleyshealth.org.

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

- Where: Cortland LGBT Resource Center, 73 Main St.

- Contact: (607) 756-8970

Parents & Change Support Group (Monthly/2nd Monday)

May 8 Jun 12 Sep 11

Oct 9 Nov 13 Dec 11

- When: 6:00 to 7:00 PM

- Where: 90 Central Avenue

- Contact: Beckey Trippp (parentsandchange@yahoo.com)

Caregivers Support Group (Monthly)

- When: 4th Thursday at 12:30 PM

- Where: County Office Bldg (Dining Rm.)

- Contact: The Area Agency on Aging @ (607) 753-5060



If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for admission to the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to **ben@sevenvalleyshealth.org** by the 7th of the month prior.

Disclaimer: The information presented here does not constitute professional medical advice. Individuals respond to treatment for mental health conditions in different ways, and treatment plans often need adjustment over time. Patients should work closely with their doctor and other health professionals in order to achieve optimal control of symptoms.