

MHA NEWSLETTER

STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY FOR YOUR CHILD WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Staying mentally healthy as a parent of a child with mental illness can be a struggle. It's difficult to watch your child experience depression, angry outbursts, or suicidal thoughts. Being a parent means having an extraordinary capacity for love, and with that comes an extraordinary capacity for worry. Your child can't make it without you, though, so it's important to recognize when you need to reach out for help, too. You need to stay mentally healthy for your child with a mental illness.

Staying Mentally Healthy for Your Mentally Ill Child

Developing symptoms of mental illness is common when you parent a child with a mental illness. It's okay to ask for help and to receive help.

Depression and Anxiety in a Parent of a Mentally Ill Child

This Mother's Day had me feeling down. I never second-guess my choice to be a mother, but I definitely second-guess whether I'm a good one. All mothers feel this occasionally, I'm sure, but there's a deeper level to it when parenting a child with mental illness. I can't comfort myself by saying it's "just a phase" for my son. It's not just "hormonal" (though don't get me started on my fears for when it is hormonal). My son has had a recent increase in outbursts. During his in-home therapy session, he ended up breaking his bedroom window (again). It's discouraging. When you've seemingly tried everything, and even have professional help present, it's hard not to feel hopeless when the scary symptoms persist.

Hopelessness and helplessness are signs of depression. Sleep and appetite problems are signs, too. I know I've hit my wall when the uncontrollable crying starts. I'll get irritable and little annoyances make me want to throw things. Don't worry, I don't actually throw things.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in a Parent of a Child with Mental Illness

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*, PTSD

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October is Depression
Awareness Month
#SpeakYourMind
#NDSD

SMH Screening for
Mental Health®



App(s) of the Month: BrainHQ

BrainHQ is a web-based cognitive training program built upon the principles of brain plasticity – the brain's ability to re-wire and change even in the presence of illness or injury. The program can be used from any Internet connected computer at home or in a clinical office. The fun and engaging cognitive exercises continuously adapt to each individual's abilities, ensuring that the experience is appropriately challenging for people across a wide range of functional abilities. Clinicians can securely review patient progress and performance data for charting and reporting purposes.

iPhone: <http://bit.ly/BrainHQapp>

Android: N/A



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, BRAIN INJURY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

A cause of brain injury that has been under-reported is domestic violence. Often the victims of domestic violence do not seek health care after the assault or they live in areas where the healthcare services lack the expertise and resources to identify brain injury. The nature of the victim's relationship with the perpetrator may further prevent them from calling for help from the police, advocacy organizations or healthcare professionals. They may be one among several victims in a family or they be the one who absorbs the abuse to protect the others. Domestic violence is not confined to the poor, it occurs in all economic groups and involves men as well as women and children. For many it's "a private issue" or "secret" that is kept hidden.

In the aftermath of abuse, the consequences of brain injury may be confused with mental health or substance abuse problems and not understood as the outcome of repeated blows to the head or strangulation attempts depriving the victim of oxygen during a violent attack by a domestic partner. The person who is agitated, depressed, forgetful, confused, having slurred speech, experiencing headaches, pain, vertigo and other physical symptoms that we associate with brain injury may be not appropriately diagnosed and treated. In situations where the abuse is ongoing, the effects of repeated brain injury are cumulative and not unlike those experienced by a boxer or football player who has had multiple concussions. Health care professionals need training in recognizing that the pattern of symptoms following domestic abuse may, in fact, be brain injury and learn to look for the real cause of problems.

In studies of the prison populations in many states, more female inmates were found to have experienced brain injuries than males. The higher rate of injuries was correlated with exposure to domestic violence. Do the behavioral and cognitive effects of brain injury account for some of the problems which land women in prison?

And, then we have the toll of psychological trauma, of living in fear of each attack and of the next event which could happen tomorrow or at any minute in a relationship characterized by explosive violence. Coupled with the effects of brain injury, PTSD symptoms are real and complicating factors.

As healthcare professionals we need to increase our awareness of domestic violence as a cause of traumatic brain injury and understand the cumulative and total effects of violence on the person. The victims of domestic violence are exposed to enormous and ongoing risk for severe brain injury and psychological problems stemming from trauma.

For more information on the dangers of brain injury in domestic violence read the [2015 story from the New Yorker magazine](#).

By Rolf Gainer, PhD

<http://www.traumaticbraininjury.net/domestic-violence-brain-injury-and-psychological-trauma/>

SHINE THE LIGHT

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

NEW YORK STATE | Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram icons are also present.



STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY FOR YOUR CHILD WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

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can result when a person is exposed to actual or threatened harm to themselves or someone they love. It's traumatic to watch your child suffer. As parents, the moment our children are born, our imaginations become extremely adept at conjuring ways they can be hurt. We try to control it by childproofing our homes; using safety equipment; teaching stranger danger. Imagine having to childproof against self-harm or suicidal thoughts. It's soul-crushing.

My child's hospitalization is what haunts me most. At one point, they put him in restraints, strapped him down while he screamed at them. I had to give permission to do this and to use sedatives. I relive that choice often. I'm crying just writing about it. He would have hurt himself otherwise, but watching them jab that needle into him, and then trying to comfort him while he passed out, will never leave me. He was hospitalized on May 21st last year, and the memories only intensify as we get closer to the anniversary. I relive it every time he has an outburst.

These are hallmarks of PTSD, though that's hard to admit. It makes me feel weak because I wasn't the one who went through it (my son did). It's all there, though, and I wouldn't doubt it's more common for parents of children with mental illness than we think.

Getting Help to Stay Mentally Healthy for Your Child with a Mental Illness

Parents are already under a microscope in our culture. As a parent of a child with mental illness, though, you also have providers in your life. I'm not concerned I'm going to hurt my child, but providers have to be concerned about that with everybody. It's their job as mandatory reporters. As a parent of a child with mental illness, you are aware of this, and you're afraid anything you say or do will be held against you. You're afraid that getting depressed and simply not cleaning your home, for instance, will be cause for child protective services.

I assure you, though: Having your own mental illness is not child abuse, and providers won't see it that way. They are professionally equipped to even help you. So ask for help. You need to be mentally healthy for your mentally ill child. So remember to care for yourself, too.

By Melissa David, A clinical social worker and mother based out of Minnesota. She has two young children, one of whom struggles with mental illness. <http://bit.ly/HealthyPlaceBlog>



Mental Health Association
OF CORTLAND COUNTY

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MENTAL HEALTH DAYS ARE GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Each day, millions of Americans with chronic conditions—mental illness, addictions, diabetes, asthma, and many more—go to work. In fact, 15% of adults who are employed full-time and 20% who are employed part-time experienced mental illness in the past year. Sometimes people with mental health conditions—like those with physical health conditions—need time off from work to cope with heightened symptoms or seek treatment.

Unfortunately, many people are skeptical of people taking sick leave to address mental health concerns. If you look up “mental health day” on websites that explain slang terms, most of the definitions equate the term to “playing hooky”—as if mental illness doesn't merit the same consideration as physical illness. At SAMHSA, [they] work tirelessly to fight this type of misinformation. That's why a recent news story that attracted a great deal of attention

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MENTAL HEALTH DAYS ARE GOOD FOR BUSINESS

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gave [them] so much hope. When a web developer asked to take time off from work to “focus on her mental health,” the company’s CEO responded in an exemplary manner. He praised the web developer for reminding her co-workers of “the importance of using sick days for mental health” and being “an example to us all.”

Employers—particularly those with a small number of employees—have considerable flexibility in setting sick leave policies. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act and other civil rights laws give workers and job applicants with mental illness the same protections as those with any other chronic health condition. So, the CEO made a valid point about supporting mental health days when he wrote, “I can’t believe this is not standard practice at all organizations.”

[We] applaud the employee for her openness and the CEO for his encouragement of other employees to step forward when they need to take time off to focus on their mental health. By encouraging employees to take mental health days when needed, the CEO showed that he is not only a caring person, but also a smart businessperson. He knows that a mentally healthy workplace can lead to increased productivity. As the Harvard Mental Health Letters observed, “In the long term, costs spent on mental health care may represent an investment that will pay off—not only in healthier employees, but also for the company’s financial health.” Ensuring employee access to treatment (through health coverage and time off) reduces turnover, sick days, and workplace accidents, while increasing hours worked.

If you’re an employer who’d like to be more supportive of employee mental health needs, SAMHSA can help by providing guidance. It’s important to remember that people with mental illness, including those with serious mental illness, are willing and able to work. SAMHSA promotes evidence-based supported employment through grants to states and a comprehensive toolkit for service providers and government agencies. If we all work together, we can achieve a future in which asking for a mental health day is no different from calling out with a bad cold.

By Paolo del Vecchio, MSW, Director, SAMHSA’s Center for Mental Health Services, <http://bit.ly/MHDaySAMHSA>

Community Events & Support

607 Healing Hearts

Monday, October 16th; 6:00 - 8:00pm

28 N. Main St., Cortland, NY

Grief support group for parents/guardians who have lost a child due to an overdose.

For more information: 607healinghearts@gmail.com

Food for Thought:

Wednesday, October 11th; Noon - 1pm

Cortland Career Works, 99 Main St. Cortland, NY

Alex Huntington-Ofner, MSW Cortland County MH, and Lt.

David Guerrero will present on Suicide Prevention Award received by Cortland Police Department

FoodForThoughtRSVP@gmail.com or call 607-756-8970

Family Matters:

Wednesday, November 1st; 5:30pm

Cortland High School, Cortland, NY

“Natural Highs” Presented by Matt Bellace, PhD
alma.johnson@dfa.state.ny.us or call 607.423.3437

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

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

- Contact: (607) 756-8970

Parents & Change Support Group

Oct 9 Nov 13 Dec 11 Jan 8

(Monthly/2nd Monday)

- When: 6:00 to 7:30 PM

- Where: Community Center, 90 Central Avenue

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

Family Caregivers Support Group (Monthly)

- When: 4th Thursday at 7:00–8:00pm

- Where: Cortland Regional Medical Center Nursing Facility Assembly Room

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

 If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for inclusion in the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org by the 14th of the month prior, Or subscribe to the newsletter via email.

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.