



~~MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA~~ presents

May is Mental Health Month "You Can Live Your Life Well"

Some people think that only people with mental illnesses have to pay attention to their mental health. But the truth is that your emotions, thoughts and attitudes affect your energy, productivity and overall health. Good mental health strengthens your ability to cope with everyday hassles and more serious crises and challenges. Good mental health is essential to creating the life you want.

Just as you brush your teeth or get a flu shot, you can take steps to promote your mental health. A great way to start is by learning to deal with stress. Stress can eat away at your well-being like acid eating away at your stomach. Actually, stress can contribute to stomach pains and lots of other problems including the following:

- ⌘ headaches
- ⌘ insomnia
- ⌘ overeating
- ⌘ vulnerability to infection
- ⌘ back pain
- ⌘ high blood pressure
- ⌘ irritability

Stress also can lead to serious mental health problems, like depression and anxiety disorders. If you think you have such a problem, you can get help. Of course you can't magically zap all sources of stress. But you can learn to deal with them in a way that promotes the well-being you want--and deserve.

The concrete steps we're suggesting are not based on guesses, fads or advice from grandma (though she probably got a lot right). They represent hundreds of research studies with thousands of participants, often conducted over decades and backed by major universities or government agencies.

This research shows that how good you feel is to a fairly large extent up to you. No matter how stressful your situation, you can take steps to promote your well-being.

We're not talking about huge changes to your lifestyle, either. We're talking about reasonable steps that if used consistently can increase your comfort and boost your ability to build a rewarding life.

-Eddie Whitlock, Director

UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Mental Health America of Northeast Georgia is hosting monthly educational programs on a variety of topics. The programs are offered free of charge and are open to the public.

The series began in March with a presentation by Tracy Tarbutton on the Treatment and Accountability Court (TAC). About 25 people turned out for the program, which was held at Buffalo's Restaurant.

Ms. Tarbutton discussed TAC, a program that provides treatment for those whose mental illness has led to an arrest. Judge David Sweat oversees the Athens Treatment and Accountability Court.

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UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (continued from cover)

The April program featured Dr. Cindy Darden, the CEO of Advantage Behavioral Health Systems. Dr. Darden's speech was on the topic of grief.

In her presentation "Life Equals Love Plus Loss," she covered the stages of grief from both clinical and personal points of view. Dr. Darden noted that death is not the only loss people face. Loss may include loss of a job, loss of a home, or loss of health.

About two dozen people attended the event at Athens Technical College.

Future topics are scheduled to include depression, teen suicide, and schizophrenia. Announcements will be made through local media and on the MHANEGA website.

-EW, Director

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH EVENTS:

"Mental Illness Treatment and Recovery" presentation at the Jefferson Public Library at 6 pm on Tues., May 5

"Recognizing Mental Illness" presentation at Athens Technical College Auditorium at 5 pm on Wed., May 13

"Blues to Fight the Blues" at Little Kings Shuffle Club in downtown Athens on Fri., May 15 and Sat., May 16

Cornhole Tournament at Little Kings Shuffle Club May 16

More events will be added. Visit our website for updates.

The Mental Health America of Northeast Georgia [Blog]

The term blog is short for "web log," an online place where a person—or organization—posts information regularly. Websites tend to have static (though hopefully up-to-date) content while blogs are postings of articles, commentary, or other information. Most blogs are updated daily to weekly.

Our own blog, www.fightthestigma.wordpress.com, was begun in September of last year. We've had over thirteen hundred visitors to the site. More than two dozen of those visitors left comments. Some have also put links to our blog on their websites.

The postings on the MHANEGA blog are divided into the categories of advocacy, education and service. Because so many of the entries overlap into more than one category, we encourage people to use the search function on the right side of the screen to search for entries that have a certain topic.

Many of the postings are of articles taken from the news media or online professional publications. Once or twice each week, the entry deals with a local topic.

Each posted entry has an option for those visitors who wish to make a comment about the posting. The comment is screened before it is posted to prevent inappropriate language or off-topic replies.

Anyone wishing to submit an article for posting on the blog can submit it to us at office@fightthestigma.com. The entry can be attributed to the author or, if so desired, posted without revealing the name of the author. We will screen submissions here as well.

If you have a blog of your own that focuses on mental health issues and would like us to provide a link to it, please share the web address with us.

The blogosphere is full of projects that were started and abandoned. We are working to keep the 'fightthestigma' blog going and growing and invite MHANEGA members to share in this.

-EW, Director

ONLINE RESOURCES for MENTAL HEALTH

This article is not designed to provide a complete list of websites for mental health information. It is merely a starting point for those who are researching a mental health issue. If you have specific websites you would like to recommend, please visit our blog at www.fightthestigma.wordpress.com and add your comments there.

When researching online for specific information, one sometimes finds articles posted that may be inaccurate or may promote an unsubstantiated treatment. It is crucial to get your information from reliable sources.

The national office of Mental Health America (MHA) hosts a great website: www.mental-healthamerica.net. The site provides a great deal of information on the organization, national goals, and affiliates across the country.

It also features excellent information that is organized by disorder/treatment, audience, and issue. The MHA website is always helpful for those looking for an overview on a particular mental health concern.

Similarly, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has a strong national site: www.nami.org. NAMI's website lists many references on the home page, and is divided into areas for locating information, for finding support, and for getting involved.

NAMI issues annual report cards to the states, grading each of the fifty on their addressing of mental health. This year's national average is "D," making for some disturbing yet fascinating reading.

For legal information, the Treatment Advocacy Center can be found on the web at www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org. Under the leadership of Dr. E. Fuller Torrey, this group has long pushed for treatment of those with severe mental illness.

The Treatment Advocacy Center's website is very helpful to those who have specific mental health concerns and feel limited by the law in addressing them. Their recognition of anosognosia (the inability of a person to realize that he or she has a mental illness) has helped professionals and laymen develop strategies to address this difficult situation. -EW

GETTING THE LATEST MENTAL HEALTH NEWS ONLINE

Using the Google search engine, you can stay up to date with mental health news from across the country and around the world.

- Go to www.google.com.
- Click the news button at the top of the screen.
- On the news page screen, you will see a list of top stories in a column on the left. Below that is an envelope icon. Click on news alerts there.
- You will now enter the information to create a news alert:
 1. The search term (such as "mental health")
 2. The type of entry (use "news")
 3. How often you wish to receive the alert (daily, weekly or as it happens)
 4. Your email address

For my own news alert, I did two of these. On one, I entered the search term "mental health" and on the other, "mental illness." Each of these alerts typically generates five to ten news stories each day.

Most of the news stories I get through this news alert method are not directly about our work here in Northeast Georgia. However, many of the articles are relevant because they cover the same issues that we face here.

Currently the news alert is helpful in seeing that the budget crisis faced here in Georgia is going on in most states. Mental Health is facing cuts everywhere.

By following the battles that others face, we can find best practices and work to avoid the missteps others have taken.

Google is not the only search engine capable of alerting users to news items. It is the one that we are using at the MHANEGA office. It is being shared here because of its ease of use. If you want to share information about other search engines, please do so at our blog: www.fightthestigma.wordpress.com.

-EW

If you have an article you'd like us to consider for the next newsletter, or a particular topic you'd like us to cover, please contact Eddie Whitlock at (706) 549-7888 or email: director@fightthestigma.com

Already a member? Invite a friend to join! Together we can make a difference!

To join Mental Health America of Northeast Georgia, complete the form below and mail with your dues to: **MHANEGA, PO Box 6384, Athens GA 30604**

Name: _____

Address: _____

email: _____

_____ \$15.00 Student

_____ \$250.00 Corporate

_____ \$20.00 Individual

_____ \$500.00 Lifetime Individual

_____ \$30.00 Family

_____ \$_____ Contribution

_____ \$100.00 Associate

If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

Click here for a membership form you can print and mail in.