



FIRST SUN
EAP

We Help People Be Better at Work

**Mental Health
Awareness
Month Kit**
for Leaders





Mental Health Awareness Kit

A guide for leaders

In this kit, leaders are referred to as human resources professionals, business owners, executives, supervisors, managers and anyone who oversees a group of people. Please share this kit with the leaders in your organization.

Welcome to the Mental Health Awareness Kit guide for leaders. This kit will help you understand your vital role in promoting awareness and offering guidance to foster a positive mental health culture. You'll find essential resources to help your employees and their families understand and navigate mental health challenges.



Mental Health Awareness Kit — A Guide for Leaders

Why Use This Kit

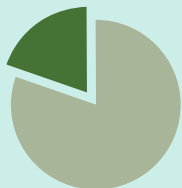
- **You are influential:** You have daily contact and a rapport with many people. This relationship opens an opportunity to observe individual behavior. This kit will heighten your awareness of when help is needed, how to take action and when to direct your employees to their employee assistance program (EAP).
- **Reduce stigma:** When your environment embraces mental health awareness, employees feel comfortable seeking assistance. This removes one barrier to getting help. A mentally healthy workforce is crucial for productivity, satisfaction, success and breaking the silence around mental health.
- **Supporting employees:** How you handle the demand for support reflects the outcome of your employees. Leaders who value mental health give employees confidence and offer their organization an advantage in retaining and attracting talent. You'll learn about many support methods in this kit.

How to Use This Kit

1. **Distribution:** Share this kit with all leaders. Consider including it in your manager communications and posting it on your intranet.
2. **Training:** Conduct workshops to educate employees and leaders on mental health awareness using the resources provided.
3. **Discussion:** Encourage open conversations about mental health to reduce stigma and create a supportive workplace.
4. **Feedback:** Gather employee feedback to improve mental health initiatives in your organization. You can receive employee feedback through annual surveys, anonymous feedback, orientations and corporate meetings.
5. **Questions:** If you have questions about your First Sun EAP services, please contact us at AccountManagement@FirstSunEAP.com or 800-968-8143.

Did you know ...

According to the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI):



1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year



1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year

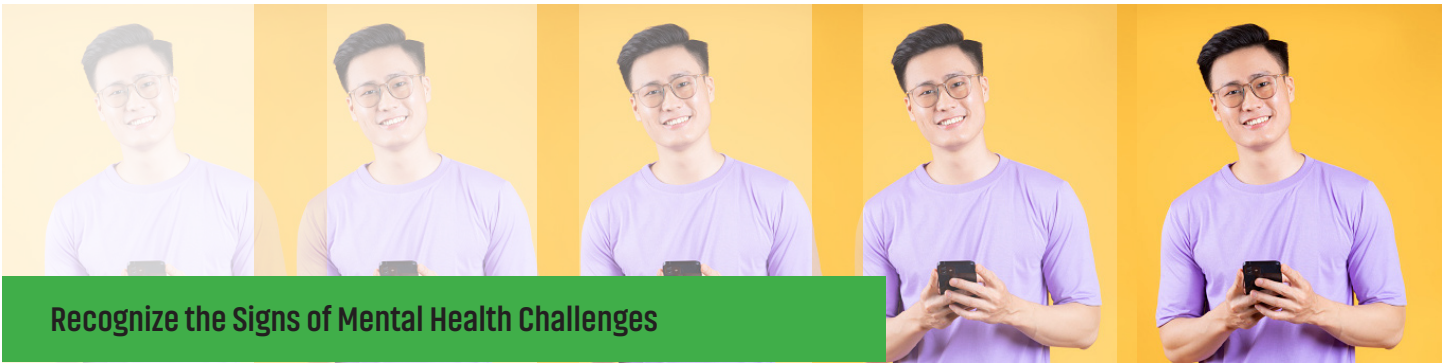


50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24



1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-14



Recognize the Signs of Mental Health Challenges

Your responsibility extends beyond achieving business objectives. It includes nurturing a healthy and supportive work environment. One critical aspect of this responsibility is recognizing the signs of mental health challenges in your staff. Understanding these signs and taking proactive steps to address them acknowledges that their mental health is essential.

Why Mental Health Matters in the Workplace

Mental health is one of the crucial components of well-being. It impacts every aspect of an individual's life, including work performance. According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), mental health conditions like depression and anxiety can significantly affect work productivity and absenteeism. Recognizing and addressing mental health challenges is part of creating best business practices that feed into an inclusive culture.

Signs of Mental Health Challenges:

- **Change in behavior:** This is one of the most noticeable signs. Changes may include increased irritability, mood swings, excessive worrying, or a sudden withdrawal from social interaction. Being observant of significant shifts in behavior can provide valuable insight into an individual's mental well-being.
- **Decline in performance:** While work performance issues can stem from various factors, declining mental health can be a potential cause. These signs may manifest as decreased productivity, missed deadlines, disorganization, or an inability to concentrate on tasks.

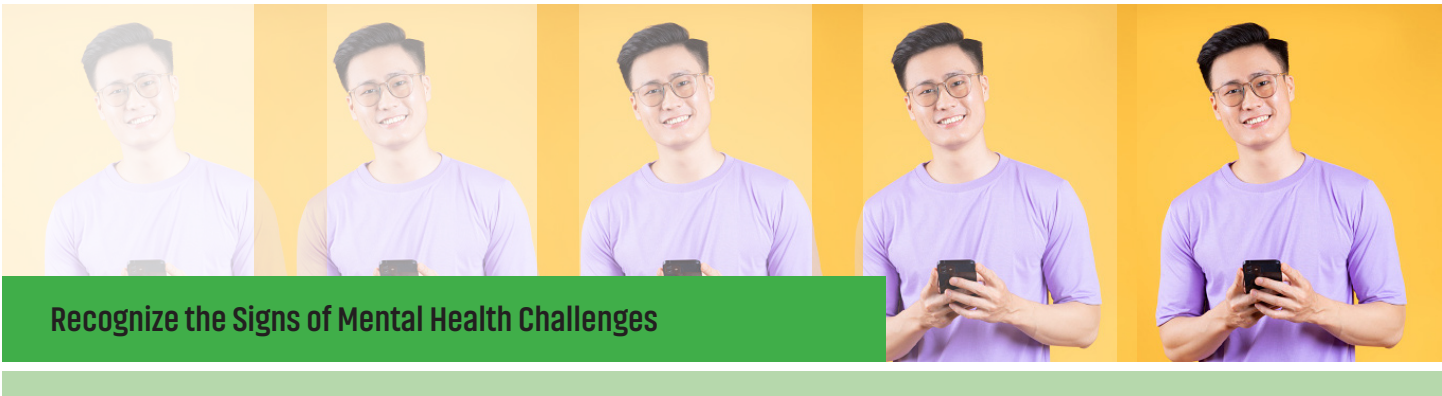
- **Physical symptoms:** You may see a decline in physical well-being, such as fatigue, changes in appetite or weight, frequent headaches, or unexplained aches and pains. These symptoms can be signs of underlying depression, stress or anxiety and can also lead to absenteeism.

SOURCE: Kaiser Permanente

Mental health conditions can be attributed to **62% of missed workdays.**

Untreated depression **costs \$9,450** per employee, per year in absenteeism and lost productivity.

80% of employees who receive treatment for a mental health condition report **improved job satisfaction.**



Recognize the Signs of Mental Health Challenges

- **Emotional instability:** Individuals may struggle to regulate their emotions. They may exhibit intense emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or anger. They may also have difficulty expressing their feelings.
- **Social withdrawal:** Signs of this may include avoiding social interactions, isolating oneself from colleagues, or declining invitations to work-related events. Social withdrawal can be a coping mechanism for individuals who are struggling.
- **Difficulty concentrating or making decisions:** Mental health challenges often affect cognitive functioning. As a result, you may observe problems with concentrating, making decisions, or focusing on tasks. These signs, along with processing information, completing assignments, or engaging in problem-solving activities, are signs of presenteeism.
- **Substance use increase:** To cope, individuals may turn to alcohol, drugs or prescription medications to self-medicate. Increased substance use or dependence can exacerbate mental health symptoms and negatively impact overall functioning.
- **Heightened sensitivity to stress:** Individuals may exhibit heightened sensitivity to environmental stressors. They may become easily overwhelmed by everyday tasks, situations, or changes they previously managed. Their heightened stress response can lead to increased anxiety and difficulty coping with their daily workload.

Being attentive to the signs of mental health challenges will help you build a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking help. Recognizing and addressing these challenges benefits team members and improves their health and productivity.

Work presentee-ism rebounds the most after people use their EAP for counseling.

Almost two-thirds of EAP users start counseling with a work presenteeism problem, but this rate is nearly cut in half after treatment. 60% vs. 34%

SOURCE: International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications



Create a Supportive Work Environment

Leaders play a pivotal part in shaping the culture and atmosphere of the workplace. A supportive environment enriches employee well-being and enhances productivity, engagement, and overall organizational success. You can apply these strategies to create a workplace where employees feel valued, respected and supported:

- 1. *Openly communicate:*** Employees should know from day one that dialogue about mental health is encouraged. When employees understand mental health is not taboo, they can honestly share their feelings with colleagues. In turn, that listener can motivate them to seek help. When an employee is speaking to you, ensure their conversation is confidential, and communicate that they can get assistance through their EAP, call [NAMI](#) at 988 or text “helpline” to 62640.
- 2. *Emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I):*** Adding DE&I into your core values is a priority for employees. Promote a culture of respect, belonging and acceptance for all employees. Addressing systemic inequalities in corporate policies and practices can prevent the social exclusion of people with mental health challenges.
- 3. *Provide education:*** Support employees with continuous learning about mental, physical, social and financial well-being. They can proactively use their resources when recognizing signs of declining well-being.
- 4. *Promote work-life balance:*** Support flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible hours and adjusting workloads. Encourage employees to take regular breaks and vacations to recharge and avoid burnout. Lead by example by prioritizing work-life balance in your schedule and decision-making.
- 5. *Appreciate your employees:*** When done well, recognizing achievements, milestones, and contributions combined with increased well-being improves an employee’s daily emotions, lowers burnout and creates stronger work relationships.
- 6. *Support mental health and well-being:*** Direct employees to their EAP. They can discuss available resources. First Sun clients can also research their specific topics on the [Well-being Center](#). Underscore the importance of prioritizing mental health through regular check-ins, flexible schedules, and stress management workshops.
- 7. *Lead with empathy and compassion:*** Demonstrate empathy and understanding towards employees with concerns. Take the time to listen and validate their feelings. Direct them to their employee benefits for help navigating their personal and professional challenges.
- 8. *Cultivate a positive work environment:*** Foster a culture of positivity, optimism, and resilience. Encourage teamwork, collaboration, and camaraderie. Create a physically and psychologically safe workspace where employees feel comfortable expressing themselves and taking risks.

A supportive work environment for mental health requires intentional effort and commitment from leadership. By applying these strategies in your organization, you can decrease and prevent risk factors for employees struggling with mental health issues.



Building a Resilient Workplace for Employees

In today's dynamic and fast-paced work environment, the ability of an employee to adapt to challenges and bounce back from adversity is critical – especially when their well-being directly impacts your organization's success. By prioritizing mental health awareness and resilience-building initiatives, you can create a culture where individuals feel supported, empowered, and capable of navigating life's inevitable ups and downs. Knowing and using the tools available for mental health support is not just an option – it's a necessity. Explore how resources for the entire organization can strengthen mental well-being and create a thriving workplace where everyone can flourish.

Empower Your Employees

First Sun EAP well-being resources:

- Raise awareness about their EAP services. Each employee and every household member receives counseling sessions and life management services. Please contact your HR department for plan specifics.
- Access benefits by filling out the [form](#), or call us at 800-968-8143. Crisis calls are addressed 24/7/365.
- Supply your employees with a [brochure](#) of their EAP services.
- Display materials. Hang [posters](#) about popular well-being topics in common areas like break rooms, bulletin boards, and entrances. Consider placing our magnets with EAP contact information in the restroom for discreet access to support.
- Direct them to the [Well-being Center](#). The center holds thou-

sands of articles, webinars, short courses, micro-learning videos and more self-help tools.

- Recommend mental health assessments. The [assessments](#) uncover your strengths, challenges and mental fortitude. They suggest self-care tools and resources based on the user's results. Locate the Assessments tile in the Well-being Center.

Link education and well-being strategies:

- Allocate funds for [lunch-and-learn](#) sessions on mental health awareness, stress management, mindfulness practices, and resilience-building techniques.
- Promote well-being by inviting guest speakers and mental health professionals to conduct interactive workshops and Q&A sessions.
- Hold annual employee orientations to discuss their benefits. First Sun customers can request an orientation or employees can access the [recording](#).
- Arrange a [benefits fair](#) and invite all your point-solution vendors. Request support materials or attendance from First Sun.

Mental Health Awareness (MHA) Resources

[Building Your Coping Toolbox](#)

[Negative News Coverage and Mental Health](#)

[MHA offices by state](#)





Building a Resilient Workplace for Leaders

Equip Your Leaders

Training:

- Conduct an annual orientation that includes your organization's tools and policies for mental health, DE&I, employee recognition, and promoting a positive culture.
- Show leaders how to initiate mental health conversations and refer individuals to appropriate resources, including the EAP. We are happy to provide a [manager orientation](#) to help leaders understand the role of EAP services.
- Create criteria for regularly checking in with individuals. Hold regular check-ins outside of standard meetings. Prepare a list of questions to instigate the check-in. Ask how things are going without prying. Ask if they'd like to discuss anything or how their workload is going. Ask how you can support them in their performance. Be a good listener and allow for transparency without judgment.

Formal workplace referrals:

- Learn how to initiate the [formal process](#) of referring an employee with a free consultation from our Risk Management team.
- Train leaders to handle these sensitive discussions and to use the formal workplace referral as a guide to better the performance of a struggling employee.

What's Important Now (W.I.N.) sessions:

- Attend our free W.I.N. sessions. We discuss topical issues with a subject matter expert to bring leaders the latest

answers to address these sensitive issues.

- Watch the recording of our popular W.I.N. session, [Burnout: A Leader's Toolkit](#).

15
mins.

Holding a 15-minute group check-in call weekly can boost morale and become eagerly anticipated by your team. SOURCE: Robert Half

For 2023, HR leaders said improving awareness and communication around their benefits is their #2 strategic priority. SOURCE: One Medical

2nd

64%

64% of workers said they're struggling with mental or behavioral health issues. 91% of them said they're less productive due to their issues. SOURCE: One Medical



Building a Resilient Workplace for Leaders

Implementation:

- This is a great way for leaders to learn what their EAP offers employees and what it offers them. When leaders are educated about the program, they are more likely to use and recommend it.
- First Sun hosts a live monthly webinar called EAP 101. It provides an in-depth look at how your organization, employees and their household member are supported. [Join us annually](#) for a refresher on service updates, new offerings, and events. You also receive HRCI and SHRM credits!

EAP sessions:

- As times change, so should your plan. Meet the needs of your employees by annually evaluating the number of EAP sessions. Currently, employees use about five counseling sessions within 50 days.
- Be inclusive. You can cover part-time, seasonal, contracted and temporary employees under your EAP plan.
- Be a role model. Use the EAP when you are in need.

Embed education and training for leaders:

- Allocate resources for regular leadership training. Trained leaders lead with confidence and efficiently address employee challenges.
- Regularly offer educational sessions on mental health, stress management, and self-care practices. You can incorporate these sessions into your development forums, team meetings, and organizational events.



Promote a culture of well-being:

- Prioritize employee well-being by providing resources, support, and encouragement for mental health awareness throughout your culture.
- Encourage open communication, mutual support, and the destigmatization of mental health throughout your organization.
- Appoint a team representing all levels of the organization to actively promote a culture of well-being.

Building resilience and promoting mental well-being is a collective effort involving the organization – employees and leaders. By providing accessible resources, training opportunities and support services, you can create a workplace environment where everyone feels empowered to prioritize their mental health and thrive personally and professionally.



A special thank you to Mental Health America for sharing their materials. Please pass along their “Decision Map” and “Four Things Likely to Affect Your Mental Health and Four Things You Can Do About It.” If you have questions about your First Sun EAP’s services, please contact us at AccountManagement@FirstSunEAP.com or 800-968-8143.

Credits: Please copy and paste the links into your browser.

Mental Health America (MHA)

<https://www.mhanational.org/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

<https://www.nami.org/>

World Health Organization (WHO)

https://www.who.int/mental_health/en/

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

<https://www.psychiatry.org/>

International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications

[https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/bitstream/handle/10713/20645/ATTRIDGE%20\(2023\)%20EAP%20Commentary%20US%20-%20revisedAugust10_final_IJSRP.pdf?sequence=1](https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/bitstream/handle/10713/20645/ATTRIDGE%20(2023)%20EAP%20Commentary%20US%20-%20revisedAugust10_final_IJSRP.pdf?sequence=1)

Robert Half Company

<https://www.roberthalf.com/us/en/insights/management-tips/why-employee-mental-health-is-so-critical-today-and-how-managers-can-help>

One Medical

<https://www.onemedical.com/mediacenter/study-finds-although-64-of-employees-are-struggling-with-their-mental-health-only-19-used-their-companys-mental-health-benefits-last-year/#:~:text=Year%20%7C%20one%20Medical-,Study%20Finds%20Although%2064%25%20of%20Employees%20Are%20Struggling%20with%20Their,Mental%20Health%20Benefits%20Last%20Year>

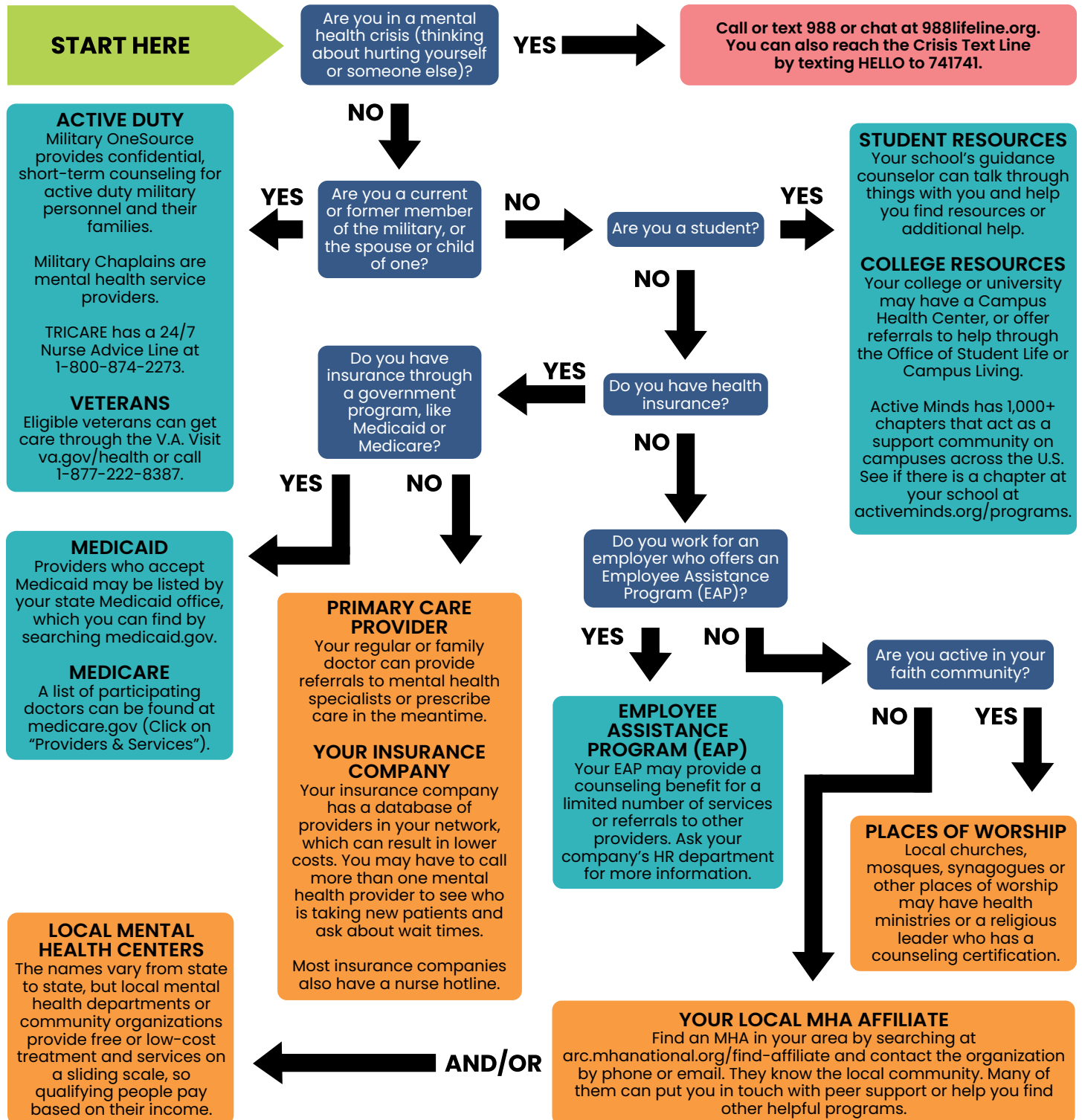
Kaiser Permanente

<https://business.kaiserpermanente.org/insights/mental-health-workplace/mental-health-stigma-costs#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20staying%20silent,-Because%20stigma%20drives&text=Employees%20with%20untreated%20mental%20health,those%20who%20do%20get%20treatment.&text=Mental%20illness%20is%20the%20single%20greatest%20cause%20of%20worker%20disability%20world-wide.&text=62%25%20of%20missed%20workdays%20can%20be%20attributed%20to%20mental%20health%20conditions>

→ WHERE TO START ←

DECISION MAP: WHERE TO GO

When you've decided to seek help, knowing what resources are available and where to start can be tricky. Use this decision map to help you figure out your options. If you don't find help where a path ends, try any of the resources in the gold boxes.



Use this tool online at mhanational.org/where-to-get-help.

→ WHERE TO START ←

4 THINGS LIKELY AFFECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, AND 4 THINGS YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Relationships or the pressures of performing at work or school are things we all know can have an impact on mental health, but sometimes it's less obvious when the world around you is what's causing problems. Whether you realize it or not, one or maybe all of these four things are probably affecting your mental health in some way right now.

CURRENT EVENTS

Violent events impact people across the world. Maybe you have family in a conflict zone, are worried about increases in identity-based hate, or have no personal ties to a particular news event but are constantly seeing graphic images online. A 2022 study found that 73% of American adults reported being overwhelmed by the number of crises going on in the world.

LONELINESS

Recent survey data show that more than half of U.S. adults (58%) are lonely, with those who are low income, young adults, parents, part of an underrepresented racial group, or living with a mental health condition experiencing even higher rates of loneliness. Loneliness increases the risk of developing anxiety and depression, and has been associated with psychosis and dementia. A low level of social interaction was found to have an impact on lifespan equivalent to smoking nearly a pack of cigarettes a day or alcoholism, and was twice as harmful as being obese.

TECHNOLOGY

Having the internet at your fingertips can be a fantastic thing – you can learn, connect with healthcare providers, keep in touch with friends and family – but it isn't without its downfalls. Exposure to constant [bad] news coverage and contentious political campaigns can make anyone's mood sour and cause anxiety about what lies ahead. In fact, almost 60% of young people (ages 18-25) expressed considerable worry about the future of the planet. Social media can cause FOMO (fear of missing out), depression, and reduced self-esteem as a result of comparison. Furthermore, the lines between work and personal time are blurred by working from home and after-hours email notifications on your phone, increasing the likelihood of burnout.

SOCIAL DRIVERS

Social drivers (also called social determinants) of health are the conditions in which you live, work, learn, and play. These include economic status, education, your neighborhood, access to resources (nutritious food, health care, green space, transportation, etc.), and social inclusion, and can have a far-reaching impact on not just your physical health, but also your mental health. One social driver that seems to be on everyone's mind is the economy.

Research shows a strong connection between worrying about money and mental distress, and for many people, salaries can't seem to keep up with rising inflation and cost-of-living expenses. A 2023 Gallup poll found that 42% of Americans are worried that they don't have enough money to pay their normal monthly bills.



WHAT CAN YOU DO IF THE WORLD IS WEIGHING ON YOU?

FIND YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having people around you to support your mental and emotional health can make all the difference. Finding those who lift you up, provide a listening ear, and help you through stressful times can make all the difference for your mental health. There are many places to seek support, including friends and family, online support groups, or community spaces. Therapy and counseling can also provide you with an extra layer of support. Seeking out groups where you have similar interests, such as a book club, running group, crafting class, or spiritual community, can offer comfort and connection. Ultimately, you want a support system that suits your needs and provides a safe space for healing.

SET TECH LIMITS/BOUNDARIES

You can create space for a healthier relationship with technology by setting boundaries. Do some research to figure out what works best for you to limit screen time. Some things to try are blocking social media use between certain hours, putting time limits on apps, checking your phone settings, or downloading a website/app blocker. Decide your reason for logging on before you do, and sign off when you've finished doing what you need to do.

CHANGE WHAT YOU CAN

With the state of the world, life can feel overwhelming, and as if nothing you do will make a difference. The good news is there are some things you can do. Taking action and advocating for causes important to you can be therapeutic in its own way. Advocacy and action as a form of healing can be powerful. Knowing you are doing what you can to make a difference can give you hope for the future. Try getting involved in causes near you, join advocacy groups, get out and vote, do your part in helping the planet, or stay informed and speak up on topics that need support.

FIND HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

It can be tempting to ignore your feelings or numb them with substances, but this doesn't help anyone in the long run. Invest some time into figuring out what works best to help you manage your feelings. You may have to try a bunch of things until you find something that works, but it will be worth it. Check out MHA's list of coping skills in our [Building Your Coping Toolbox article](#).

Sometimes trying to manage your mental health by yourself is too much. Seeking professional help shows strength and can provide you with the support you need to manage life's stressors. Talking to a counselor or therapist can help you identify what might be affecting your mental health and how to best cope.

If you're taking steps to help yourself but still feel like you're struggling, take a mental health test at mhascreening.org, and check out MHA's book "Where to Start" for tips on how to take action.

In crisis? Help is available! Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.