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May 2023 Edition

“You don’t seem depressed.” “You’re being so dramatic, it is not that serious.” “Just snap out of it!” “Deal with it!”

Prejudice: Mental Health

Have you ever uttered these words or phrases similar to them? Or have they been directed toward you? For those who suffer from depression and other mental illness, these are familiar phrases and only serve to exacerbate their isolation. People with mental illness are marginalized and discriminated against every day, whether subtly or in blatantly obvious ways. A lack of awareness, understanding, education, and empathy can lead to harm in the forms of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination.



May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and in this digest, we provide tips on how to become more self-aware about mental illness, become an ally, and create workplaces

that can be a safe space for employees with mental illness. We will focus on depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder, and also examine the invisibility of mental illness.

Understanding Depression, Anxiety Disorders, and Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think, and how you act.

Depression affects an estimated one in 15 adults (6.7%) in any given year. And one in six people (16.6%) will experience depression at some time in their life.

- Being sad is not the same as having depression. The grieving process is natural and unique to each individual and shares some of the same features of depression.
- Both grief and depression may involve intense sadness and withdrawal from usual activities. They are also different in important ways.

According to the [Association Psychiatric Association](#), "more than half of people with mental illness don't receive help for their disorders. Often, people avoid or delay seeking treatment due to concerns about being treated differently or fears of losing their jobs and livelihood."

Anxiety disorder refers to anticipation of a future concern and is often associated with muscle tension and avoidance behavior.

- Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can be beneficial in some situations. It can alert us to dangers and help us prepare and pay attention.
- Anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness or anxiousness and involve excessive fear or anxiety.
- Anxiety disorders can cause people to try to avoid situations that trigger or worsen their symptoms. Job performance, school work, and personal relationships can be affected.

Other Mental Health Disorders	Types of Anxiety Disorders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)• Bipolar disorder• Personality disorders• Schizophrenia	Generalized anxiety disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panic disorder• Specific phobias• Agoraphobia• Social anxiety disorder• Separation anxiety disorder

AMGA's Work

Take a look at some brief descriptions of projects AMGA's Research and Analytics department are currently working on or have implemented around Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and Chronic Opioid Use (COU) and dementia. [Click Here.](#)

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a treatable mental disorder that affects a person's brain and behavior, leading to their inability to control their use of substances like illegal drugs, alcohol, or legal medications. Symptoms can be moderate to severe, with addiction being the most severe form of SUD.

- Both SUDs and other mental disorders can run in families, meaning certain genes may be a risk factor.
- Studies found that people with a mental disorder, such as anxiety, depression, or [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#), may use drugs or alcohol as a form of self-medication. However, although some drugs may temporarily help with some symptoms of mental disorders, they may make the symptoms worse over time.

An article written in *Psychology Today* by Robert C. Ciampi, LCSW, discusses how mental illness has been viewed differently than physical illness for many years. He asks the question "Why is there a disparity between the understanding of a person who is physically unwell and a person who is emotionally or mentally ill?" He concludes that mental illness is less quantifiable and more qualitative in nature, which means that many physicians are not trained or practiced in identifying it. This is true not just for providers. Oftentimes family, friends, and coworkers can pinpoint a physical illness before recognizing when someone is suffering from mental illness.

"It is assumed that a broken bone will produce pain and that it will take some time for it to heal and for the pain to subside. However, those who have never experienced the pain of psychiatric illness, such as depression, do not understand that the pain can be greater than that of a person suffering from a broken bone. Yes, it hurts to have a mental illness." – Robert C. Ciampi

What Can We Do?

Don't feel you have to know everything about or be able to recognize every symptom of mental illness. Just be aware that many people around you may be struggling with it, and it is not always easy to recognize when mental illness is a factor in their behavior. Be aware of our pre-judgements, assumptions, and the stigma toward

individuals who may be in mental pain. Be open to having honest, empathetic conversations and support your coworkers and friends who may be going through difficult times.

Below, we provide a number of resources for you to review at your convenience that will assist you in becoming more aware of mental illness.

Also, remember that AMGA has a resource for those who are seeking counseling through the **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**. If you feel comfortable, talk to your supervisor or a trusted source who can be an ally for you and help get the support you need. If you have questions about how to access the EAP, contact Laura Welsh at lwelsh@amga.org.

What Can Leaders and Managers Do?

Workplace mental health: 5 ways to support employee wellness:

- Understand how mental health impacts your employees.
- Include mental health coverage as part of your healthcare plan.
- Establish an employee assistance program (EAP).
- Use communication to reduce stigma and increase access to mental health resources.
- Promote well-being

Reflections

How can AMGA be safe workplace for employees? How can you better support a friend or family member with mental illness or SUD? In what way might you have pre-judged someone with mental illness or SUD? What kind of language have you used toward them? Have you been treated unfairly because of a mental illness?

We invite you to bring your perspective to the Discussion Den taking place **June 9, 2023, 12 - 1 pm ET** as we will continue to explore these questions. If you can't

Video Resources:

[Stanford's Sapolsky on Depression in U.S. \(Full Lecture\)](#)

[Depression | Talking about mental health - Episode 4](#)

[Addiction Neuroscience 101](#)

[Hooked, Hacked, Hijacked: Reclaim Your Brain from Addictive Living: Dr. Pam Peeke at TEDxWallStreet](#)

make it for any reason, please feel to reach out to us and we'd be happy to involve your thoughts in the conversation.

Resources of the Month

DE&I Committee May Picks:

[New Surgeon General Advisory Raises Alarm about the Devastating Impact of the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation in the United States](#), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 2023

[Caring for Your Mental Health](#), National Institute of Mental Health, December 2022

[Depression](#), Cleveland Clinic, 2023

[How to Make Workplaces More Inclusive For People with Invisible Disabilities](#), Harvard Business Review, April 2023

[How Managers and Leaders Can Actively Support Individuals with Invisible Disabilities](#), Forbes, 2023

[Substance Abuse vs. Addiction](#), Wake Forest University

Do you have a topic you want to see in the next edition of *DE&I Digest*? Do you want us to tell your story? Send topics or your story to DEICommittee@amga.org for review by the DE&I Committee. Please ensure

Raise Your Cultural IQ!

Did You Know?

May marks Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which celebrates the histories and communities of Americans with familial and cultural ties to the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. This year, the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) has selected “Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity” as the 2023 theme for the month honoring people who identify as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI).

The month was the brainchild of Jeanie Jew, a former Capitol Hill staffer, who shared the idea with Rep. Frank Horton, who introduced the legislation that formed it.

In 1977, Horton introduced a resolution that would establish Pacific/Asian American Heritage Week. Sen. Daniel Inouye introduced similar legislation to the Senate.

In the following year, Horton, with cosponsor Rep. Norman Mineta,

resources submitted are from reputable sources.

introduced another related resolution that passed. President Jimmy Carter signed it in October of 1978.

AAPI Heritage Month Events in Washington, DC

[Washingtonian: AAPI Heritage Month Celebrations Around DC](#)

[DC Public Library Events](#)

[District Fray Magazine: 15 Way to Celebrate AAPI Heritage Month in D.C.](#)

[Smithsonian: Heritage and History Month Events](#)

[The World of Possibilities Disabilities Expo](#)

[Fifth annual Active for Autism 5K & Kids Dash](#)

[Shine Brighter Together](#)

[Sensory-Friendly Activities in DMV](#)

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? We'd love to hear from you! Email the DE&I Committee at DEICommittee@amga.org

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