

# May Is Mental Health Awareness Month, Help #BreakTheStigma Today

*Addiction and other struggles with mental health are a problem for many, yet due to societal stigmas, few reach out for support. Find out what you can do to stop these stigmas and raise awareness surrounding mental health struggles and the support available to help.*

One in five Americans faces some sort of struggle with their mental health each year, and nearly two thirds will face some form of mental illness within their lifetimes. Yet despite this remarkable prevalence, a variety of societal and internalized stigmas leave many unable or unwilling to reach out for the support that they so desperately need.

Many may feel as though others are going to judge them, whether directly through some sort of remark or comment or indirectly through a change in perception or actions such as avoidance. Much of this stigmatization may be deeply internalized as well. People can feel vulnerable seeking help, and some may feel as though they're supposed to manage their mental health all alone. These internal and external stigmas act as a barrier for many, preventing them from seeking treatment or even just speaking about their situation in the first place.

## Mental Health Awareness Month

For the last 71 years, Mental Health America and affiliated organizations have remained on a sustained campaign to shatter these stigmas to allow people to seek the help they may very much need. What originally started as the National Mental Health Awareness Week throughout the '40s and '50s, turned from a weekly campaign to a monthly one as May became Mental Health Awareness Month in the 1960s.

The campaign is focused on raising awareness and educating the public about various mental illnesses, their notable prevalence, and the treatment options available to help them. In the age of the current coronavirus crisis and the age of social distancing, the National Alliance on Mental Health has chosen "You Are Not Alone" for this year's theme. This theme highlights the prevalence of mental illness and conveys the potential help available, as well as the importance of having connections and relationships during these trying times.

For those living with addiction, these connections can be all-the-more important. As noted in Johann Hari's seminal work on addiction "Chasing The Scream", addiction is often the opposite of connection, meaning substance abuse is often the result of difficulty connecting with others rather than simply chasing an altered state. Feelings of isolation and other aspects such as a lack of routine created by the crisis have led to a direct increase in substance abuse and other mental health disorders.

Addiction is commonly referred to as "substance use disorder" by mental health professionals and comes with a variety of challenges and stigmas in its own right. Compounding these challenges, many living with addiction may face additional mental illnesses as well. This is

known as dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorders, where a person has been diagnosed with both a mental illness and substance use disorder simultaneously. This is far more common than people may think, with nearly half of those living with substance use disorder facing a mental illness or disorder at some point throughout their lives.

The compounding of these problems can be plenty for anyone to bear and are often overwhelming for many. Thankfully for those struggling, there are treatment options available to help. Dual-diagnosis treatment programs utilize an approach known as integrated intervention, understanding the way these disorders compound on each other and treating them in tandem.

## **Reach Out Today**

Mental Health Awareness Month is a time to help raise awareness and shatter the stigmas surrounding mental health. You are not alone when it comes to managing the struggles of substance use and other mental health disorders, and there is help available for you during your time of need.

You should never feel alone when facing mental illness and the struggles that come with it. We offer a world-class licensed dual-diagnosis treatment program to help those living with co-occurring disorders better manage their mental health.

Call 1-844-I-CAN-CHANGE today to speak to one of our experienced, compassionate admissions coordinators and all that Lighthouse Recovery can offer. Our trusted team of treatment professionals is here for you to help when you need them most.