

2024 Mental Health Awareness Month – Promo & Comms

Week 0: Kick-off Email

Send date: Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Subject: Mental Health Awareness Month: Living Well with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

All of us, at one point or another, experience symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. This reality doesn't have to prevent us from living well and experiencing a good quality of life.

In fact, there's a lot we can do to take charge of our mental health and overcome or manage these symptoms.

This year, as we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month, we're going to provide learning and connection opportunities to help you feel informed, supported, and empowered to support your mental health needs.

Check out the kick-off blog post on the InsideSource for more details.

To stay connected with Mental Health Awareness Month activities and conversations, [click here](#) to join Mental Health Awareness in Microsoft Teams.

What's Coming Up

Below is a highlight of upcoming activities and webinars. Meeting invites will be sent separately and include additional details. All participation is optional.

Webinar screenings are showings of live or pre-recorded webinars to create a space where participants can use the chat to discuss what they're learning and/or join the webinar to listen as time allows.

May 1-3: Mental Health Awareness Month kick-off

- All ERGs: Mental Health Tools, May 3

May 6-10: Healthy coping strategies

- Mindful Minutes for Self-Care Challenge in Virgin Pulse, May 6 – June 2
- Info sessions for Mindful Minutes challenge, May 6 & 7
- Health Advocate webinar screening: Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout: Moving Toward Hope and Health, May 8

May 13-17: Accessing mental healthcare

- Accessibility Advocates (employee resource group) mental health panel discussion, May 14

- Accessing Mental Healthcare webinar with Member Support Specialists, May 14 & 15
- Live Health Advocate webinar screening: Mental Health and Me, May 16

May 20-24: Supportive communication

- Live Burnalong webinar: Conscious Communications, May 21 & 22
- Health Advocate webinar screening: Coworkers and Mental Health Issues: How to Help, May 23

May 27-31: Supportive communities and relationships

- Health Advocate webinar screening: Handling Highly Emotional Callers, Customers, and Coworkers
- Health Advocate webinar screening: Strengthening Your Relationships

Resources to support your mental health

Throughout the month, you'll learn more about how our mental health programs and resources can help you. [Click here to get a head start](#) and learn more about:

- Health Advocate, our employee assistance program
- Teladoc for behavioral health
- Member Support Specialists
- And more!

Cheers!

Week 0: Kick-off InsideSource Article

Post date: Tuesday, April 30, 2024

Subject: Kicking off Mental Health Awareness Month

Header: Living Well with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

Body copy:

All of us, at one point or another, experience symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. This reality doesn't have to prevent us from living well and experiencing a good quality of life.

In fact, there's a lot we can do to take charge of our mental health and overcome or manage these symptoms.

Here's what you can expect over the next four weeks:

- Week 1: Healthy coping strategies
- Week 2: Accessing mental health care and resources
- Week 3: Supportive communication
- Week 4: Forming supportive relationships and communities

Below is more information about what all of this will look like. It's a lot of information—we know. But don't stress! You can engage with as much or as little as you have time and capacity for.

This is just to let you know what to expect and help you prioritize the activities that will be most relevant for you.

Activities during Mental Health Awareness Month will be geared toward educating, empowering, and connecting. Separate meeting invites will be sent out for these events, and event information will be added to the calendar on the PS Web home page. Here's what that will look like:

Mindful Minutes for Self-Care Challenge in Virgin Pulse

Join the challenge in Virgin Pulse starting May 1 and spend four weeks prioritizing mindfulness for self-care. This is an individual-based challenge (no teams) where participants choose a weekly mindful minutes goal. Throughout the challenge, you'll learn more about mindfulness and self-care while you log your mindful minutes. As you progress through your goal, you can earn points for the Healthy Life Rewards program.

Info sessions will be held on Monday, May 6, and Tuesday, May 7, to help participants get set up in Virgin Pulse, access and join the challenge, and get answers to questions they may have about the challenge.

Health Advocate Webinar Screenings

Did you know that Health Advocate, our employee assistance program, has a variety of pre-recorded and live webinars to support you in work and in life? Meeting invites will be sent for webinar screenings so that you can watch a selection of these webinars with your peers and coworkers.

The purpose of these screenings is to familiarize yourself with Health Advocate resources while also creating space for discussion. Participants are encouraged to use the chat functionality to connect as they learn, though this is not required. The webinar screenings include:

- Depression, anxiety, and Burnout: Moving Toward Hope and Health, May 8
- Mental Health and Me, May 16 (live webinar)
- Respectful Communication: Civility in the Workplace, May 23
- Coworkers and Mental Health Issues: How to Help, May 28
- Handling Highly Emotional Callers, Customers, and Coworkers, May 30

Accessing Mental Healthcare webinar with Member Support Specialists

Accessing mental healthcare services can be tough—that's a reality we live with. But getting access to care is still possible, and Restricted Member Support Specialists Lindsey Rickman and Victoria Johnson are here to help!

Join us on May 14 or May 15 for this interview-style webinar where Lindsey and Victoria share more about how they can support you in accessing mental healthcare, and—more importantly—share their tips and tricks to help you better understand what you can do to access mental healthcare services.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Mental Health

One of the many benefits of employee resource groups (ERGs) is that they create spaces of belonging and safety among people with shared or similar lived experiences. During Mental Health Awareness Month, there will be opportunities to learn more about ERGs, mental health tools, and have open discussions. Watch for more information and calendar invites.

Learn and Connect on Mental Health Awareness Teams

Webinars can be tough to accommodate in our busy schedules. To help you still connect while respecting your capacity, you can join your coworkers on the Mental Health Awareness Teams where you can check out daily “micro-learning” opportunities. This means bite-size pieces of information to stay engaged with our weekly content in about 30-60 seconds. Contribute to conversations as time allows so you can learn and share more about mental health topics.

Mental and Behavioral Health Resource Highlights

Learning and connection opportunities are great, but sometimes you need a little more help. That’s where our resource highlights come in. Throughout the campaign, we’ll share tips and tricks for how to use existing resources to your benefit, particularly our employee assistance program (Health Advocate) and Teladoc for behavioral health.

Finally, we’ll do our best to provide links to webinar and event recordings wherever possible, so if you’re able to attend something that’s of interest to you, no worries! In instances when we’re not able to provide recordings, we’ll provide other documentation to make the information available.

Questions? Contact EmployeeWellness@pacificsource.com.

Week 1: Healthy Coping Strategies

Send date: Monday, May 6, 2024

Subject: MHA Week 1 | Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

Header: How you cope matters

Body copy:

How you cope matters

When you think about coping strategies for stress, anxiety, and depression, what comes to mind?

The thing is, not all coping strategies truly support your mental health. While they may seem helpful at the time—like unwinding at the end of the day with a drink—it’s important to understand that how you cope matters, and not all go-to coping strategies are truly supporting your mental health.

This week, we’re focusing on identifying and establishing healthy coping skills to help you manage stress, anxiety, and depression. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember to join us in [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#) for daily bite-size learning opportunities and to connect with your coworkers on this topic.

Activities This Week

- **May 6 – June 2** | Mindful Minutes for Self-Care Challenge in Virgin Pulse
- **May 6 & 7** | Info sessions for Mindful Minutes challenge
- **May 8** | Health Advocate webinar screening: “Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout: Moving Toward Hope and Health”

Did you miss a meeting invite? Meeting invites for these activities are attached to this email for your convenience.

ERG Highlight | Veterans Alliance

PacificSource’s newest ERG, Veterans Alliance, is designed to create a supportive and empowering community for our employees with military backgrounds, as well as those who are passionate about supporting veterans. This group will play a crucial role in enhancing our workplace culture, providing valuable insights, and fostering connections among our diverse teams.

To learn more about this ERG, contact Bethany Saint Claire or [visit the Veterans Alliance ERG page on the PS Web.](#)

Resource Highlight | Health Advocate, employee assistance program

In challenging times, it can be helpful to talk to someone for support and resources. With Health Advocate, our employee assistance program, you and your family members have access to a licensed counselor who will listen and provide emotional support and coping tips for personal, family, and work issues, at no cost to you.

Health Advocate can help with stress, anxiety, depression, relationships and parenting issues, financial and job pressures, grief, substance abuse, and more.

Here’s how it works:

1. Call Health Advocate at 866-799-2485
2. An intake counselor will conduct a brief assessment to determine your needs and connect you to the right counselor to begin counseling sessions.
3. If needed, you’ll be connected to a Work/Life Specialist to locate childcare/eldercare, legal/financial, relocation, or other resources you may need.

[Explore other Health Advocate resources at HealthAdvocate.com/members.](https://www.healthadvocate.com/members) From here, you can also request counseling support using the online form.

Understand your counseling options

Connect with us to figure out what type of counseling may work best for you and what counseling options are available to you.

[Begin here](#)

Cheers, and be well!

Week 1: Healthy Coping InsideSource Article

Post date: Friday, May 3, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

Headline: Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

Header: How you cope matters

Body copy:

You might not always have control over the things that cause you stress or feelings of anxiety and depression, but you do have control over how you cope with those feelings. In those moments, you get to choose how you cope, and how you cope matters.

To truly help yourself in those moments and support your mental health and emotional well-being, you'll want to ensure you're choosing healthy coping strategies.

What's the difference between healthy and unhealthy coping strategies?

- **Healthy coping strategies** promote long-term well-being and resilience, often address the root cause of your emotions, and help you manage your emotions effectively.
- **Unhealthy coping strategies** may provide temporary relief but can have negative long-term consequences and could even worsen your symptoms.

Here are some examples of healthy coping strategies:

- **Mindfulness and meditation:** These can help you tune into your thoughts and emotions in a calmer way. For more practice with this, see below for more information about the Mindful Minutes for Self-Care challenge.
- **Therapy:** Mental health professionals provide the tools to help you help yourself. They can work with you to identify strategies for managing your stress, anxiety, and depression in a healthy and constructive way.
- **Sleep:** Sometimes stress can prevent us from getting enough quality sleep, but by prioritizing healthy coping activities, you can set yourself up for better sleep, which builds on your other coping practices. Sleep helps your body naturally reduce levels of stress hormones, helping you stay calmer and regulate your emotions better.
- **Exercise:** Regular physical activity can reduce stress hormones, improve your mood, and help you sleep better. Choose activities you truly enjoy for an extra boost.

- **Social connections:** Reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness by connecting with friends, family, or other community or social groups. This is a great way to get emotional support and help you work through your feelings.

Some common examples of unhealthy coping strategies include using drugs or alcohol, avoiding problems or issues, withdrawing from social interactions and support networks, and dwelling on negative thoughts without actively addressing them.

If any of these unhealthy coping strategies are familiar to you or common go-tos, you're not alone. For Mental Health Awareness Month, challenge yourself to start taking steps to trade unhealthy coping strategies for ones that will serve you better in the long run.

Virgin Pulse Journeys to Help You Cope

For additional guidance to practice better coping strategies, [check out the Journeys in Virgin Pulse](#). Journeys provide daily micro-learning opportunities to ease you into new habits or learn more about healthy behaviors. Some options to consider include:

- Calm Your Mind for Sleep
- Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others
- Coping Under Pressure
- Explore Life with Less Alcohol

Mindful Minutes for Self-Care Challenge in Virgin Pulse

Remember to join the Mindful Minutes for Self-Care challenge! The challenge runs from May 6 to June 2. This is another great opportunity to practice looking out for yourself and to support your mental health and emotional well-being.

Here's how to join:

1. Sign up for Virgin Pulse or log into your account. ([Click here for sign-up instructions.](#))
2. Go to the "Social" menu option and select "Challenges".
3. Join the Mindful Minutes for Self-Care challenge.
4. Complete the prompts to identify your mindful minutes goal.
5. Track your progress in Virgin Pulse throughout the month.

For more information about this challenge, join one of the brief challenge demos on May 6 and 7. Refer to meeting invites and/or the calendar on the PS Web homepage for info session details.

Week 2: Accessing Mental Health Care

Send date: Monday, May 13, 2024

Subject: MHA Week 2 | Strategies for Accessing Mental Healthcare

Body copy:

Explore your mental healthcare options

Living well while managing symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression doesn't mean we have to take that journey alone. In fact, one of the best things you can do to support your mental

health and manage your experience with these symptoms is to work with a mental healthcare provider or access mental healthcare resources.

Oftentimes, that's easier said than done. Accessing mental healthcare can be a challenge in many of our communities—but challenging does not mean impossible.

This week, we're focusing on accessing mental healthcare, including tools you have access to, how to seek out a provider that's right for you, and overcome barriers to care. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember to join us in [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#) for daily bite-size learning opportunities and to connect with your coworkers on this topic.

Activities This Week

- **May 14** | Accessibility Advocates (ERG) mental health panel discussion
- **May 14 & 15** | Accessing Mental Healthcare webinar with Member Support Specialists
- **May 16** | *(Live)* Health Advocate webinar screening: "Mental Health and Me"

Did you miss a meeting invite? Meeting invites for these activities are attached to this email for your convenience.

ERG Highlight | Accessibility Advocates

The Accessibility Advocates ERG is open to employees with a visible or invisible disability (either diagnosed or self-identified), as well as employees who love and care for someone with a disability. If you're thinking, "Do I fit in?", the answer is yes!

Join the Accessibility Advocates for a conversation about mental health

This week, the Accessibility Advocates ERG is hosting an open house panel discussion to talk about mental health, and all employees are welcome to join. Several of the ERG members will be participating on the panel. If you have questions you would like the panel members to address during the discussion, submit your questions to [Jenny Hill](#).

To learn more about Accessibility Advocates, contact [Amber Tierney](#) or [visit the Accessibility Advocates ERG page](#) on the PS Web.

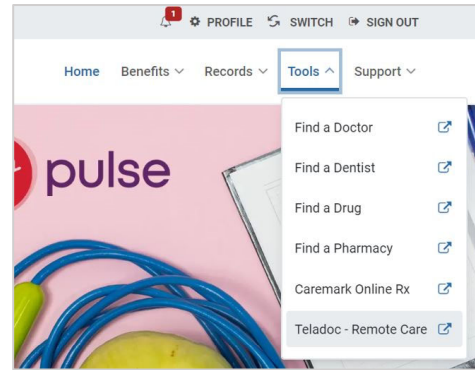
Resource Highlight | Teladoc for Mental Health

If you need mental healthcare fast, Teladoc for Mental Health is a great option for you. Teladoc provides confidential therapy on your terms, with access seven days a week by phone or video. Their licensed therapists can help with stress, anxiety, depression, grief, marital issues, and more.

Do your future self a favor and sign up for Teladoc today so that you're ready to go if/when the time comes:

4. Log into InTouch.
5. Click "Tools" from the top menu.
6. Select "Teladoc – Remote Care".
7. Complete the registration process and health history.

Once you're set up, you can **make access even easier by downloading the mobile app**. With everything set up, you've made it easy for yourself to access mental healthcare when you need it. Well done!



Cheers, and be well!

Week 2: Accessing Mental Healthcare InsideSource Article

Post date: Friday, May 10, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

Headline: Strategies for Accessing Mental Healthcare

Header: Support your mental health with help from providers

Body copy:

It seems like more people than ever are accessing mental healthcare services. On the one hand, this is great because people are feeling less stigmatized and more comfortable caring for their mental health.

On the other hand, this has also made accessing mental healthcare a little more challenging.

Here are some things you can do to access mental healthcare:

- **Take a proactive approach.** If you're not in immediate need for mental healthcare, consider other things you can do to prepare yourself so that you have an action plan should you need additional support. This could look like researching mental healthcare providers in your area, setting up your Teladoc account, identifying your support system, and establishing healthy coping strategies. It's also important to understand your mental healthcare benefits so you can be prepared or explore additional resources if necessary.
- **Talk to your primary care provider (PCP).** Your PCP can help you address your mental health concerns, make recommendations and referrals, discuss medications, and help you identify next steps. Some clinics also have in-house behavioral health services.
- **Sign up for Teladoc.** Teladoc is included in the PacificSource employee health plan and gives you access to mental healthcare providers—often more quickly than scheduling with other in-network providers. [Click here to learn more about Teladoc](#) and how to get started.
- **Contact your EAP.** Your EAP is your employee assistance program, and for PacificSource employees, that means access to Health Advocate. When you contact Health Advocate, they will do a quick intake assessment to determine which resources

will best support you, including counseling and/or life and work resources. [Click here to get more information](#) or call 866-799-2485 to get started today.

- **Check Psychology Today for providers taking new patients.** Finding a provider who is taking new patients can take some time. [Psychology Today](#) gives you free access to a directory of mental health providers and resources like support groups. You can search by your zip code and learn more about the providers in your area, including whether or not they're accepting new patients.
- **Research providers and get on wait lists.** Therapy isn't one-size-fits-all—it's important to find a provider you connect with, and it's OK to try different providers to find one you connect with. You don't have to dive in without any context. The [Psychology Today tool](#) not only lets you search for providers in your area, but you can check out brief bios where they tell you what their specialty is and who they're passionate about helping. If you find someone who looks like a good fit and you're ready to pursue mental healthcare treatment, be sure to get yourself on a wait list. Also be sure to double-check on the [Provider Directory](#) to ensure they're in-network on your health plan.
 - You don't need to be in a mental health crisis to seek support, and getting on wait lists early can help ensure you're able to be seen before a situation becomes hard to manage.
- **Ask people you trust for referrals.** Not all referrals come from providers. Talk to people you trust for any referrals or recommendations they have for providers or resources. This can include friends, family, coworkers, or clergy. Read online reviews with caution: everyone is different and a negative experience for one person doesn't mean your experience would be the same.
- **Explore low-cost options and community resources.** Therapy isn't the only form of mental healthcare. Get curious and research local nonprofits, support groups, and mental health centers for resources. Accessing other resources can help you find some stability, especially if you're on a wait list for therapy. [Check out 211](#), ask friends or family, or do online searches to learn more about what's available in your community. You can also explore options for financial support in accessing mental healthcare services as there may be resources available for that.
- **Seek emergency help if needed.** Sometimes, in spite of your best efforts, mental health emergencies happen and wait lists just aren't enough. In those instances, go to the emergency room or call the mental health crisis line at 9-8-8 to get help right away.

Now that you have some ideas for how to access mental healthcare, take action and put together a plan, even if you don't have an immediate need. When you're struggling with your mental health, taking action can feel even more daunting. Putting together a plan before you need it will help you get quick access to care if or when you find yourself needing mental healthcare.

Week 3: Supportive Communication

Send date: Monday, May 20, 2024

Subject: MHA Week 3 | Communication for alleviating stress and supporting mental health

Body copy:

What did you say?

When you think about the moments when you're experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression, there's often an interaction or communication that has contributed to those feelings. Whether it's a curt email, a vague request, a misunderstanding, or complete lack of communication, how we communicate—especially in a remote or hybrid environment—plays a big role in our mental health.

The good news is that there are a lot of things we can do to foster healthy, supportive communications so that we can reduce or eliminate feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.

This week, we're exploring communication and how all of us have the power to communicate with respect and compassion to support each other's mental health. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember to join us in [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#) for daily bite-size learning opportunities and to connect with your coworkers on this topic.

Activities This Week

- **May 21 & 22** | *(Live)* Burnalong webinar: "Conscious Communications"
- **May 23** | Health Advocate webinar screening: "Respectful Communications: Civility in the Workplace"

Did you miss a meeting invite? Meeting invites for these activities are attached to this email for your convenience.

ERG Highlight | People of Color Unity

The People of Color Unity ERG is open to employees who self-identify as a person of color. The ERG's mission is to advance a diverse and inclusive work environment at PacificSource for employees of color and underrepresented groups. Their efforts are geared toward supporting and fostering community across the organization. Through collaboration with other PacificSource ERGs, they help foster networking, professional development, mentoring, and leadership opportunities.

To learn more about this ERG, [visit the People of Color Unity ERG page](#) on the PS Web.

Resource Highlight | Burnalong

It may sound like a physical health and fitness resource, but Burnalong is also a great resource for mental health and emotional well-being, financial well-being, and more.

Burnalong is an online wellness platform that provides videos to help you stay motivated and keep you healthy—at no cost to you. Plus, you can invite up to four friends and family members to join you. They'll get their own account with access to the same features.

Get Started

1. [Click here to access the PacificSource registration page.](#)
2. Complete the registration fields and follow the on-screen instructions to create your account.
3. Download the mobile app and/or [bookmark the sign-in link](#) for returning users for future use.

Note: It's important to use the PacificSource registration link, otherwise you'll be asked for a payment method. If you are asked for a payment method, contact EmployeeWellness@pacificsource.com to have your account linked to the PacificSource account.

Cheers, and be well!

Week 3: Supportive Communication InsideSource Article

Post date: Friday, May 17, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

Headline: Communication for Alleviating Stress and Supporting Mental Health

Header: What did you say?

Body copy:

Supportive communication provides you with validation, empathy, and a sense of understanding, which is crucial to promoting mental health. In stressful environments or situations, some of this gets lost and poor communication can make those situations worse. It can even create additional conflict and lead to unintended instances of bullying.

To overcome this, it's important to understand what supportive communication looks like, how it can be misconstrued, and questions to ask to help you get on the same page.

(Tip: If you're easily overwhelmed by a lot of information, read this article in small chunks at a time.)



What supportive communication looks like

- **Active listening:** This means listening fully and focusing on what the other person is saying with their words and nonverbal cues. Listen to understand, not to respond. This means listening to what someone is saying without simultaneously thinking about your response.
- **Validating experiences:** You don't have to completely understand or agree with someone's viewpoint to validate their experience. Listen without judgment. Responses can be as simple as, "It sounds like you're dealing with a lot of tough stuff."
- **Offering encouragement:** Self-doubt can be really loud sometimes. Offer someone encouragement and voice your belief in them. Consider things like, "You've shown a lot of strength and resilience in situations like this before and I believe in your ability to get through this. I'm here to support you."
- **Respecting autonomy:** Being supportive doesn't mean solving someone's problem for them. Recognize the other person's autonomy and offer support without solutions. Try statements like, "I trust your judgment and I'm here to support you if you'd like help."
- **Leading by example:** Supportive communication isn't always easy, but when you commit to practicing supportive communication, you're committing to leading by example. It might not seem like much, but when others see and experience the benefits and support, they're more likely to follow suit.

While these are all great practices, stressful situations can interfere with even the best intentions. Simply having different communication styles can create unnecessary conflict or come across as bullying, leading to increased stress and feelings of anxiety and depression.

How different communication styles can create conflict

- **Perception of intimidation:** Assertive or direct communication can come across as intimidating to someone who is a more passive communicator.
- **Misunderstanding tone or body language:** Some people have a general demeanor and expressions that comes across as serious, stern, or even hostile or confrontational, even if that's not how they're feeling.
- **Lack of social awareness:** With so much going on in our own lives, it's sometimes hard to practice social awareness and tune into how others are feeling or how our communication styles affect others. As a result, we might unintentionally disregard others' feelings, boundaries, or perspectives.
- **Power dynamics:** If your supervisor has ever said to you, "Let's talk in my office," with no other context, this can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. The power dynamic tends to imply a negative or confrontational conversation. This can happen in more subtle ways too, so be mindful of the power dynamics between yourself and who you're communicating with.
- **Making assumptions:** When we take communication at more than face value—or read more into what someone is saying than what they actually said—it can lead to miscommunication and sometimes feelings of intimidation or bullying.

Strategies for practicing supportive communication

The good news about all of this is that there are things we can do to help each other create safe space for supportive communication.

- **Have individual and team conversations about communication styles and preferences.** Engaging in the Ntrinx training with the Learning and Development team is a great option. Additionally, team members can engage in one-on-one conversations to discuss questions like:
 - What is your preferred communication style?
 - How do you typically communicate?
 - What does “actively engaged” look like to you? (Some people might look like they’re not paying attention when actually they need to be doing something like drawing or coloring to help them focus and listen.)
 - My communication style is different—how can we meet each other halfway or compromise to feel like we’re both being heard?
- **Wait to respond.** If you get a message that has you feeling anxious or stressed, wait a few minutes or even overnight before responding. Give yourself a chance to regulate your emotions.
- **Read messages with a “news reporter tone”.** Sometimes we misinterpret messages if we’re feeling emotionally activated and apply a tone to messages that were not intended. To remove emotion from the message, read it out loud like a news reporter would. You might interpret the message differently.
- **Get outside perspective.** When we’re feeling especially stressed, anxious, or depressed, it can be helpful to get another perspective. Connect with someone you trust and get their input on the situation. For more honest feedback, don’t give your own interpretation of the message. Try, “Can you read this for me and tell me how you would interpret this?”
- **Ask clarifying questions.** This can be especially helpful in situations that seem passive aggressive. Try asking something like, “I get the impression you’re upset about something. Is there something we should talk more about?” Remember to use “I” statements so that you’re not unintentionally assigning blame.
 - For example: “I thought I was meeting expectations, but I get the impression I’m missing something. Can we talk about this more to make sure we’re on the same page?” Instead of, “You think I’m not doing my job, but I am!”
- **Respect others’ communication preferences.** A community of belonging where we can show up as our authentic selves is important—AND—it’s also important that we respect each other’s differences and demonstrate that respect with how we communicate. If you prefer phone calls to talk through things but your coworker prefers messaging or email, send them a message asking if they have time for a phone call and explain what you want to talk about. This demonstrates respect while also advocating for your own communication preferences.
- **Advocate for your communication needs.** It’s not fair to assume that others should know your communication preferences. Give others the chance to respect your communication preferences by being open about them and brainstorm together how this can be accommodated in future settings.

Keep in mind that creating a safe space for everyone to communicate in a way that’s comfortable for them can take time, patience, and understanding. Give each other grace as you learn, and focus on how you can lead by example. Remember: You can’t control what other people do and say, you can only control what you do and say.

Week 4: Supportive Relationships

Send date: Tuesday, May 28, 2024

Subject: MHA Week 4 | The value of supportive relationships and communities

Body copy:

We're in this together

Last year during Mental Health Awareness Month, we talked about how having friends is one of the best things you can do to support your health. This year, we're expanding on this truth and talking about how we show up for each other. How are you showing up for your coworkers? During times of stress or when you're feeling anxious or down, who do you reach out to?

Having strong social connections helps us remember that while all of our mental health journeys look different, we can still share experiences, empathize, and support each other.

This week, we're focusing on the value of healthy relationships and social connections for living well with stress, anxiety, and depression. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember to join us in [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#) for daily bite-size learning opportunities and to connect with your coworkers on this topic.

Activities This Week

- **May 28** | Health Advocate webinar screening: "Co-workers and Mental Health Issues: How to Help"
- **May 30** | Health Advocate webinar screening: "Handling Highly Emotional Callers, Customers, and Coworkers"

Did you miss a meeting invite? Meeting invites for these activities are attached to this email for your convenience.

ERG Highlight | FLARE

The FLARE (Facilitating LGBTQIA+ Affirming Resources and Education) ERG is open to employees who self-identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. FLARE provides education, empowerment, community, and advocacy to all PacificSource teams, members, providers, and community at-large for the LGBTQIA2S+ community. ERG members endeavor to achieve these goals through a supportive and gender-affirming workplace, healthcare options, and engagement opportunities.

To learn more about this ERG, [visit the FLARE ERG page](#) on the PS Web.

Resource Highlight | Member Support Specialists

Earlier this month, we held an interview-style webinar with Restricted Member Support Specialists Lindsay Rickman and Victoria Johnson.

As we wrap up Mental Health Awareness Month, we wanted to remind you of a few key takeaways that Lindsay and Victoria shared:

- Psychology Today is a great resource for searching for mental healthcare providers in your area and understanding their specialty. Be sure to cross-reference those providers with our provider directory to confirm they're in-network on our employee health plan.
- Be persistent, even if providers have long waitlists. It'll pay off in the long run.
- Be flexible. Sometimes getting timely mental healthcare can mean being flexible about what you're looking for, such as telehealth options instead of in-person.

Remember, if you'd like assistance finding a mental healthcare provider, you can reach out to them at [removed]@pacificsource.com.

Cheers, and be well!

Week 4: Supportive Relationships and Communities InsideSource Article

Post date: Friday, May 24, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

Headline: The Value of Supportive Relationships and Communities

Header: We're in this together

Body copy:

According to a 2023 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, "lacking social connection can increase the risk of premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day."¹ There's an abundance of research about the mental and physical health risks associated with isolation and loneliness, but what does that look like in our day-to-day lives?

There's a difference between enjoying some downtime to yourself and experiencing isolation and loneliness. Isolation and loneliness can have serious negative effects on your mental health and emotional well-being.

First, let's break down loneliness vs. isolation because they're similar but have distinct differences:

- **Loneliness** is a subjective feeling or experience resulting from perceived isolation or lack of meaningful connections.
- **Isolation** is objectively having few social relationships or roles and infrequent social interaction.

¹ Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community, 2023, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

If you're already feeling symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, isolation and loneliness can make those symptoms worse or might even be partly to blame for those symptoms. Here's how:

- Without social interaction and support, you may experience feelings of sadness or hopelessness, which can make depressive symptoms worse.
- Lack of social connections and support networks can result in you feeling overwhelmed by worries or concerns, which feeds feelings of stress and anxiety.
- They can negatively affect self-esteem and self-worth by leading you to internalize feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy.
- Loneliness and isolation can interfere with your sleep, and sleep problems can exacerbate mental health issues.
- Without social networks to provide a buffer against stress and adversity, it can result in reduced resilience and coping skills.
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation can lead to an increased risk of substance abuse from attempts to cope with those feelings and other heightened emotions.

Now that you understand the negative impact social isolation and loneliness can have on your mental health, what can you do to overcome that and create strong, supportive relationships and communities?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Boost the relationships you have.** Whether the relationships are peers, coworkers, acquaintances, or family, find opportunities to engage in more frequent or more meaningful ways. Examples could include regular in-person coffee chats, device-free activities, or trying new things together.
- **Practice forgiveness and understanding.** All of us at one point or another need some empathy and compassion for mistakes we've made. Harboring negative feelings from past experiences can sometimes cause us to put up barriers or prevent ourselves from getting close to others.
- **Re-establish connections.** Some people isolate themselves as a way of coping with difficult emotions, which puts strain on relationships. If you've neglected the people or friends you've had, it might feel like you don't have them at all. Re-establish those relationships by reaching out to them.
- **Participate in social activities.** This can look like joining social clubs, enrolling in recreational sports, get involved in committees at work, attend events, or looking for local meetups in your community. Great places to look for these opportunities include at work, within your spiritual community, local community resources like fairgrounds, event centers, and recreation leagues.
- **Volunteer in your community.** Volunteering is a great way to help you meet people and feel connected where you live. You can choose from one-time events to ongoing volunteer support, depending on what's most comfortable for you. Bonus: Volunteering and giving back can promote a sense of purpose, which another great way to support your mental health and emotional well-being.
- **Identify common interests.** Connecting with others over shared hobbies is a great way to establish new connections or strengthen existing relationships. Having a shared

interest can also help alleviate anxiety about meeting new people because you can chat about your mutual interest to help break the ice.

- **Establish boundaries.** Not all connections are healthy. Sometimes, it's necessary to evaluate how you feel in certain relationships and decide what boundaries might be necessary to support your mental health. In doing so, you free up emotional and mental capacity to invest in healthier relationships.

Understand that building supportive relationships and community involves a combination of effort, openness, and willingness to connect with others. When you're feeling a lot of stress, anxiety, and depression, building these relationships might feel too overwhelming to pursue. However, the benefits of making the effort can be profound.

Give yourself the grace to start slowly and take baby steps. Taking even one small action today can help you create the momentum you need to establish supportive, healthy relationships.

Week 5: MHA Month Wrap-up

Send date: Monday, June 3, 2024

Subject: Wrapping up Mental Health Awareness Month

Body copy:

We want to hear from you

Every year, our goal with our Mental Health Awareness Month campaign is to engage employees in conversations around mental health and provide education and resources to help individuals feel supported and empowered.

As we wrap up this year's campaign, we ask that you complete the Mental Health Awareness Month wrap-up survey in Workday. Your feedback helps us evaluate what's working and how to structure future efforts.

Watch for a Workday email notifying you that the survey is ready to complete. This survey will be open until end-of-business on Friday, June 7.

ERG Highlight | Allyship at PacificSource

We said at the beginning of this campaign that there's an ERG for everyone. If the Veterans, Accessibility Advocates, People of Color Unity, or FLARE ERGs are not applicable for you, we hope you'll join our **Allyship at PacificSource ERG**.

This employee resource group brings together allies who are committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, in support of and in solidarity with, groups of people who are underrepresented and experience systemic inequities.

To learn more about Allyship at PacificSource, [visit the Allyship at PacificSource ERG page](#) on the PS Web.

Reminder: Mental Health and Well-being Resources

- [Mental health resources page on the Healthy Life site](#)
 - Health Advocate, our employee assistance program
 - Teladoc for mental health
 - Hotline numbers
- [Contact a Member Support Specialist](#)
- [DEI Council and ERGs](#)
- [Burnalong and Virgin Pulse](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#)

Cheers, and be well!

Week 5: Wrap-up InsideSource Article

Post date: Friday, May 31, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

Headline: Wrapping up Mental Health Awareness Month

Header: Darn, that's the end—sort of

Body copy:

Another Mental Health Awareness Month campaign is in the books! We hope that this year's focus on living well with stress, anxiety, and depression have given you information, tools, and resources to help you manage these issues in healthy ways that support a good quality of life.

Here's a recap of the information and resources that we shared during this campaign:

Blog articles

- [Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression](#)
- [Strategies for Accessing Mental Healthcare](#)
- [Communication for Alleviating Stress and Supporting Mental Health](#)
- [The Value of Supportive Relationships and Communities](#)

Webinars and event recordings

- [Health Advocate webinars](#) (go to the [Health Advocate landing page](#) and search "PacificSource" before accessing the links):
 - [Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout: Moving Toward Hope and Health](#)
 - [Mental Health and Me](#)
 - [Respectful Communication: Civility in the Workplace](#)
 - [Coworkers and Mental Health Issues: How to Help](#)
 - [Handling Highly Emotional Callers, Customers, and Coworkers](#)
 - [BONUS: Strengthening Your Relationships](#)
- [ERG Open House: Mental Health Tools](#)
- [Accessibility Advocates: Mental Health Panel Discussion](#)

- [Member Support Specialists Tell All: Accessing Mental Healthcare](#)
- [Conscious Communications – a Burnalong webinar](#)

Resources to support your mental health

- [Mental health resources page](#)
- [Teladoc for mental health](#)
 - Check out this video: [How to Schedule a Mental Health Visit](#)
- [Health Advocate](#), employee assistance program (search “PacificSource”)
- [Psychology Today therapist directory](#)
- [PacificSource provider directory](#)
- [Employee Resource Groups](#)
 - [Veterans Alliance](#)
 - [Accessibility Advocates](#)
 - [People of Color Unity](#)
 - [FLARE](#)
 - [Allyship at PacificSource](#)
- [Connect with a Member Support Specialist](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness on Teams](#)
- [PacificSource Social Clubs](#)
- [Burnalong](#) – mental health and emotional well-being videos, including “Conscious Communications” playlist
- [Virgin Pulse](#) – Journeys, videos, and habits to support mental health and emotional well-being

Remember to watch for the Mental Health Awareness Month wrap-up survey to provide your feedback! Your input helps us plan ongoing mental health activities and future Mental Health Awareness Month campaigns. It also helps us identify what opportunities, tools, and resources to prioritize to further support our employee community’s mental health.