

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A FRIEND MAKES

Social Acceptance Is Key to Mental Health Recovery

Recent Findings

Recent Findings from the 2006 HealthStyles Survey¹ (See Table C on Page 3)

- Only around one-quarter of young adults between the ages of 18-24 believe that a person with mental illness can eventually recover.
- Only 42 percent of Americans believe that a person with mental illness can be as successful at work as others.
- Only a little more than half (54%) of young adults who know someone with a mental illness believe that treatment can help people with mental illnesses lead normal lives.
- Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that people with mental illnesses are not to blame for their conditions (84%), only about one in four (26%) agrees that people are generally caring and sympathetic toward individuals with mental illnesses.

National mental health anti-stigma campaign encourages education and support from friends.

The opportunity for recovery from mental illness is more likely in a society of acceptance. Many Americans are misinformed about mental illness and respond negatively when confronted with a friend's mental illness. According to the 2006 HealthStyles Survey conducted by Porter Novelli, fewer than one-third of adults believe a person with mental illness can recover, and about 1 in 4 adults age 18-24 believes a person with mental illness can recover. To help improve awareness about recovery from mental illness, SAMHSA and the Ad Council have developed an anti-stigma campaign, targeted to men and women 18-24 years old, which focuses on friends as a key component of mental health recovery.

¹The HealthStyles Survey is conducted annually by Porter Novelli to assess attitudes and beliefs about chronic and infectious disease and behaviors, exposure to health information, health communication campaigns, and self-reported symptoms, risk factors, diseases and disorders. The survey is based on the results of three consumer mail panel surveys administered in two waves. The surveys are based on a stratified random sample of 20,000 potential respondents. Survey data were weighted to match the 2005 Current Population Survey estimates relative to age, sex, marital status, race/ethnicity, income, and region. In 2006, CDC and SAMHSA collaborated to suggest a series of questions to assess the public's attitudes about mental illness, and the data are licensed from Porter Novelli.





Facts Friends Need to Know About Friends with Mental Illnesses

- Mental illnesses (e.g., depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia) are more widespread than most people realize. According to SAMHSA, in 2005 there were an estimated 24.6 million adults age 18 or older who experienced serious psychological distress (SPD), which is highly correlated with serious mental illness. Almost every family in America is affected by someone with a mental illness.²

Table A. Self-Reported Health Conditions During the Past Year

	All Ages (n = 5,251)		18 – 24 years (n = 672)	
	N	%	N	%
Anxiety	629	12.0	125	18.6
Dementia	46	0.9	*	*
Depression	641	12.2	117	17.4
Eating Disorder	203	3.9	58	8.7
Schizophrenia	52	1.0	15	2.2

*Note: Sample size <10

HealthStyles October 2006 Data

- Mental illness can happen to anybody regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or background.
- Nearly 1 out of 5 persons 18-24 reports having a mental illness.
- Major depression and anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental health problems experienced by young adults, who experience most serious mental illnesses at a higher rate than the general population.
- The incidence of eating disorders among 18- to 24-year-olds was more than twice as prevalent than among all ages.
- Mental illness is treatable. There are more treatments, strategies, and community support systems available than ever before, including medication, rehabilitation, psychotherapy, group therapy, self-help, or a combination of these.
- People with mental illness can and do recover. Studies show that most people with mental illnesses get better, and many recover completely.

- Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential.
- Among 18- to 25-year-olds, the prevalence of SPD is high (18.6% for 18-25 vs. 11.3% for all adults 18+), yet this age group shows the lowest rate of help-seeking behaviors.²
- Those with mental health conditions in this age group have a high potential to minimize future disability if social acceptance is broadened and they receive the right support.
- One of the main reasons why people don't seek help is because of the stigma associated with mental illness. Stigma is a big barrier to recovery.
- People with mental illnesses are good employees. Studies by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Alliance to the Mentally Ill (NAMI) show that there are no differences in productivity when people with mental illness are compared with other employees.
- People with a mental illness need to be treated with respect, compassion, and empathy just as anyone with any other serious but treatable condition.
- Almost two-thirds of 18- to 24-year-olds know someone with depression or alcoholism and more than 40 percent of the 18- to 24-year-olds know others with a drug addiction.

Table B. Percentage of People Who Know Others with These Illnesses

	All Ages (n = 5,251)		18 – 24 years (n = 672)	
	N	%	N	%
Anxiety	2,032	38.7	297	44.1
Dementia	1,550	29.5	119	17.7
Depression	2,997	57.1	427	63.6
Eating Disorder	1,028	19.6	161	23.9
Schizophrenia	668	12.7	80	11.9
Drug Addiction	1,909	36.4	282	41.9
Alcoholism	2,894	55.1	422	62.8

HealthStyles October 2006 Data

²2005 National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NSDUH) Data, SAMHSA.

Table C. Percentage of Agreement with Attitudes About Persons with a Mental Illness (weighted percentages)

Statement		Moderately or strongly agree % (n)	Moderately or strongly disagree % (n)	Neither agree or disagree % (n)
Dangerous to Others	All Ages	23.1 (1,190)	41.5(2,137)	35.5 (1,828)
	Age 18-24	23.5 (158)	42.1 (282)	34.4 (231)
Unpredictable	All Ages	38.2 (1,959)	24.7 (1,264)	37.2 (1,905)
	Age 18-24	38.9 (258)	27.2 (183)	33.4 (221)
Hard to Talk With	All Ages	19.3 (988)	38.6 (1,978)	42.1 (2,156)
	Age 18-24	17.9 (119)	45.2 (302)	36.9 (246)
Treatment and Support Helps	All Ages	67.3 (3,432)	7.0 (356)	25.7 (1,312)
	Age 18-24	56.3 (372)	11.6 (76)	32.0 (212)
Feels Like Us	All Ages	39.0 (1,951)	26.9 (1,344)	34.1 (1,708)
	Age 18-24	44.0 (296)	19.4 (128)	35.8 (237)
Can Eventually Recover	All Ages	28.8 (1,440)	29.5 (1,475)	41.8 (2,090)
	Age 18-24	26.9 (176)	33.8 (221)	39.3 (257)
Can Be As Successful at Work As Others	All Ages	42.4 (2,133)	18.0 (904)	39.7 (1,996)
	Age 18-24	43.3 (287)	16.9 (112)	39.8 (264)
Treatment Can Help People Lead Normal Lives	All Ages	64.6 (3,295)	6.9 (353)	28.5 (1,451)
	Age 18-24	55.2 (364)	9.3 (61)	35.5 (234)
People Are Caring and Sympathetic	All Ages	25.7 (1,306)	37.9 (1,926)	36.3 (1,844)
	Age 18-24	35.0 (230)	34.0 (223)	31.0 (204)

*Note: Items were modified from the British Omnibus National Survey for the “Changing Minds Campaign of the Royal College of Psychiatrists,” and were used with permission; Crisp et al. 2000.

HealthStyles October 2006 Data

- Young adults are more likely than the general population to know someone with a mental illness. Targeting young adults with public education programs is likely to have a broader impact on reducing stigma and discrimination.
- Two-thirds of Americans believe that treatment and support can help people with mental illnesses lead normal lives.
- Only 1 in 5 persons surveyed feels that persons with mental illness are dangerous to others.
- Everyone can do something to help a person with mental illness...like avoiding the use of “label words,” showing kindness and respect, or helping to eliminate discrimination against housing, employment, or education.
- One of the most important factors in recovery is the understanding and acceptance of friends. Friends can make a difference by offering reassurance, companionship, and emotional strength.
- The emotional and psychological aspects of mental illness make supportive friends and family even more important to a person’s recovery.
- Friends can express an interest and concern for people with a mental illness by asking questions, listening to ideas, and being responsive.
- Friends can help break down the stigma and encourage society to treat mental illness like any other healthcare condition.
- Friends can dismiss any preconceived notions about mental illness and embrace a more helpful way of relating to people.

Friends can learn more about mental illness and how to help support a friend who is living with a mental illness in his or her recovery process by visiting www.whatadifference.org.



For general information on mental illness:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	http://www.samhsa.gov/
Center for Mental Health Services	http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/
National Mental Health Information Center	http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/
Resource Center to Address Discrimination and Stigma	http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/
Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign	http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child/
National Institutes of Mental Health	http://www.nimh.nih.gov/HealthInformation/index.cfm

For information on helping a friend:

SAMHSA's National Mental Health Anti-Stigma Campaign	http://www.whatadifference.org
What to Do When a Friend Is Depressed	http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/friend.cfm
Ulifeline—an online resource center for collegiate mental health	http://www.ulifeline.org/page/main/Home.html
American Psychiatric Association: Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives—College Mental Health	http://www.healthyminds.org/collegementalhealth_new.cfm
Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health—Youth Resources List	http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/pgYouthResources.shtml

To order TV, radio, and print ads to share with the media in your community:

Hartford Direct, P.O. Box 7382, Berlin, CT 06037-7382, Phone: 800-933-PSAS (7727), Fax: 860-829-2343
www.whatadifference.org

