



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Champlain East
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

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Mental Illness Awareness

This year, Mental Illness Awareness Week is happening on October 1 - 7. This is a great opportunity to get to know more about mental illnesses, talk more about them and try to end the stigma attached to them.

What are mental illnesses?

Mental illnesses are health problems that affect the way we think about ourselves, relate to others, and interact with the world around us. They affect our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Mental illnesses can disrupt a person's life or create challenges, but with the right supports, a person can get back on a path to recovery and wellness.

Different mental illnesses

Health professionals divide mental illnesses into several different groups based on signs or symptoms. Common groups of mental illnesses include:

- Anxiety disorders (e.g. panic disorder, phobias)
- Mood disorders (e.g. depression, bipolar disorder)
- Eating disorders (e.g. anorexia nervosa)
- Psychotic disorders (e.g. schizophrenia)
- Personality disorders (e.g. borderline personality disorder)
- Childhood disorders (e.g. attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder)
- Dementia (e.g. Alzheimer)

What can I do about it?

Experiencing a mental illness can be very distressing. You may wonder if you'll feel like yourself again. You may not know what's happening to you, and you may worry about other people's reactions. It's important to know that it's not your fault and it's not a sign of weakness. It's important to seek help early. Finding help early will get you on the road to recovery faster and may even reduce the risk of problems in the future.

Treatment often includes a few different approaches—for example, counselling, medication and self-care. Support groups can connect people with shared experiences. And there are many self-help strategies to try.



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How can I help a loved one?

When someone you love experiences a mental illness, you may have conflicting feelings. You may feel worried about their future, and feel relieved that the problem has a name. You may even wonder if you've done anything to cause their illness. These feelings—and many more—are normal.

You can be an important person in your loved one's recovery. Ask what you can do to help. Emotional support is important, but don't forget about practical help with daily tasks, if needed. Remember to take care of yourself and find support, too. Contact your local CMHA branch (see below) to find resources in your community.

How can I make a difference in my community?

Mental illness affects everyone. People who experience a mental illness may face challenges in their communities. Capable workers may not find good employment. Housing may come with restrictions or may be limited by inadequate income. Many challenges around living with a mental illness have to do with unfair attitudes and discrimination. You can make a difference by advocating for people who experience mental illnesses. Let leaders and policy-makers know that your community includes everyone, and support organizations that work to give everyone a voice.

DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

Contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to learn more about support and resources in your area.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca