



# BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

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Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



**Moving Past Stigma  
and Toward  
Mental Wellbeing**

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**Becoming Who  
You Want to Be**

[Click to Read Article](#) ▶



**How Habits Can  
Change Your Life**

[Click to Read Article](#) ▶



**Healthy Recipe:  
Avocado Pasta**

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## Moving Past Stigma and Toward Mental Wellbeing

Mental health concerns go heavily untreated in the United States. With growing statistics of stress, anxiety, depression, and decreased evidence of successful work/life balance, people in the United States struggle to stay on top of their mental health.

There are certain barriers to seeking treatment, known as stigma. Stigma is the negative stereotype associated with mental health concerns, preventing people from seeking necessary treatment.

We often apply our own negative, judgmental thoughts to ourselves, as if we are “weak” for seeking outside help, but we do not call someone weak for seeing a doctor when they are having flu symptoms. We do not call someone weak for taking blood pressure medication.

Taking care of yourself includes taking care of your mental state in addition to your physical state. This constitutes your overall wellbeing, and is integral to leading a happy and fulfilling life.

Fortunately, many people experience improved mental wellbeing with the right help. There are always options, there is always hope, and there is always a healthy way to manage your symptoms.

If you are experiencing these common symptoms of a mental health concern, reach out to your Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 to discuss your benefits and schedule an appointment with the appropriate provider:

- ▶ Feeling sad or down
- ▶ Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate
- ▶ Excessive fear or worry, or extreme feelings of guilt
- ▶ Extreme mood changes between highs and lows
- ▶ Withdrawal from friends and activities
- ▶ Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping
- ▶ Detachment from reality (delusions), paranoia or hallucinations
- ▶ Inability to cope with daily problems or stress
- ▶ Trouble understanding or relating to situations and other people
- ▶ Alcohol or drug abuse
- ▶ Major changes in eating habits
- ▶ Sex drive changes
- ▶ Excessive anger, hostility or violence
- ▶ Suicidal thinking
- ▶ Decreased pleasure from hobbies or activities you used to enjoy



## Becoming Who You Want to Be

While there are mental health concerns that require professional assistance, you can do things in your own life to maintain your stress levels, remain level-headed, and respond properly to the inevitable adversity in your life. You can equip yourself to becoming the person you intend to be by fine tuning yourself mentally and making sure you're on the right track.

**Pay attention to how you feel.** Your behaviors and responses to circumstances in your life can give definite clues to areas of your life that may need improving. You can typically navigate the source of pain or joy by first noticing how you feel, and thinking about the surrounding circumstances that led you there. Notice when you feel happy and content, and try to evoke more of those experiences and contexts into your life. Also notice when you feel uneasy or stressed out, and try to eliminate what you can that might be contributing to your negative emotions.

**Do things that make you proud of yourself.** Everyone has things in mind that they want to change about themselves and about their lives. We are faced with situations regularly that request something of us. Those situations ask if we want to continue being as we are, or if we want to improve, and often we choose to continue as we are. We do not

refrain from gossiping even though we don't approve of it, we react harshly to a loved one over something silly, we choose to make unhealthy eating decisions even though we want to lose weight. When you clearly iron out what you want and who you want to be, you must start doing the things that contribute toward your success with these things.

Failing to do the things that we **truly** want for ourselves can create an influx of shame and guilt, and is the antithesis to building self-esteem and pride in who we are. Soon, we are dismayed because we aren't reaching goals, and we feel like the things we want are constantly out of our grasp.

**Practice gratitude.** Each person has their own burdens to bear, and we are all carrying what can, at times, feel like quite a load. In spite of your suffering and in spite of your difficulties, being grateful can allow you the perspective to overcome any adversity. Pay attention to the highlights of your day, and write down three things before bed that make you feel grateful each evening.

**“There is no joy without gratitude.”**  
**-Brene Brown**



## How Habits Can Change Your Life

The butterfly effect is the theory that small actions can have large consequences, as if a butterfly flapping its wings could cause tiny but significant changes in the atmosphere that could cause a tornado in another country entirely. Your daily habits are the same concept. The ramifications of small actions can build into creating a monumental impact on your life.

In order to determine what positive or negative habits you'd like to either begin or break, you must determine what you want. Do you want to be a better friend, learn another language, or be able to run a 5k? Do you want to stop smoking, engaging in negative self-talk, or procrastinating? Tiny, repetitive actions will allow you to accomplish all of these things.

It's a good idea to start small. Don't expect yourself to be perfect the first day. Expect yourself to fail, feel unmotivated and unwilling to change. Starting so small that you won't feel overwhelmed is the ideal way to begin.

If you get off track with a habit, simplify the action. Instead of exercising for an hour a day, cut back to just 10. "Don't kill the plant," as behavior coach Eric Zimmer says. If there is some disruption to your habit, just keep the plant, the habit, alive, even if that means doing the bare minimum. Additionally, you should expect that you will get off track at some point. Life happens, circumstances change, and you

might not be able to commit like you once did. You'll be less likely to get demoralized from it because you've already accepted that it is inevitable and that it happens to everyone at some point.

What starts out as a habit becomes a practice, which then can become a behavior. Choose things that allow you to align with who you want to be, and refrain from the things that don't. Then, your behaviors will be in sync with your goals, and your habits will be what got you there.

### AVOCADO PASTA

12 ounces spaghetti; 2 ripe avocados, halved, seeded and peeled; 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves; 2 cloves garlic; 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice; Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste; 1/3 cup olive oil; 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved; 1/2 cup canned corn kernels, drained and rinsed

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta according to package instructions; drain well. To make the avocado sauce, combine avocados, basil, garlic and lemon juice in a food processor; season with salt and pepper. Add olive oil in a slow stream until emulsified; set aside. In a large bowl, combine pasta, avocado sauce, cherry tomatoes, and corn. Serve immediately.

Source:  
<https://damndelicious.net/2014/06/20/avocado-pasta/>