



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

October 2019

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.



Mental Illness
Awareness Week,
October 6-12

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Change Your Lens: Five
Steps to Realistic
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Mental Illness Awareness Week: October 6 -12

What's the difference between mental health and mental illness? Sometimes the answer is clear, but often the distinction between mental health and mental illness isn't so obvious. For example, if you're afraid of giving a speech in public, does it mean you have a mental health condition or a run-of-the-mill case of nerves? Or, when does shyness become a case of social phobia?

Each mental health condition has its own signs and symptoms. In general, however, professional help might be needed if you experience:

- ▶ Marked changes in personality, eating or sleeping patterns
- ▶ An inability to cope with problems or daily activities
- ▶ Strange or grandiose ideas
- ▶ Excessive anxiety
- ▶ Prolonged depression or apathy
- ▶ Thinking or talking about suicide
- ▶ Substance abuse
- ▶ Extreme mood swings or excessive anger, hostility or violent behavior

Why is it so tough to tell what's normal?

It's often difficult to distinguish normal mental health from mental illness because there's no easy test to show if something's wrong. Also, primary mental health conditions can be mimicked by physical disorders.

Mental health conditions aren't due to a physical disorder and are diagnosed and treated based on signs and symptoms, as well as on how much the condition affects your daily life. For example, a mental health condition can affect your:

- ▶ **Behavior.** Obsessive hand-washing or drinking too much alcohol might be a sign of a mental health condition.
- ▶ **Feelings.** Sometimes a mental health condition is characterized by a deep or ongoing sadness, euphoria or anger.
- ▶ **Thinking.** Delusions — fixed beliefs that aren't changeable in light of conflicting evidence — or thoughts of suicide might be symptoms of a mental health condition.

Many people who have mental health conditions consider their signs and symptoms a normal part of life, or they avoid treatment out of shame or fear of judgment from others. Others' judgments almost always stem from a lack of understanding. Learning to accept your condition and recognize what you need to do to treat it, seeking support, and helping educate others can make a big difference.

If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Call your BHS Care Coordinator for confidential assistance at 800-245-1150.



Change Your Lens: Five Steps to Realistic Optimism

Optimism is a set of beliefs that helps to focus your attention and behavior on the opportunities and possibilities of life. Optimism is not a rose-colored lens, but a clear lens, without distortion, that allows you to see life realistically and clearly. Being realistic is to be optimistic. Optimism allows you to see that opportunities exist even when confronted by challenges in your life. Pessimism, on the other hand, is an internal stressor that creates a sense of threat around the stressors in life. The challenge associated with moving to a more optimistic world view has to do with practicing new beliefs and new behaviors, which are then reflected in the choices you make in your everyday life. Where the pessimist sees problems, the optimist sees opportunities. Here are five steps to help you become an optimist:

Step 1: Focus on the positive.

It's important to retrain your thinking and begin to focus on the experiences you have in life that work out well, even when they are not perfect. This also allows you to increase the level of gratitude in your life, which is a characteristic of resilient people.

Step 2: Resist the desire to complain.

While you tend to think that "getting things off your chest" has value, the reality is that complaining usually makes you feel worse by keeping your attention on an unhappy situation.

Step 3: Decide for yourself what is and isn't possible.

Be skeptical of limiting yourself to beliefs that say something can't be done. The statement "that's impossible" or "that can't be done" has been made about every advancement in human history. Of course, not everything is possible. People can't fly to the moon by flapping their arms. There are many things that can be dismissed too easily, however. This is about learning to "think outside the box."

Step 4: Be for things, not against things.

When you are against something, you are focused on creating less. Creating less requires attacking, punishing, complaining, and reacting. When you are for something, your focus is on creating more. Creating more is about new ideas, options, and productivity. Instead of saying "no" to pessimism, say "yes" to optimism.

Step 5: Fake it until you make it.

A short cut to changed behavior is to engage in the desired behavior, even if it goes against how you would normally act. Practice new habits even if they feel awkward. Research is clear that one of the best strategies for behavior change is to change behavior first and let your feelings about it catch up. If you put off change until you're comfortable with the idea, you may never change.



Frightfully Good Team Building

Halloween is becoming one of the top celebrated holidays in the workplace. A recent survey by National Today shows that 72 percent of U.S. employers encourage their employees to wear a costume to work for the holiday.

The day of candy and fun offers many workplaces a chance to build camaraderie and give employees a chance to get to know each other better.

Here are some fun ideas for your office Halloween activities with your employees.

Host a Halloween costume contest

Encourage your people to dress up for the occasion by holding a costume competition.

Organize a Halloween-themed lunch

The colorful and tasty treats associated with Halloween are the mass appeal of the holiday.

Plan a team trick or treat

Bring back the trick or treat days to your office by challenging each of your company departments to come up with a fun treat or surprise to give away.

Host an office Halloween party

Throw a casual team gathering during the last couple business hours of the day to spread the Halloween spirit before your employees head off for their evening festivities.

Planning to wear a costume to work for Halloween? Keep these guidelines in mind:

- ▶ If the costume impedes your ability to work, don't wear it.
- ▶ Want to spend the day bonding with your co-workers rather than arguing? Avoid political costumes.
- ▶ There is a fine line between funny and offensive. If you think you are teetering on that line, don't do it.
- ▶ Make sure what you wear sticks to office dress code.
- ▶ You don't have to wear a costume! Choose black and orange clothing, Halloween themed t-shirts, and earrings and hair accessories.

RECIPE: SCARY MUMMY SAUSAGES

32 Hillshire Farm Lit'l Smokies®
1 (8 ounce) can refrigerated crescent dough rolls
Mustard or ketchup, if desired

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
- Unroll dough, separate at perforations, creating 4 rectangles. Press perforations to seal.
- With a knife or pizza cutter cut each rectangle lengthwise into 8 strips making a total of 32 strips. Wrap one strip of dough around each Lit'l Smokies® stretching dough slightly to look like bandages, leaving tip exposed to create face. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.
- Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until golden brown. Draw features on tip of Lit'l Smokies® to create face. Serve with mustard or ketchup, if desired.