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Seeking Mental Health Assistance:

How to Know When It's Needed

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Participant Handbook

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Learning Objectives

- Identify situations that require immediate mental health intervention
- Describe scenarios for support interventions
- Discuss why it is important to seek mental health help when needed
- Identify the costs of not getting help when needed

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When To Seek *Immediate* Mental Health Help: Emergency Situations

- Plans to harm yourself
- Plans to harm someone else
- Psychosis or symptoms where you are having difficulty determining reality (i.e., hallucinations / delusions)
- Severe physical symptoms related to drug overdose or withdrawal
- Physical symptoms related to severe eating disorders that need immediate medical attention
- *What else?*

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Non-Emergency Mental Health Issues: Seeking Assistance

- General rule of thumb: If an issue has been problematic for two or more weeks, seek mental health assistance
- Others have indicated that you might benefit from therapy
- You have been considering the need for yourself
- Types of issues that can benefit from therapy:
 - Managing your overall mental health
 - Dealing with major life events
 - Challenging negative thinking patterns
 - Managing daily productivity and/or activities
 - Improving yourself and/or your relationships
 - Finding yourself

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Managing Your Overall Mental Health

- Managing stress
 - Feeling overwhelmed
 - Constantly worried
- Difficulties regulating emotions
 - Disproportionate rage / anger / resentment
 - Feelings of hopelessness
 - Irritability / sadness / otherwise not “feeling yourself”
 - Problems controlling emotions
- Utilizing unhealthy coping skills
 - Avoid dealing with the actual issue by engaging in other behaviors
 - Using drugs, alcohol, food, shopping, sex, etc. to cope

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Dealing with Major Life Events

- Transitions
 - Grief / Loss of something or someone important to you
 - Death of a loved one
 - Divorce or separation
 - Physical health issues
 - Biological changes
- Parenting support
 - Want a trusted someone to be your ally
- Processing traumatic event
 - Sexual assault
 - Car accidents
 - First responders / medical professional exposure to trauma on the job (vicarious / secondary trauma)
 - Other events that have led to trauma responses

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Challenging Negative Thinking

- Desire to change unhelpful patterns of thinking
 - You are ready for a change
 - You have always been curious
- Not feeling as happy as you think you could be
 - Looking at patterns or situations that contribute to feelings
- You think you might have symptoms of a mental illness
 - Agoraphobia
 - Anxious / intrusive thoughts that are consuming you
 - Depression
 - Other symptoms that you find troubling

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Managing Daily Productivity / Activities

- Your job / school or other responsibilities are suffering
 - You have a lot going on in your life right now
 - You may feel overwhelmed by multiple competing demands
 - You cannot focus on other things
- Emotional state is impacting you
 - Fatigued
 - Too much / too little sleep
 - Loss of appetite / eating too much

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Improving Yourself / Relationships

- Struggling with reaching goals
 - Loss of productivity
- Desire to improve relationship(s)
 - Difficulty building and maintaining relationships
 - Avoiding social situations
 - Conflicts in your relationships
 - Invite family to attend with you
 - Loved ones are concerned about you
 - Feeling isolated and alone
- Increase self-awareness
 - You want to improve yourself but do not know where to start
 - Unable to talk to family and friends about situation(s)
 - Feel like you have run out of resources

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Finding Yourself

- Loss of interest in activities
 - Apathy (could also be a sign of depression)
 - You cannot do the things you like to do
 - You do not care about anything
- Dealing with another person's issues
 - A family member may have physical or mental illness, substance use issue, etc.
 - You are working to maintain your own mental health while living with someone who has challenges
 - There may be struggles with maintaining healthy boundaries with others
- Social life is suffering
 - Social withdrawal

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Why Therapy?

- You are taught coping skills to deal with symptoms that often do not respond to medication right away
- Benefits of therapy tend to last longer than the benefits of medication alone
- Learn life long coping patterns that can help you to address future issues on your own
- You will learn more about yourself
- Therapy can help you achieve your goals
- Therapy can help you have more fulfilling relationships
- Better overall health
- Improvement in all areas of life

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How Long Does Therapy Take?

- The duration of therapy depends on the issue or situation being treated
 - Shorter interventions for most adjustment issues
 - Longer interventions may be needed for more complex or traumatic issues
- Types of therapy professionals
 - Psy.D. or Ph.D. in Counseling or Clinical Psychology
 - Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
 - Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT)
 - Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
- Physician's treatment may be recommended, in addition to therapy, if the condition would respond positively to prescription medication
 - Mood or anxiety issues

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The Cost of Not Getting Help

- Inability to work or go to school
- Difficulty in relationships
- Difficulties with taking care of children
- Increased risk of health issues
- Hospitalization
- Suicide
 - Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people in the US between the ages of 10 and 34.
 - About 90% of people who die by suicide in the US lived with a mental health condition.

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Helping Others...Helping Yourself

- It is important to know that telling someone that they need therapy or should seek it out can be stigmatizing
- It is important for people to choose to seek out help on their own
 - When to insist on therapy: They are a risk to themselves or someone else
- People who feel forced into therapy are often resistant to the process
 - They may have a harder time putting in the necessary work to make needed changes

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Summary

- Seeking therapy for a mental health issue is an important step in creating mental and emotional balance
 - The sooner you can seek out help, the better
- Therapy can restore or enhance the ability to better manage thoughts and feelings
 - Effects of therapy tend to last longer than the benefits of just medication alone
 - The skills you learn in therapy can be used in the future for other challenging situations
- Therapy can provide understanding and awareness about complex issues

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Resources

- American Psychological Association
 - www.apa.org
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
 - www.adaa.org
- National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)
 - <https://www.nami.org>
- National Institute for Mental Health
 - www.nimh.nih.gov
- Mayo Clinic
 - www.mayoclinic.org

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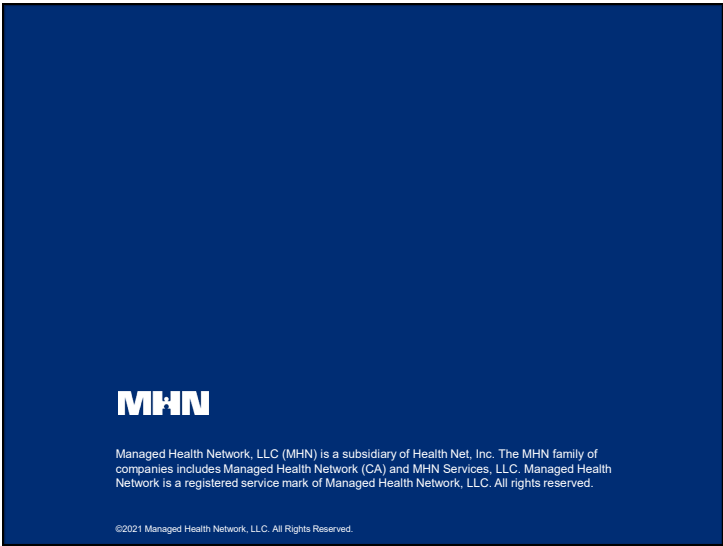
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Resources

- Mental Health America (MHA) – Finding Help
 - <https://www.mhanational.org/finding-help>
- Psych Hub
 - <https://psychhub.com/>
- SAMHSA – Find a Treatment
 - <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
- MHN EAP Services
 - www.mhn.com

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Handout A. Signs and Symptoms Across the Lifespan

There are some signs and symptoms that may be more prevalent at different times of a person's life. Below is an overview of the various signs at each age group that may indicate a need for evaluation and assistance.

Children: Ages 1 to 12

Children may begin to develop issues with their behaviors as they get older and socialize with others. It is also possible that they may face traumas or other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that need mental health support.

- Difficulty discussing emotions
- Inappropriate expressions of anger or affection
- A desire to hurt others
- Difficulty coping with the loss of a family member
- Refusal to follow instructions from authorities
- Extreme changes in appetite, energy, or sleep
- Overly concerned about abstract or adult issues

Resource: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/signs-your-child-may-need-a-therapist/>

Teens: Ages 13 to 18

Teenagers may have difficulties around areas with their identity formation as they begin to explore new aspects of their sexuality and socialization in middle school and high school. It is not uncommon for academic and social pressures to be compounded with social media expectations and the college application process, leading to some coping mechanisms that may need mental health support.

- Obsessive behaviors with social media
- Negative self-comparison
- Preoccupation with self-image or body image
- Sudden extreme dieting or exercise
- Irritability or impatience with peers and parents
- Sudden change in academic performance
- Withdrawal from social groups or extracurricular activities
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts

Resource: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/child-and-adolescent-issues>

Young Adults: Ages 19 to 39

Young adults are often in periods of transition either into first jobs or homes and starting to move away from their families. These transitions can bring up feelings of anxiety and homesickness or lead to coping issues with their new independence and distance from their support systems.

- Sudden extreme dieting or exercise
- Involuntary change in the sleep cycle
- Difficulty coping with significant life transitions
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Withdrawal from social groups or extracurricular activities
- A change in substance use like alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs
- Anxious feelings that make it challenging to complete daily tasks

Resource: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun06/emerging>

Middle-Age Adults: Ages 40 to 65

Midlife adults may find themselves having difficulty coping with financial changes, parenting issues, career transitions, and the loss of parents. It is not uncommon for these events to overlap during this time, creating drastic changes in lifestyle from their previously established routines.

- Sudden withdrawal from social groups
- A change in substance use like alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs
- Restlessness or unusual sleep patterns
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Anxious feelings that impede obligations or tasks
- Losing interest in hobbies or career
- Excessive exercising or dieting
- Negative self-comparison to others

Resource: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/midlife>

Older Adults: Ages 65 and over

It is important to note that older adults have the highest rate of suicide of any of the age groups. They are also susceptible to experiencing cognitive decline as they get older. This age group is often coping with the loss of peers and loved ones. Depressive symptoms may also be present in individuals who begin to lose their independence and mobility.

- Lack of sleep or restlessness
- Difficulty coping with the death of friends or family members
- Consistent worrying or anxiety
- Lack of desire to do any physical activity

- Sudden withdrawal from social groups
- Irritability, aggression, or impatience with others
- Development of a chronic illness or disability
- Persistent feelings of sadness, depression, or thoughts of suicide

Resource: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/suicide>

Handout B. How to Find the Right Therapist

Finding the right therapist is essential as research has shown that the quality of the therapeutic relationship is a healing factor in and of itself.

Here are some tips for finding a good therapist:

- **Ask for recommendations** – a good place to start is to ask people that you trust if they have any suggestions. You could ask friends and family members or one of your health care providers.
- **Search online** –search for top therapists in your area or your specific issue. You can also go to sites of national mental health associations or state and local organization pages. Look at the ratings and reviews for the professionals that come up in your searches.
- **Do a quick interview** – don't be afraid to call the therapist and ask for information about hours, fees, practice locations, etc. You are looking for someone who comes across as warm and genuine and has the required skills you are looking for in a therapist.
- **Ask for a consultation** – it is not uncommon to ask to see a therapist for a consultation to see if you connect with them and want to continue to see them. Consultations allow for a “test drive” without committing to ongoing sessions.
- **Get multiple recommendations** – the therapeutic relationship is essential, so ask for numerous suggestions and meet with one than one if possible, to find the best fit for you.
- **Be clear about what you want** – it is essential to be clear about what you wish to achieve when talking with a prospective therapist. If you know you want a specific type of therapy, be sure to ask as there are many different types of treatments, and not all professionals are trained in all of them.
- **Go virtual** – if you are having difficulty locating a therapist in your area, try out the many options for online therapy and see if you can connect with a therapist that has the training and opportunities you are seeking.