

# Mental Health

A Report of the  
Surgeon General

# Mental Illnesses Are

- *Diagnosable* conditions that impair thinking, feeling, and behavior and interfere with a person's capacity to be productive and enjoy fulfilling relationships.
- They include depression, schizophrenia, manic depressive (bipolar) illness, panic disorder, autism, eating disorders, and Alzheimer's disease.

# Mental Health Problems

- Refer to the signs and symptoms of insufficient intensity or duration to meet the criteria for any mental disorder.
- They may be triggered by traumatic personal experiences, such as the death of a loved one, physical or sexual abuse, or a divorce, or a natural disaster.

- Mental illness and mental disorders are real, and in most cases treatable health conditions.
- They are not character flaws!

# 1 In 5 Americans Suffers From A Mental Disorder

- Mental disorders like depression, schizophrenia and eating disorders are real illnesses that are as disabling and serious as cancer and heart disease, in terms of premature death and lost productivity.
- Children, adolescents, adults and the elderly all can experience a mental disorder.

# Mental Illness And Mental Health Problems Can Affect Anyone

- Few Americans are untouched by mental illness, whether it occurs within one's family or among neighbors, co-workers, or members of the community.
- Overall quality of life is tremendously improved when a mental disorder is diagnosed early and treated appropriately.

# Progress

- Over the last 25 years, a scientific revolution in the study of the brain and behavior has led to the development of new and more effective treatments and services for people with mental disorders.

- Today, mental health disorders can be correctly diagnosed, and for most mental disorders there are several choices of treatments, including medications and short-term psychotherapy.

- A consumer movement has increased the involvement of individuals with mental disorders and their families in mutual support and services.

# Maintain Good Health

- Psychological and emotional problems must be acknowledged.
- People with mental health problems can benefit from treatment even if they don't meet the criteria for a mental disorder.

- Mental health is fundamental to health, indispensable to personal well being and to leading a balanced and productive life, so, if you, or a loved one, are experiencing the symptoms of a mental disorder, seek effective treatment.

# What Can You Do?

- Get help. A variety of professionals can provide help, including a psychiatrist or psychologist, a social worker, a primary care provider, a nurse, or a religious counselor.
- Self-help and consumer-based organizations can also help those in need.

## And Be Sure To

- Support and encourage individuals who are in recovery from mental illness; with effective treatment, people can live with severe mental illnesses and still maintain a high quality of life.

- *To get the help you need for you or a loved one, call toll-free:*

**1-877-9-MHEALTH**

**(1-877-964-3258)**