

# Health & Wellness

## Mental Health Awareness: The Importance Of Preventative Mental Health And Wellness

(NAPSA)—More Americans need mental health care than many people realize. According to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 43.4 million adults dealt with a mental illness over the past year, while a University of Phoenix College of Social Sciences survey found that as many as two-thirds of U.S. adults have personally dealt with mental health issues.

### The Good News

Fortunately, counselors can help people struggling to deal with stress manage life changes or grapple with more serious mental health concerns. Seeking treatment for mental health should be viewed positively, like going to the doctor for physical illnesses. In fact, there's a link between mental and physical health as long-term stress may contribute to heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and other conditions.

### Doctor's Advice

"It is important for people to recognize and understand the effects of stress, anxiety or depression that could develop into greater problems or other mental health issues," said Dr. David Engstrom, counseling faculty member at University of Phoenix College of Social Sciences. "Overall wellness and preventing major mental health crisis or illness is key to overall health."

### Not Enough Seeking Help and Not Enough Providers

Many people struggling with mental health hesitate to seek help, however. The University of Phoenix survey also found that for three out of 10 respondents, social stigma was a barrier to getting proper care and counseling. Other common challenges were uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of counseling and a reluctance to face problems.

What's more, even those who do seek help may have trouble finding it. The latest Health Professional Shortage Area statistics show that the U.S. currently has enough practitioners to meet only 44 percent of its mental health needs.

To help address that gap, University of Phoenix College of Social Sciences is committed to training professional counselors, through programs such as its Master of Science in Counseling with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The school also operates eight counseling centers in six states (California, Michigan, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and Colorado) that offer free services to the public.

### Holistic Approach to Prevention

Behavioral health care includes preventative care, which means developing healthy habits that can keep problems from arising in the first place. While many individuals focus on their



**Many Americans might enjoy a better life with help from well-trained mental health counselors.**

physical preventative health, by exercising or eating right, this approach is equally beneficial for developing mental wellness. Dr. Engstrom offers the following tips on preventative mental health practices:

**1. Build Optimism.** Many studies have found a correlation between optimism and better physical and mental well-being. To think positively, it helps to be aware of how you handle or experience a particular event:

- **Permanence:** Optimistic people are willing and able to bounce back quickly from failure; they can move on from a negative event. Try to point to specific temporary causes for negative events instead of permanent.
- **Pervasiveness:** Acknowledge failure when it happens and try to correct it and learn from mistakes. Pessimistic people assume if they fail once, they're doomed to fail in life. Try to allow good events to brighten negative ones.
- **Personalization:** Optimists tend to share the blame on bad events with themselves and with outside causes, whereas pessimists may blame only themselves. Work to be more confident, and quickly internalize positive events.

**2. Cultivate Gratitude.** Research shows that "being grateful" or building gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness and mental health. Writing a thank-you note, keeping a gratitude journal or even just mentally thanking and appreciating someone can help improve mental health.

**3. Don't Forget To Mind Your Body.** Mental and physical health are connected. Exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and taking time to relax aren't just good for physical health, these activities are also good for mental health.

### Learn More

For further information about these counselor training programs, including on-time completion rates, the median debt incurred by students who completed the program and more, visit [www.phoenix.edu/programs/gainful-em-employment](http://www.phoenix.edu/programs/gainful-em-employment).