

## A Healthy Mind

Good health. We all want it. Good health is priceless, and it is talked about every day without hesitation. At work, at home, on the radio, on TV, everywhere. How many people make resolutions every New Year to improve their health? Strategies to achieve good health range from improving exercising habits to better eating behaviors, from quitting smoking to increasing water intake. Improving healthy habits can be approached by both individual and group methods, support is all around us.

But what about a healthy mind? You know...that thing inside our heads that keeps us going every day. The voice that tells us when we are doing things well, when we might not be, and what to do about it. Talking about a healthy mind isn't nearly as easy. In fact, talking about mental health can be downright difficult. However, if we don't approach our mental health with the same open, curious, dedicated approach we do our physical health, then we are missing half the equation and can never really attain true Good Health.

### What is Mental Health?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, mental health can be defined as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of

life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." What's more, the CDC estimates that only about 17% of U.S. adults actually achieve a state of optimal mental health.

Mental health can be built and strengthened in many ways, including:

- **Developing a strong social network** – a circle of trusted individuals who support us, cheer us, listen and accept us;
- **Encouraging self-growth** – whether spiritual, intellectual, physical, or psychological, experiencing new things helps expand our sense of self and develop a stronger identity and purpose;
- **Building self-acceptance** – looking at ourselves with appreciation for our strengths and uniqueness, accepting our faults and learning how to overcome them leads to better emotional well-being, happiness, and satisfaction.



### Mental Health vs Mental Illness

The diagnosis of a mental illness can make achieving good mental health even more challenging. Though

definitions vary because of the very nature of mental illnesses, they all have some core commonalities including: enduring nature, distinct frequency, and severe symptoms that cause a marked decrease in the ability to function in normal everyday circumstances. The presence of a mental illness makes support, diagnosis, and treatment that much more important to achieving good health.

### The Stigma Around Mental Health/Illness

So why isn't mental health/illness talked about as openly as other health issues? Sadly, the stigma surrounding mental illness has not gone away despite advances in diagnosis, treatment, and understanding. According to

the Mayo Clinic, people who are struggling with mental health issues often refuse to seek treatment because they fear what others will think about them. Fear of being labeled, being treated differently, avoided, or perhaps even losing a job weigh heavily on the decision to seek help, even when help is desperately needed. "No one would ever say that someone with a broken arm or a



## About Your EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit set up by your employer to assist you in dealing with personal concerns that may affect your work or home life. Use of the EAP is confidential and free to you and your immediate family members.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.paseap.com>

"What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, more unashamed conversation."

~Glenn Close



## Kindfulness

Mindfulness has become a ubiquitous term now familiar to much of society. But what good is mindfulness without compassion – for ourselves and for others?

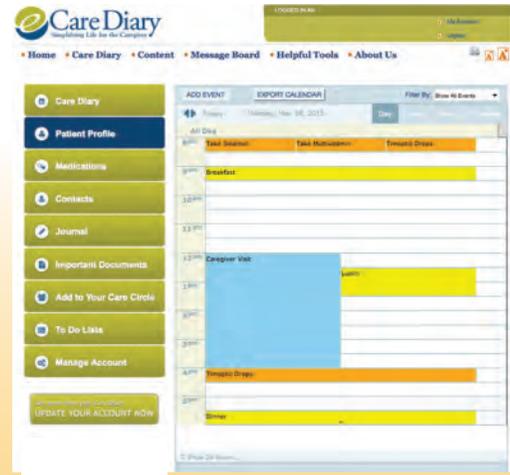
Ajahn Brahm has developed a new term: *Kindfulness*, a combination of both mindfulness and kindness. Mindfulness without kindness becomes dry, meaningless and cold. *Kindfulness* reminds us to be forgiving and kind even as we practice mindfulness in our daily lives.



## Featured Service: eCareDiary™

Online tools, information and resources to help families coordinate care, available through PAS' resource center for employees:

- ▼ **Care Coordination Tool** - a secure online organizer to help you schedule and coordinate appointments, medication dosages and frequencies, legal documents, and care scheduling needs. Share your Care Diary with others in your care circle to provide the same up-to-the minute access to vital information.
- ▼ **Content** - a wide range of expert content such as articles, Expert Q&A, podcasts, webinars and videos.
- ▼ **Message Board** - a supportive online community where you can chat online with others who may share a similar experience.



- ▼ **Legal Documents** - learn about advanced directives, healthcare proxies and living wills. Downloadable forms by state are available.
- ▼ **Condition Information** - Up to date information on the most common aging diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other medical conditions, available treatments and outcomes.
- ▼ **Finding Care** - a search engine to help you find care providers within your local zip code.

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broken leg is less than a whole person," says Elyn Saks, "but people say that or imply that all the time about people with mental illness."

### Helping Yourself...And Others

Just like physical fitness, mental fitness takes time, dedication, and often a great coach or buddy to help you along. There are many tools at your disposal:

- **Educate yourself** – PAS offers personal, confidential assistance to help you with mental health issues.
- **Don't define someone by their illness** – remember that is a disease is something someone has, not what they are.
- **Become an advocate** – work together with another person or a team to open up the discussion about mental health.
- **Avoid self-stigmatizing** – silence your inner critic with understanding and self-appreciation. The road may be difficult, but stop making it harder on yourself with negative self-talk.



Mental conditions do not discriminate by gender, race, age, or status. They are human conditions, ones that can affect anyone. Acceptance, education, and support can help us all on our journey towards a Healthy Mind.

If you or someone you know has questions or concerns about mental health, the EAP is available to provide confidential guidance and support. Services are free to employees and their dependents.