

HELP & HOPE

MONTCALM & IONIA
COUNTIES

2024 MENTAL HEALTH Resource Guide



DAILY NEWS

VIEW *Newspaper* Group

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— MEMO FROM OUR TITLE SPONSOR —

Social Workers are Everyday Heroes

Social workers wrestle with poverty, defend the vulnerable, and leap tall piles of paperwork in a single bound. Quite simply, they are our everyday superheroes. I can tell you, I'm continually in awe of the stories I hear about people who have been helped to become more independent, overcome challenges, improve their health, or find recovery.



Tammy Warner
Executive Director
Montcalm Care Network

Social work can be exceptionally rewarding, but with continued workforce shortages and increased community needs, the work is more challenging than ever. The demand for social workers is reflected in the statistics – the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the field will grow exponentially. “Overall employment of social workers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations,” the BLS states on its website.

If you enjoy helping others and like a variety of day-to-day responsibilities, social work may be for you. There are many different paths and opportunities for people to break into the field of social work, and not all require a college degree. Direct Care Worker positions are a great way to help people and to learn about mental health services and supports.



There are also opportunities in the public mental health system to work alongside social workers and other clinicians in helping people to navigate community resources.

Whatever the path, being an everyday superhero can be a rewarding career, and one I hope more people will consider.

Thank you for reading and sharing the 2024 Help & Hope publication.



For help in connecting to autism, mental health or substance use disorder services in Montcalm County, call Montcalm Care Network at 989-831-7520 or toll free 800-377-0974.



A MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MONTCALM CARE NETWORK AND THE DAILY NEWS

Warning Signs of Developing Mental Health Issues

Various mental illnesses are more common among women than men, including depression and anxiety. The Mayo Clinic says it's common to have mental health concerns from time to time, but when one of those concerns becomes frequent or affects one's ability to function, it becomes an illness.

According to Clearview Treatment Programs, women often live with mental illness for months, even years before seeking treatment. Individuals may not realize the severity of their conditions, or they may mistake mental illness for stress or feeling overwhelmed. Even though the stigma surrounding mental health issues has decreased considerably in recent years, women still face societal barriers, says McLean Mass General Brigham Hospital. Women may not be inclined to discuss their issues and, in turn, fail to receive prompt care.

Signs of mental illness vary, depending

on the disorder and additional variables. A condition may affect a person's emotions, behaviors and thoughts.

Mental illness can affect anyone. According to research, women may have a higher propensity to develop certain mental health conditions and thus need to be aware of the symptoms of those disorders. Anyone in crisis should call 911 or their local emergency number immediately. In the United States and Canada, women can call or text 988 to reach suicide and crisis support.

SOME SIGNS OF A BURGEONING MENTAL ILLNESS INCLUDE:

- Significant changes in sleep habits, which may include sleeping more or not at all.
- Changes in eating behaviors, which may include binge eating or going without food.
- Women tend to internalize mental

illness, and symptoms can include ruminating, withdrawal from activities and generally retreating from life.

- Physical conditions that cannot be explained, such as headaches, stomach aches, chronic pain, and even high blood pressure.
- Emotional lability, which means rapid mood swings from happiness to anger and sadness.
- Confused thinking or a reduced ability to concentrate.
- Excessive fears or worries.
- Detachment from reality, resulting in delusions.
- Trouble relating to situations and people.
- Changes to sex drive.
- Excessive anger or hostility.
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts.



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How to Begin the Day in a Positive Frame of Mind

Each new day brings the potential for change, even amid the routine of the daily grind. When people start the day with positive thoughts, it can affect how they behave and see themselves throughout the day, and may even benefit their overall health.

The Mayo Clinic says some studies suggest personality traits such as optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of a person's health and well-being. Positive thinking that is pronounced in optimistic people is associated with effective stress management, which translates into many different health benefits.

Some people abide by the "Law of Attraction," which states that what a person gives attention to and thinks about throughout the day is what will be predominant in their life. Whether this is true or not, many aspire to have more positive thoughts and be in a generally optimistic mindset. The following tips can put people on a positive path at the start of each day.

BEGIN THE NIGHT BEFORE

Certain mental health experts suggest clearing the mind in the evening to reduce stressful thinking and create the mental capacity to wind down and relax. Keep a notepad handy and jot down any invasive thoughts or concerns. Removing these thoughts from the mind and putting them on paper can help you rest more readily. Being well-rested can improve mood.

KNOW YOUR WEAKNESSES

Recognize where you may need some help as you strive to be more optimistic. Map out the behaviors you want to change, and then be intentional about how you want your day to go and which actions will get you there. The Mayo Clinic suggests figuring out what you usually think negatively about (i.e., work, commuting, life changes) and then approach each aspect in a more positive way.

TAKE A TECHNOLOGY PAUSE

Do not check email or text messages right after opening your eyes. Similarly, avoid reading the news or watching news programs

"STARTING THE DAY WITH A POSITIVE MINDSET IS EASIER THAN ONE MIGHT THINK."

on television too early. Negative or scandalous stories often get the most clicks or views, and coming across upsetting information at the outset of the day can adversely affect your mood. Rather, spend time meditating, praying, reading, or just being in the moment until you are awake.

RECOGNIZE THE GOOD PEOPLE ARE DOING

When you open your eyes and focus on the positives, you'll see all the good that other people are doing around you. Offering compliments or acknowledging others' actions, whether large or small, puts positivity out there.

FOCUS ON GRATITUDE

Take a few moments at the start of each day to mentally list all the things you are grateful for. This may be that you have a cozy home or that you are healthy. Even stressful situations or people can be means for gratitude. Boisterous toddlers may be a handful, but you can be grateful for the ability to have had children when so many are not able.

Starting the day with a positive mindset is easier than one might think. It may take a little practice, but also can begin to pay positive dividends sooner than later.



Managing Grief and Loss in Children



Tracy Zavala
School Based
Mental Health Clinician
Montcalm Care Network



Kayla Chamberlain
School Based
Mental Health Clinician
Montcalm Care Network



Grief, Loss, and Trauma often go hand in hand. According to the Cleveland Clinic, grief is the experience of coping with loss. Most of us think of grief as happening in the painful period following the death of a loved one. But grief can accompany any event that disrupts or challenges our sense of normalcy or ourselves. This includes the loss of connections that define us. Similarly, loss is defined as “the act or fact of being unable to keep or maintain something or someone.” Examples of loss include illness, divorce, loss of a pet, and natural or world disasters. Lastly, in the context of this article, trauma is “a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.” It is not uncommon for a new loss to bring forth feelings related to a past loss, even if the survivor was not close to the person that recently died. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a loss that impacted so many of us in various ways. Trauma is like a wild card that shuffles the deck of grief, increasing the intensity. There are different types of trauma and what is traumatic to one person may not be to another. Past trauma can complicate grief and loss.

STAGES OF GRIEF:

There are five stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Not everyone goes through all the stages and certainly not in the same order. Denying that the loss has occurred allows time for the brain to process what has happened. It is not uncommon for a grieving person to be angry with the person who has died or others around them. Bargaining occurs in an attempt to bring the person back. Depression or feelings of sadness is common and can lead to the need for intervention. Acceptance is difficult and can depend on the circumstances surrounding the loss. Not everyone is able to accept the situation. There is no one right way to grieve.

CHILDREN AND LOSS:

Children experience emotions, just like adults. However, children often do not have the vocabulary to express how they are feeling and respond with behaviors instead. Just because a child doesn't talk about it, doesn't mean that the loss is not felt. Children are susceptible to multiple losses through separation/divorce of parents, abandonment, incarceration, and death. As a caregiver of a child experiencing loss:

- **Be honest with them.** Saying mom will be back, when you know that she will not creates mistrust and can lead to separation anxiety. Saying grandma is sleeping creates a fear of falling asleep. Use words that describe what happened, while being sensitive to the child's development. For example, Mommy was in an accident and died. Grandma was really old and really sick. Utilize a grief book (ex. “When Dinosaurs Die”) and then express to the child that the story represents what is happening to grandma.
- **Don't automatically assume the child should or should not be involved in burial rituals.** It is an opportunity for the child to say goodbye and can help them understand the finality of what has occurred. For others, it may be scary and overwhelming but allowing the child the choice can help them process their grief.
- **Maintain routines.** There is familiarity in routines. Focusing on healthy meals, engaging in physical activities, playing together, and sticking to bedtimes is helpful.
- **Expect that the child may regress.** In sleep, using the bathroom, speech, or behavior; do not punish, but provide nurturing and clear expectations.
- **Continue to be available to the child.** Help them identify five people they can go to for help and encourage them to do that as needed. Model coping skills such as mindfulness and deep breathing. Talking about positive memories of a loved one can be healing. Validating the

Managing Grief and Loss in Children...continued from page 6

child's emotions lets them know they are valued, and their emotions are not bad or wrong.

WHEN DOES GRIEF BECOME A PROBLEM?

There is no timeline for grief. The process depends on the relationship with the person who is gone and the circumstances of the loss. For example, the loss of an acquaintance to an illness may not cause as much distress as the loss of a child in a tragic accident. Grief and loss become a problem when they consistently impact the survivor's ability to function in their everyday life for an extended amount of time.

- Areas of functioning that are considered are: appetite, sleep, mood, thinking, energy, hygiene, relationships, and activities of daily living (employment, parenting, school, budgeting, etc.) Certainly, grief and loss impacts all of those areas in the short term; however, changes in appetite that lead to significant weight loss/gain, inability to go to school leading to academic failure and/or attendance concerns, and inability to get out of bed or not being able to fall asleep are examples of grief and loss impacting functioning long term and are indicators that help is needed.

- In addition, when you are unable to stop using alcohol, marijuana, anxiety or pain medication (beyond what is prescribed), or other substances, treatment is recommended.

- If thoughts of harming oneself or others are present, call Montcalm Care Network's crisis line at 989-831-7520 or 1-800-377-0974. If urges to harm oneself or others are uncontrollable, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

- As the Community Mental Health provider for Montcalm County, Montcalm Care Network is available to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis intervention and connects people to providers to meet their mental health needs. Call 989-831-7520 or 1-800-377-0974 for assistance.

- Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Hotline to connect to a trained crisis counselor.

- In addition to school counselors and school social workers, school-based mental health providers are in local school districts through the 31n partnership between Montcalm Area Intermediate School District and Montcalm Care Network. They are available for crisis intervention in addition to brief individual and group intervention addressing trauma, depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns.

- For some people, an appointment with their primary care provider may be needed to assess any health concerns and to determine whether medication may be needed, such as an anti-depressant.

- You can find grief support groups here: <https://www.griefshare.org/findagroup>. Additional information related to traumatic grief is available at the National Child Traumatic Stress Network <https://www.nctsn.org/> as well as Montcalm Care Network's trauma page at <https://montcalmcare.net/>.

- The website goodgrief.org has resources, information and support tools for adults and children experiencing grief.

- "When Dinosaurs Die" by Laurie Krasny-Brown is a beneficial book for explaining death, coping, and grief to young children. "The Invisible String" by Patrice Karst is another good option.

- Movie recommendations for teens and adults: "The Hope of Surviving Grief" or "The Collateral Beauty" demonstrate the lessons that grief teaches and the gifts that can come as a result.



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Building Resilience

Trauma is a word many of us have heard. It is also something many of us have experienced. It can be difficult to understand why one person cannot seem to get past what some may view as a minor event while another person flourishes despite tragedy. “Traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with an external threat.” - Bessel Van der Kolk, 1989. Trauma overwhelms a person’s resources for coping and impacts upon the person’s sense of safety, ability to self-regulate, sense of self, perception of control and interpersonal relationships.



Tara Allen
Outreach Services Manager
Montcalm Care Network

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are ten identified experiences in a child’s life that have been linked to disruptions in development as well as health conditions such as obesity, depression, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. This can also lead to behaviors such as smoking, alcoholism, and substance use in addition to lower educational attainment and difficulty maintaining housing and employment. Building and maintaining healthy and stable relationships is difficult. Ultimately, the more ACEs one has encountered, the more likely they are to experience health effects resulting in an early death. These impacts are regardless of income or social status.

ACES IN MONTCALM COUNTY

Approximately 25% of adults nationwide have experienced 3 or more ACEs. According to the most recently released Kids Count data, 1,630 children in Montcalm County experience food insecurity. Montcalm County has double the rate of homeless youth as the state of Michigan as a whole. Nearly 20% of Montcalm County children are living in poverty and nearly a quarter are living in single-parent households. 2,201 children live in families that have had investigations for child abuse and neglect. Since 2017 an average of 6 children ages 0-17 die per year in Montcalm County. That is up from an average of 4 children per year from 2012-2016. The prevalence of heavy drinking in Montcalm County exceeds that of the state of Michigan and United States in general. According to the Michigan Overdose Data to Action Dashboard, in 2021 there were 213 emergency room visits for suspected drug overdoses, with 18 deaths in the past year and 7 of those occurring from January-April 2023. In the past 5 years, Montcalm County has had an average of 15.4 deaths by suicide annually, a 54% increase compared to the 5 years previous. Approximately 1 in 40 children in Montcalm County will experience the

death of a parent before they turn 18, which is higher than in surrounding counties.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Prevention is key. While the return on investment varies across intervention types, for every dollar spent on early intervention, between \$4 and \$9 is saved in costs related to special education, incarceration, child abuse and neglect, substance use, mental health, and future earning potential. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified six strategies for preventing ACEs and mitigating the harms associated.



Resilience is a protective factor that can minimize the impact of the ACEs. Building resilient children and families is important to Montcalm County service providers. Trauma Champions of Montcalm County is an organization made up of various community providers and volunteers, aimed at reducing ACEs in Montcalm County and building a resilient community.

Resilience allows us to return to a healthy and hopeful state after a traumatic experience. Showing compassion toward one another and working to understand where another person is coming from, rather than using a judgmental stance, can help people access services and treatment to eliminate ACEs and their negative impacts. The Montcalm Prevention Collaborative’s series Compassion Cures is aimed at building the community’s compassion toward those with the greatest struggles in an effort to curb substance use by youth. The Ionia/Montcalm Families Against Narcotics (IM FAN) has recently relaunched its efforts to support families of people who use substances, reducing the loneliness and shame they experience. If you are interested in finding out your ACEs score, check out the QR code. If you are interested in more information about Trauma Champions contact hope@traumachampionsmontcalm.org. Go to <https://montcalmprevention.org/> for more information about the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative and to find out more about Compassion Cures.



Preventing ACEs

Strategy	Approach
Strengthen economic supports to families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening household financial security • Family-friendly work policies
Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education campaigns • Legislative approaches to reduce corporal punishment • Bystander approaches • Men and boys as allies in prevention
Ensure a strong start for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood home visitation • High-quality child care • Preschool enrichment with family engagement
Teach skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-emotional learning • Safe dating and healthy relationship skill programs • Parenting skills and family relationship approaches
Connect youth to caring adults and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring programs • After-school programs
Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced primary care • Victim-centered services • Treatment to lessen the harms of ACEs • Treatment to prevent problem behavior and future involvement in violence • Family-centered treatment for substance use disorders

WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT:

- Changes (for more than two weeks) in appetite, sleep, energy, memory
 - Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness
- Ongoing feelings of emptiness, sadness, worry
 - Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others

— WHO TO CALL —

There are several mental health providers in the area, but it can be intimidating to find the right one.

Here are some tips:

- Check with your primary care provider. They may have mental health services available.
- If you're comfortable, ask your friends and family for their

recommendations. Perhaps they have had experience with a particular practice.

- Call your insurance company. They can explain your benefits to you and give you a list of providers that accept your insurance.
- Contact your local community mental health agency. As the Community Mental Health provider for Montcalm County,

Montcalm Care Network is available to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis intervention and connects people to providers to meet their mental health needs. Call **989-831-7520** or **1-800-377-0974** for assistance.

- Call or text **988** to reach the Suicide and Crisis Hotline to connect to a trained crisis counselor.

DID YOU KNOW?

Coronavirus

The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been studied in recent years, and the National Institutes of Mental Health notes that rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse disorder have increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Though research into the link between COVID-19 and mental health is ongoing, the NIMH notes that people are more likely to develop mental illnesses or disorders in the months following infection. In addition, people diagnosed with long COVID, which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes is characterized by ongoing symptoms or health problems that can persist for weeks, months or even years after infection, may experience various symptoms related to brain function and mental health. Such symptoms, according to the CDC, may include difficulty thinking or concentrating, headache, sleep problems, lightheadedness when standing up, depression, or anxiety. Individuals who suspect they may be dealing with mental health issues are urged to speak with their physicians immediately. More information about COVID-19 and mental health is available at [covid19.nih.gov](https://www.covid19.nih.gov).

Ionia County Health Department

We provide an array of important services, from food safety inspections to substance abuse prevention to Immunizations, to the citizens of Ionia County.

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- ◆ Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
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- ◆ Food Licensing
- ◆ Children's Special Healthcare & Maternal Infant Health Program
- ◆ STI/HIV & Immunization Clinic
- ◆ Emergency Preparedness

Our focus is squarely on preventing disease, protecting public health and promoting healthy lifestyle choices.



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Misbehavior: Responding to Build Skills for Adulthood

How do I best handle my child's misbehavior? This question is on the minds of all parents. Schools, social service agencies, law enforcement, and the courts also ask this question when a child's behavior impacts the community. Discipline and punishment are the traditional responses, coming from the desire to teach the youngest members of our community the vital lesson of abiding by rules and expectations. Unintended consequences can arise from approaching problems with behavior in a purely disciplinary or punitive manner. Kids may inadvertently get the message they are bad, rejected by adults, or have to rely on others to control behavior. Another option exists. Restorative Practices provides an alternative way to respond.



Julianna Kozara,
LMSW, Clinical Director
Montcalm Care Network

Growing a child into a responsible adult with the ability to take personal responsibility and understand the impact of behavior on others is the goal of any parent. Restorative Practices is a field in social science that studies individuals, social connections, and community with a focus on building healthy communities, decreasing crime or other socially undesirable behaviors while repairing relationships and developing the skills to be a contributing member of society. One of the basic tenets of this practice is providing kids with feedback in a way that creates empathy toward others while having the child participate in correcting their own behavior.

“Why did you do that?” is the question parents often ask. The problem is that most kids can't give you a solid reason as to why and become defensive or shut down.

Instead try:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What are you thinking now?
4. Who was affected by what you have done?
5. What needs to happen to make things right?



Restorative Practices does not mean letting your child off the hook for misbehavior. By contrast, kids are helped to develop better internal controls for their behavior. Kids learn that when things go wrong, they need to repair the situation and accept consequences.

Montcalm County is committed to using Restorative Practices. The practice is already used in several school districts. A partnership between Montcalm Care Network, Ionia/Montcalm Department of Health and Human Services, the Juvenile Court, and local experts in the practice is spreading the commitment to growing young adults who can navigate relationships and have connection to their community. Watch for an upcoming Community Parent Training in Restorative Practice this spring. To receive information on upcoming training opportunities, send your contact information to outreach@montcalmcare.net. In the meantime, try out the questions above the next time your child misbehaves.





DID YOU KNOW?

A survey from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that 46.3 million people aged 12 or older met the applicable criteria for having a substance use disorder (SUD) in 2021. The SAMHSA survey also found that the percentage of people classified as having a past year SUD was higher among young adults between the

ages of 18 and 25 compared to youth and adults age 26 and older. Perhaps the most troubling finding in the SAMHSA survey concerned treatment for SUD. The survey found that 94 percent of people aged 12 or older with an SUD did not receive any treatment, and nearly all of those people indicated they did not feel as though they needed treatment.

HOW TO HELP A PERSON IN RECOVERY:

- If the person is under the age of 18, insist they receive professional help from a qualified eating disorder specialist.
- Be a good listener and do not try to fix the problem yourself. Find your own support from friends and family.
- Identify your role in the recovery, explore your own thoughts about food, weight, shape and appearance.
- Ask the person and their treatment team how you can support them best.
- Follow the treatment team's recommendations and remove triggers from the environment (No diet foods, scales, and stress).
- Be warm and caring but determined with boundaries, rules, and guidelines while reinforcing positive changes without focusing on weight, shape or appearance.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Survivor's Pension Special Monthly Pension Appeals Process Obtaining Military Records CHAMPVA Debt Waivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burial/Funeral Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burial Claims County Burial Program Burial Flags, Presidential Memorial Certificates Natl. Cemetery, Headstones, Markers & Medallions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellow Ribbon Program Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship Forever GI Bill Montgomery GI Bill Post-9/11 GI Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran Resources & Other Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCVA Emergency Financial Assistance Program MCVA Free Veteran Transportation Program Online Resources Assistance Local Resources Assistance And MUCH MORE...

DID YOU KNOW ... Montcalm County is home to more than 3,997 Veterans? National statistics indicate that nearly one-half of our Veteran population may never access their earned benefits.

VETERANS DAY

Homelessness is REAL!

How to help others:

- Do you know someone who is homeless and needs a place to stay? **Send them our way!**
- Do you know someone who needs food? **We offer the Bread of Life Pantry on Tuesday and Thursday from 10am to 1pm at Greenville Community Church.**
- Want to help the homeless in our community?

have mercy

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NON-EMERGENCIES

- Food
- Housing
- Utility Assistance
- Healthcare Services
- Transportation
- Legal Services
- Counseling

988

SUICIDE AND CRISIS

- Thoughts of Suicide
- Mental Health Crisis
- Substance Use Crisis
- Emotional Distress
- Veterans Crisis

911

EMERGENCIES

- Medical
- Fire
- Crime
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988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

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Visit: www.rightdoor.org

Locations in: Ionia, Belding and Portland

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Montcalm Area Parkinson's Support Group Resumes Monthly Meetings



Corewell Health physical therapist Cora Lindamood spoke at January's Parkinson's disease support group meeting about balance and Parkinson's exercises. — Submitted photo

IONIA — Now that their COVID-based hiatus is officially over, this winter the Montcalm Area Parkinson's Support Group resumed monthly meetings.

With approximately 90,000 new diagnoses of Parkinson's disease each year and more than 10 million people currently living with the disease (parkinson.org/understanding-parkinsons/statistics), it was beyond time to reactivate the local support group for individuals with Parkinson's and their caregivers in the Montcalm, Ionia and northern Kent county areas.

"Meeting regularly with a support group can be very helpful for people with Parkinson's, diabetes or other chronic diseases," said Jim Brasseur, a Parkinson's patient since 2010 who attends the meetings with his wife/caregiver Linda. "It allows you to talk to people that have your same problems. You talk about things like, 'I experienced that, and this is how it happened to me.' You can talk about what you're going through, some of the stresses you're going through."

The support group was initiated in 2011 and grew slowly by word of mouth until there were 24 people attending each month.

"COVID kind of put a damper on things," Brasseur said. "Of

the total of about 24 that we had in the group, we lost about seven thanks to COVID and similar conditions."

Caregivers of Parkinson's patients are encouraged to attend the monthly support group meetings.

"The one group that is very important is our caregivers," Brasseur, a retired physician assistant, said. "Every Parkinson's patient generally has a caregiver one way or the other, very often a spouse, and without caregivers it would be remarkably difficult to go through. I would have extreme difficulty without Linda. She's a great deal of help, very supportive."

'YOU'RE NOT ALONE'

What the caregivers do during each of the meetings depends on the meeting.

"Sometimes we have speakers, and so we all listen and learn things," said Sandy Main, a Daily News columnist and caregiver for her husband Terry, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's six years ago.

"Every now and then we separate into two groups, patients and caregivers, and each group talks about stuff that's important to them, brainstorms a problem or whatever," Main said.

"Caregivers will talk about what they're going through with us and we talk a little bit about what we're going through with them, because there are stresses on either side," Brasseur added. "I mean, you're talking about someone that you've been around for a number of years, and now they can't drive, they keep falling down or you



Retired physician assistant Jim Brasseur was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2010. He attends the monthly meetings of the Montcalm Area Parkinson's Support Group at First Methodist Church, 204 W. Cass St., Greenville, with his wife/caregiver Linda. — DN Photo | Tim McAllister

can't understand them. And those are just some of the common symptoms."

Terry and Sandy Main joined the support group soon after Terry's diagnosis.

"We heard about the support group right after that," Sandy Main said. "We started going to it and we've been going there ever since. Of course, it didn't meet during COVID, and we both really missed it. For one thing, it makes you realize you're not alone, and that's important for morale purposes. It helps to know that somebody else is dealing with what you're dealing with."

Each meeting includes some time for socialization and snack before they sit down with the group.

"Often we will have a presentation by somebody from the outside," Brasseur said. "At our January meeting (we had) some physical therapists come in, and they're going to talk about balance and other similar problems. In the past, we've had someone talk about financial planning, we had someone talk about the importance of pre-planning for funerals and what to watch out for. It was done by one of the local funeral homes, and they did an exceptional job. Other times we would have

Tim McAllister
tmcallister@thedailynews.cc

have someone come in to lead exercise to music or something along that line."

Main shared that the biggest benefits of being a caregiver is knowing that they can help and make a difference.

"Terry is pretty good yet, and I just help him with day-to-day stuff," Main said. "Sometimes his shoulder bothers him so I have to help put his coat on or something like that, but for the most part, he can do it himself. One of the biggest problems is that I'm a little hard of hearing and his speech is getting slurred, so I have to ask him to repeat himself a lot. Thank goodness, he is kind about it."

"The biggest challenge is that you have to face the fact that this this person that you love can no longer do everything they used to do," Main continued. "And it's hard for them, so it's hard for you too, but you have to deal with that because you love them."

Montcalm Area Parkinson's Support Group meetings are held at 11 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month at First Methodist Church, 204 W. Cass St., Greenville. For more information about the group, email jimbrasseur@gmail.com or call (616) 334-4084.

"Don't hesitate to join, the people there are wonderful. They're so friendly, and everybody is so willing to to help each other," Main said. "We talk about things, and somebody has an idea and somebody else has an idea, and it's very helpful. Plus it's so helpful to know that you're not the only one going through this."

Tips for Seniors to Safeguard Their Mental Health

The wide-ranging impact and reach of mental health issues garnered considerable attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the virus as well as mandates designed to reduce its spread led to increased feelings of anxiety and isolation. Since then, life has returned to normal for billions of people across the globe, but many people, including seniors, continue to experience mental health issues.

The Pan American Health Organization reports that at least one in four older adults experiences a mental disorder such as depression, anxiety or dementia. And those figures will likely only grow, as population estimates indicate seniors will make up a greater percentage of the global population in the years to come. Seniors dealing with mental health issues may feel helpless, but there's much they can do to safeguard their mental health.

· SOCIALIZE REGULARLY

A 2019 study published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences found that older adults who socialized with people beyond their circle of family and close friends

were more likely to have greater positive moods and fewer negative feelings. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of older adults report feeling isolated from others. According to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging that was conducted in January 2023, one in three older adults reported infrequent contact (once a week or less) with people from outside their home.

· SPEAK WITH A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

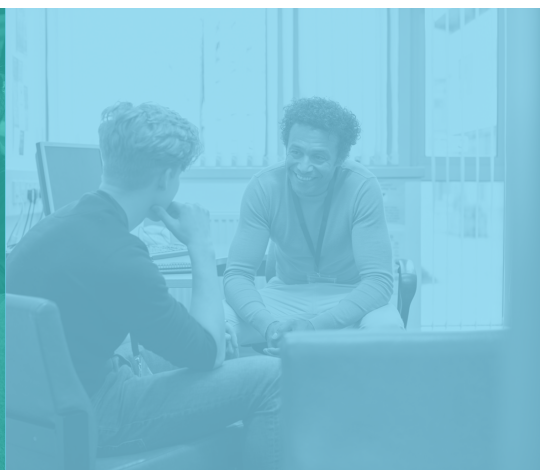
Among the more troubling aspects of the mental health crisis affecting seniors is that the PAHO reports two-thirds of older adults with mental health problems do not get the treatment they need. Speaking with a mental health professional can help older adults in myriad ways. Such professionals can identify the issue that is prompting seniors to seek help and offer suggestions that can improve overall health and quality of life. Roundstone Insurance notes that reliance on digital behavioral health tools, including telehealth, was turned to both during the pandemic and ever since, and seniors can utilize such services if they have limited mobility and/or no one to help them make it

to in-person appointments.

· VOLUNTEER

Many older adults are retired, and while ample free time may have seemed like the ultimate reward after a lifetime of working, many retirees experience a void once their life no longer has the structure that work can provide. According to the independent nonprofit HelpGuide.org, retirement depression can compel retirees to feel as though they miss the sense of identity, meaning and purpose that came with their jobs, which can make some feel depressed, aimless and isolated. Volunteering can help fill the void created by retirement, and the positive mental health effects of volunteering are well-documented. According to the Mayo Clinic, studies have shown volunteering increases positive, relaxed feelings and gives volunteers a sense of meaning and appreciation.

No one is immune to mental health issues, including seniors. But older adults can take various steps to address their mental health and improve their overall health as a result.



WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia.

Signs of dementia can vary greatly.

Examples include problems with:

- Short-term memory.
- Keeping track of a purse or wallet.
- Paying bills.
- Planning and preparing meals.
- Remembering appointments.
- Traveling out of the neighborhood.



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8 Things Women Should Know About Stress

Stress can be paradoxical. A certain amount of stress can motivate people to get things done. But having too much can cause a person to resist doing anything at all. The Cleveland Clinic says stress is the body's response to daily events that occur in life. When stress becomes chronic, it can be negative and destructive, making it hard to adapt and cope.

Chronic stress is a concern for many women. The Office on Women's Health says women are more likely than men to report symptoms of stress, including headaches and upset stomach. They're also more likely to have mental health conditions that are exacerbated by stress, including anxiety and depression.

Learning the facts about stress can help women care for their mental well-being. Here are eight things to know.

1. Stress can manifest in emotional, cognitive or physical symptoms. Notable physical symptoms include muscle tension and headaches as well as fatigue and low energy. Emotional symptoms may include increased worry, mood swings or irritability.

2. Stress can lead to unhealthy habits. Women have higher risk of overeating due to stress, and may become inactive or smoke to cope with stress, says the American Heart Association.

3. Common causes of long-term stress include poverty and financial worries. Women in poverty who care for children or other family members may develop more severe stress, says the Office of Assistant Secretary for Health.

4. Women respond to stress differently. Healthline indicates women have a higher percentage of perception of stress than men, and also are more apt to realize they must manage it. Seventy percent of women have tried to reduce stress over the past five years.

5. Research reported on by the American Psychological Association says women are more likely to internalize stress, leading more readily to both physical and mental disorders. Men tend to be better at disassociating from stress.

6. Women are more likely to cancel plans due to stress than men, despite realizing they could use more social support.



7. Stress can disrupt hormonal balance in women, leading to menstrual irregularities.

8. Stress can trigger increased pain sensitivity, making women more prone to tension headaches and migraine attacks.

Stress can take its toll on anyone, including women. Recognizing help is needed, setting measurable targets and being realistic about managing stress can help women feel better.



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Mental Health Issues That Affect Men

Studies have shown that men have historically been less likely to report mental health issues than women. Lower rates of self-reporting among men may be attributable to a number of factors, including the stigma that's still attached to the issue of mental health.

Mental health issues can affect all aspects of a person's life, and if left untreated, these issues can have grave consequences. Men are not immune to those consequences. In fact, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates age-adjusted suicide rates are substantially higher among men than women. Among men, that rate is 14 per 100,000, which is more than twice as high as the rate among women (6.1 per 100,000).

There's no formula to identify which men will develop a mental health issue or which condition they might experience. But it's worth noting some of the more common mental health issues and equally important that all men recognize these issues can affect any man at any time.

ANXIETY

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that anxiety disorders affect roughly 20 percent of the adult population in the United States each year. Similarly, Statistics Canada notes that a screening in spring 2021 found that 15 percent of Canadians screened positive for generalized anxiety disorder. Anxiety is an umbrella term that alludes to a number of issues that each produce their own symptoms and side effects, but the DHHS notes that anxiety disorders are marked by feelings of fear and uncertainty that interfere with everyday activities. These feelings persist for six months or more and can increase a person's risk for heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and depression.

DEPRESSION

The World Health Organization reports that roughly 5 percent of the global adult population suffers from depression. Depression is more than the feelings of sadness that everyone experiences from time to time. The National Institute of Mental Health notes that depression produces persistent feelings of

sadness, anxiety or an "empty" mood. Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism are some additional characteristics of depression. It's important to recognize that these symptoms must be persistent. Symptoms that persist for at least two weeks and interfere with a person's ability to work, sleep, study, and eat may indicate major depression, while less severe symptoms that last for at least two years suggest the presence of persistent depressive disorder.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

The National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics has identified substance use disorder as a public health emergency. Statistics support that assertion, as data from the National Center for Health Statistics indicates more than 20 million Americans ages 12 and over are affected by a substance use disorder. Statistics Canada indicates that around six million Canadians will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetime. Though anyone, including children, can develop substance use disorder, a 2016 report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration indicated that men have higher rates of use or dependence on illicit drugs and alcohol than women. The National Institutes of Health notes that substance use disorder affects a person's brain and behavior, which makes them incapable of controlling their use of substances, including medication and alcohol.

Men are no less vulnerable to mental health issues than women. The NIMH urges individuals in crisis or people who suspect someone is in crisis to call 911 or to call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. More information about mental health can be found at nimh.nih.gov.



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Taking the Mystery Out of Anxiety Disorders

It is normal to feel nervous from time to time, particularly when anticipating a potentially life-changing event. However, when nervousness is excessive, persistent and intense, or arises from seemingly innocuous stimuli, that could indicate the presence of an anxiety disorder.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

The American Psychiatric Association says anxiety is a normal response to stress. Anxiety disorders differ from normal nervousness because they involve excessive fear. The APA also says anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders and affect nearly 30 percent of adults at some point in their lives. It is time to seek help when anxiety interferes with your ability to function; you often overreact when something triggers your emotions; and you can't control your responses to situations.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO ANXIETY DISORDERS?

A combination of environmental factors and personality traits can increase the risk for developing anxiety disorders, according to the Cleveland Clinic. These include:

- Stressful or traumatic events in early childhood or adulthood.
- Certain personality traits like shyness or behavioral inhibition.
- Family history of anxiety or another mental health condition.
- Physical conditions, including thyroid problems and heart arrhythmias.
- Being a woman, as researchers are still studying why women experience anxiety disorders in higher proportions than men. Some researchers suggest hormonal fluctuations in women are a possible explanation for the higher rates of anxiety.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS?

Several types of anxiety disorders exist, but some are more common than others.

- **Generalized anxiety disorder:** GAD is persistent and excessive anxiety about activities or events, even routine tasks.
- **Panic disorder:** This involves sudden feelings of intense



fear or terror about certain situations. These panic attacks may lead to concerns about recurrence.

- **Social anxiety disorder:** High levels of anxiety, fear and avoidance occur during social situations, particularly fear of being judged or viewed negatively by others.
- **Phobias:** Major anxiety is tied to a specific object or situation and a desire to avoid it. There are phobias concerning heights, insects, leaving the home, and more.

Anxiety disorders also can develop in people dealing with substance abuse issues or certain medical conditions.

TREATING ANXIETY DISORDERS

It is important to note that anxiety disorders, while frightening and frustrating, are treatable. The APA says that while each anxiety disorder has unique characteristics, most respond well to psychotherapy (talk therapy) and medications. They can be given alone or in combination. Cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a type of psychotherapy, can help a person react and think differently in certain situations so they feel less anxious. Medications often are prescribed to provide relief from symptoms. The most common medications used are anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants and beta-blockers.

Anxiety disorders affect millions of people. There is help to be had and many people can overcome anxiety over time. persons undergoing chemotherapy.

The next time you book a massage, remember that you are not only doing it for your physical health, but you are doing it for your mental health as well!

7 Signs of a Mental Health Condition

MENTAL ILLNESS DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE. A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION CAN AFFECT ANYONE REGARDLESS OF AGE, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, ETHNICITY OR GENDER

The numbers are staggering. The National Alliance of Mental Illness reports nearly 44 million Americans experience a mental health condition every year — that's about one in five adults. And there is no doubt that everyone in the state of Michigan is living in crisis mode with the spread of COVID-19; schools and businesses closed, social distancing and most of our time spent at home. This can be very stressful. In fact, 36% of Americans say that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on their mental health, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

Mental health affects everything—it's our emotional and psychological state of mind impacting how we think, feel and act. But when something feels out of whack, it can pose issues to your day-to-day routine and wellbeing, but unlike illnesses of the rest of the body, mental illness has been swept under the rug for many years because it hasn't been as widely accepted as a serious medical issue.

It's important to remember that everyone will experience anxiety and sadness at some moment in their life. However, when that anxiety and sadness is overwhelming and occurs regularly, a mental illness may be the cause and you should seek help. You don't have to live with the symptoms; there are resources available to feel better.

While every mental illness is different, here are seven common signs to help determine if you or a loved one may be suffering:

- 1. CHANGE IN FEELINGS OR DEemeanor:** When a person is suffering from a mental illness, they may experience increased feelings of worry, panic, sadness or hopelessness.
- 2. LOSS OF INTEREST:** They may start avoiding friends, family and activities that used to once bring pleasure.
- 3. CHANGE IN SLEEPING HABITS:** Sleeping patterns may change to sleeping too much or too little, especially when compared to previous sleep routines.
- 4. LOW ENERGY:** This can manifest itself as either sleeping too much or having the inability to carry out everyday activities and tasks such as work or even self-care.
- 5. DIFFICULTY INTERACTING:** Many times people with a mental illness will find it hard to understand or relate to others. This may also present as extreme irritability with others or themselves.
- 6. APPETITE OR WEIGHT CHANGES:** Dietary changes, whether it is excessive eating or little to no eating, is a large indicator of depression.
- 7. UNCONTROLLABLE EMOTIONS:** A distinct, rapid mood swing from sadness to happiness, or similar emotions on opposite ends of the spectrum, may be an indicator of mental health struggles.

If any of these symptoms sound familiar, the best thing to do is to ask for help with your family doctor or a mental health resource. By getting help, you can take control of your symptoms and in many cases, recover completely. Here are some options, if you've decided you could use some help:

• **Your health insurance company.** Check with your health plan to see which resources are available. For example, Priority Health provides members with information like what kind of help is available, what your plan will cover and how to find counselors or behavioral health care providers to meet your needs. An on-staff behavioral health team is available to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the number on the back of your member ID card (your call is completely confidential) or log into your online account. Priority Health has also partnered with a digital health specialist to offer free access to mental wellness resources specifically focused on the COVID-19 pandemic.

• **Disaster distress helpline.** A 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

• **Online or virtual care.** Try an online therapy session through a website such as 7 Cups, an online emotional health service provider. The app enables users to select listeners based on their preferences/experiences and anonymously chat via the platform 24/7. In times of emotional turmoil or stress, it is highly beneficial to talk to someone and this app offers a safe space to do that. Headspace is another free mental health resource for Michiganders during the COVID-19 pandemic offering meditations, at-home workouts and other help for stress and anxiety.

• **Community resources.** For Michiganders in need of free or low-cost mental health, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has a county map of community mental health service programs.

Whatever tools you use for help, take the time to make your mental health a priority. Your mind and health are certainly worth it.

About the Author: Molly McCoy is the Director of Sales & Client Services, East Region at Priority Health. With more than 30 years of insurance experience, Molly is committed to growing Priority Health's footprint in the eastern region. She is also a mental health first aid instructor and is certified through the National Council for Behavioral Health.

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Kelsey Hospital Guild's Final Gift: Over \$30,000 to Support Youth Mental Health

LAKEVIEW — The Corewell Health Foundation Greenville Hospital announces a nearly \$31,000 Kelsey Hospital Guild donation to support adolescent behavioral health in the Lakeview community.

The Kelsey Hospital Guild was a volunteer group that supported Kelsey Hospital by coordinating fundraising efforts, hosting various staff celebrations and helping with blood drives. With Kelsey Hospital's closure, this group officially dissolved last September, but leaves a lasting impact in the community.

"Over our 60-year history, we have worked tirelessly to make positive improvements in our community," said Kim Carr, former Kelsey Hospital Guild member. "It feels right that our final act as a guild is to make sure that our local youth, the future of our community, can have the resources they need to help their mental health and to live their best lives."

Corewell Health will use this donation to support its adolescent behavioral health telemedicine clinic inside Lakeview High School. These types of clinics give students — many who are under or uninsured — an opportunity to see a licensed social worker for therapy and counseling services at little to no cost without leaving school.

"Adolescent behavioral health issues are at an all-time high across the country," said Katie Thorsen, Corewell Health's virtual health manager. "This program removes barriers to care and allows high schoolers to receive services where and when they need them."

Students experience numerous behavioral health struggles — bullying, relationship issues with parents/friends, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, grades, peer pressure and social media pressures — and sometimes it can be hard to access treatment options.

"We are extremely grateful for our partnership with the guild to support Lakeview students who would otherwise be unable to receive care," said Shelly Westbrook, Corewell Health Foundation Greenville Hospital's director. "Kelsey Hospital Guild and its recent gift have made a tremendous impact and will continue to do so for generations to come."

The Kelsey Hospital Guild was founded in 1959. Fundraising efforts included: Selling strawberry shortcake, candles and everything in between; hosting raffles, silent auctions, Christmas activities like the Tree of Love event and home tours; volunteer projects including the Kelsey Hospital gift case, decorating hospital trees, Summerfest Parade, Rural Health Day, blood drives and many others. Guild-related purchases made possible through fundraising were significant, such as nursing grants, equipment, furniture and program support.



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- **Manage Stress:** Take time each day to digitally unplug, connect with yourself.
- **Stay Active:** Commit to daily or weekly exercise time.
- **Eat Healthy:** Strive to eat more vegetables, drink more water or limit sugar/caffeine.
- **Get Quality Sleep:** Set a regular bedtime and find ways to wind down each night.
- **Accept Help:** You are not alone. There is always help and there is always hope.

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