

A Newsletter for Employees and Their Families

The Importance of Social Connections

Social Connections can have powerful effects on our health. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social links to others can influence our biology and well-being.



Wide-ranging research suggests that people who have larger and more diverse types of social ties tend to live longer. They also tend to have

better physical and mental health than people with fewer such relationships. In contrast, loneliness and social isolation are linked to poorer health, depression, stress and increased risk of early death.

Having a variety of social relationships may help reduce heart-related risks, improve your ability to fight off germs and give you a more positive outlook on life. And, social support may be especially protective during difficult times.

Here are a few ways to find new social connections:

- * Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, painting, gardening or cycling.
- * Learn something new. Take a cooking, writing, art, music, computer, yoga or karate class.
- * Volunteer at a school, hospital, or place of worship.
- * Participate in neighborhood events, like a park clean-up, join a local community group or find other ways to get involved in things you care about.

Source: [National Institute of Health, NIH-News in Health](#)

Understanding Body Dismorphic Disorder (BDD)

Most of us have something we don't like about our appearance — a crooked nose, an uneven smile, or eyes that are too small. And though we may fret about our imperfections, they don't interfere with our daily lives.

But people who have body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) think about their real or perceived flaws for hours each day. They can't control their negative thoughts and don't believe people who tell them that they look fine. Their thoughts may cause severe emotional distress and interfere with their daily functioning. They may miss work or school, avoid social situations and isolate themselves, even from family and friends, because they fear others will notice their flaws.



In reality, a perceived defect may be only a slight imperfection or even nonexistent. But for someone with BDD, the flaw is significant and prominent.

BDD most often develops in adolescents and teens, and research shows that it affects men and women almost equally. If you or a family member suffers from BDD, contact us to speak with a professional counselor.

Source: [Anxiety & Depression Association](#)

Insomnia in the Time of COVID

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder that can make it hard to fall asleep, hard to remain asleep, or cause you to wake up too early and not be able to get back to sleep. “Coronasomnia” and “COVID-somnia” are new terms that refer to sleep problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has impacted everyone in different ways, and for many of us, it was, and still may be, the cause of stress and anxiety that can keep us up at night. And with so many people working and studying remotely, the lines between work and home have blurred, undoing routines that kept circadian rhythms intact. Even as the worldwide health crisis wanes, the sleep troubles that surfaced over the course of the pandemic may persist, experts say.

If you suffer from insomnia, whether due to the pandemic or not, try to adopt the following bedtime habits, which can make it easier for you to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Go to sleep and wake up around the same time each day, even on the weekends. Establishing a routine can facilitate a sense of normalcy even in abnormal times. It’s easier for your mind and body to acclimate to a consistent sleep schedule.

Make your bedroom sleep-friendly. Sleep in a cool, quiet place. Avoid artificial light from the TV, phone or other electronic devices, as this can disrupt your sleep-wake cycle. Try to avoid using these devices for at least an hour before bed.

Wind down before bed. This is an important time to relax and get ready for bed. It can involve things like light reading, stretching, taking a bath, listening to soothing music and meditating. Given the stress of the coronavirus pandemic, it’s wise to give yourself extra wind-down time each night. Don’t spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning if you can’t fall asleep. Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing in very low light, and then head back to bed once you feel sleepy.

Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol close to your bedtime. Although alcohol can make it easier to fall asleep, it triggers sleep that tends to be lighter than normal. This makes it more likely you will wake up during the night.

Get regular physical activity during the daytime (at least 5 to 6 hours before going to bed). Exercising close to bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep.

Avoid daytime naps, especially in the afternoon. This may help you sleep longer at night.

Eat meals on a regular schedule and avoid late-night dinners. This helps maintain a regular sleep-wake cycle.

Limit the amount you drink close to bedtime. It may help you sleep longer without having to use the bathroom.

Avoid certain over-the-counter and prescription medicines that can disrupt sleep (for example, some cold and allergy medicines). Talk with your doctor about which medicines will not disrupt your sleep.

These lifestyle changes can often help improve short-term insomnia. For chronic insomnia you may need to visit a doctor who specializes in treating sleep problems. The doctor may recommend a type of counseling called cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, which is usually the first treatment recommended for chronic insomnia. There are also several prescription medications which can help manage insomnia and help you have a regular sleep schedule.

Call the EAP for help and support regarding any issues you might be experiencing with sleep at 425-454-3003.

Sources: [National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute](#), [Sleep Foundation](#), [AARP](#)



Teen Depression and Suicide

Teen depression can be a serious medical illness. It's more than just a feeling of being sad or "blue" for a few days. It is an intense feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and anger or frustration that lasts much longer. These feelings make it hard for teens to function normally and do their usual activities. Depressed teens may also have trouble focusing and have no motivation or energy. Depression can make them feel like it is hard to enjoy life or even get through the day.

Many factors may play a role in depression, including genetics, brain biology and chemistry, hormones and stressful childhood events such as trauma, the death of a loved one, bullying, and abuse. These days, the effects of the pandemic such as social isolation and remote learning are also contributing to teen depression. Some 46% of parents say they've observed "a new or worsening mental health condition" in their teen since the pandemic began, according to Michigan Medicine's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.



Certain teens are at higher risk of depression: those who have other mental health conditions, such as anxiety, eating disorders, and substance use; have family members with mental illness; have a dysfunctional family/family conflict; have problems with friends or other kids at school; have learning problems or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); have had trauma in childhood; have low self-esteem, or are members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially when their families are not supportive.

The most common symptoms of depression in teens include sadness; feelings of emptiness and hopelessness; and being angry, irritable, or frustrated, even at minor things. Other symptoms can include no longer caring about things one used to enjoy; changes in weight; changes in sleep; feeling restless or having trouble sitting still; feeling very tired or not having energy; feeling worthless or very guilty; having trouble concentrating, remembering information, or making decisions; and thinking about dying or suicide.

A teen suffering from depression should visit their doctor to see if a health problem is causing depression. If not, a psychological evaluation is usually advised by either the doctor or a mental health professional. Once depression is diagnosed, effective treatments for teens include talk therapy, or a combination of talk therapy and medicines.

Teen depression can sometimes lead to thoughts of suicide. Often, family and friends are the first to recognize the warning signs of suicide and can take the first step toward helping the person find help. Some people may feel that kids who say they are going to hurt or kill themselves are "just doing it for attention." But if a teen mentions thoughts of suicide, believe them and get help.

Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. These include talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves; looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun; talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live; talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain; talking about being a burden to others; increasing the use of alcohol or drugs; acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly; sleeping too little or too much; withdrawing or isolating themselves; showing rage or talking about seeking revenge; and extreme mood swings.

If someone is telling you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone and get help as soon as possible. Call 911 for emergency services and/or take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room. You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), which is available 24 hours a day, every day. You can also chat with them online at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Crisis Text Line is another free, confidential resource available 24/7. Text "HOME" to 741741.

If you are worried about your teen, give us a call at 425-454-3003 or toll-free at 800-648-5834.

Sources: [Medline Plus](#), [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

Personality Disorders

Personality disorders are a group of mental conditions. They involve long-term patterns of thoughts and behaviors that are unhealthy and inflexible and are very different from society's expectations. People with personality disorders have trouble dealing with everyday stresses and problems. A person with a personality disorder has trouble perceiving and relating to situations and people which can cause significant problems in relationships, social activities, work and school.

There are 10 main types of personality disorders that are separated into three different categories or clusters based on descriptive similarities:

Cluster A disorders, characterized as eccentric, includes paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders.

Cluster B, characterized as dramatic, includes antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders.

Cluster C disorders, characterized as anxious, are more prevalent and includes avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders. Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is not the same as obsessive-compulsive disorder, which is a type of anxiety disorder.



People with personality disorders may have trouble realizing that they have a problem and often do not seek treatment on their own. To them their thoughts are normal, and they often blame others for their problems. They tend to seek help once their behavior has caused severe problems in their relationships or work. They may also seek help when they are struggling with another mental health problem since personality disorders often occur along with other mental illnesses, such as substance abuse, anxiety, and mood disorders like depression or bipolar disorder.

The cause of personality disorders is unknown. However, experts think genes and childhood experiences may play a role and most personality disorders begin in the teen years. Some personality disorders, such as borderline personality disorder and histrionic personality disorder, are more common in women, and others, such as antisocial personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, are more common in men. Symptoms vary widely, depending on the type of disorder and can range from mild to severe. Often a person will be diagnosed with more than one type of personality disorder.

Personality disorders are diagnosed based on a psychological evaluation and certain types of psychotherapy are effective for treating personality disorders. The type of treatment will depend on the specific personality disorder, how severe it is, and the individual's circumstances.

If you think you or a loved one has a personality disorder and would like to talk with a professional mental health therapist about it, call Fully Effective Employees: 425-454-3003. Use of our services is confidential.

Sources: [Mayo Clinic](#), [Cleveland Clinic](#), [MedlinePlus](#)

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