



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM ATLANTIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | March 2023

Women's Mental Health – Embracing Equity

In celebration of International Women's Day and to honor women and all they do for so many around the world, it is especially poignant to discuss the importance of their well-being and mental health.

It is not an overstatement to say that, in many cases, women take care of everyone. Studies show that women do most of the caretaking and caregiving from the cradle to the grave. Even as men are stepping up to take on caregiving of children and family members, it is still women who provide the majority of unpaid childcare and elder care. "Women provide the majority of informal care to spouses, parents, parents-in-law, friends and neighbors, and they play many roles while caregiving—hands-on health provider, care manager, friend, companion, surrogate decision-maker and advocate." [Women and Caregiving: Facts and Figures - Family Caregiver Alliance](#)

If you are feeling exhausted there may be a good reason. It is not unusual to feel tired, frustrated, resentful and overwhelmed when providing care for a family member, even someone you care for and love deeply. When we don't make time to take care of our own needs, we can easily fall into low mood, anxiety or depression.

Sometimes this can come from a misguided belief that doing something for oneself is "selfish" which can prevent women from taking the needed steps to refill their own well. This can also lead to the habit of women putting themselves at the bottom of the care list and can easily neglect their own health care and emotional needs. Women may also learn to not ask for help which can lead to depression and other mental health issues.

Caregiving is often an expression of deeply held values and commitments for women. While these roles can be very rewarding and satisfying, they can also take a toll on women's well-being and mental health.



International Women's Day (March 8th) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. This year's theme is #EmbraceEquity

[IWD: International Women's Day 2023 Campaign Theme: #EmbraceEquity](#)

Activities to Celebrate International Women's Day

- Watch a documentary about women's rights
- Read books about gender equality
- Add some new podcasts to your queue
- Learn about the challenges women and girls face around the world
- Have a dance party to an all-woman playlist

[21 Ways to Celebrate International Women's Day \(2023\) \(goodgoodgood.co\)](#)

Women and Mental Health

While both men and women can experience a mental health disorder or diagnosis, **“about twice as many women as men experience depression.”** [Depression in Women: Understanding the Gender Gap - Mayo Clinic](#)

There are some mental health issues that are unique to women. “Some disorders are more common in women such as [depression](#) and [anxiety](#). There are also certain types of disorders that are unique to women.

For example, some women may experience symptoms of mental disorders at times of:

- hormone change, such as perinatal depression
- premenstrual dysphoric disorder
- perimenopause-related depression
- postpartum depression. [NIMH » Women and Mental Health \(nih.gov\)](#)

What to Look For:

Women and men can develop most of the same mental disorders and conditions but may experience different symptoms. Some symptoms include:

- Persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness
- Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Excessive fear or worry
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Extremely high and low moods
- Aches, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear cause
- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Suicidal thoughts



When to Seek Professional Help

Seek professional help if you are experiencing severe or distressing symptoms that have lasted two weeks or more, such as:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Inability to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities

Don't wait until your symptoms are overwhelming. Talk about your concerns with your primary care provider or gynecologist who can refer you to a mental health professional, if needed.

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, get help immediately. You can call 911 or call or text the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) at **988**.

Taking Care of Ourselves While Taking Care of Others

What can help when you are caring for a loved one: Asking for and accepting help can be difficult and is also important for women providing care for loved ones. Consider setting up formal or informal respite care to take a short break.

- **"In-home respite:** Health care aides come to your home to provide companionship, nursing services or both.
- **Adult care centers and programs:** Some centers provide care for both older adults and young children, and the two groups may spend time together.
- **Short-term nursing homes:** Some assisted living homes, memory care homes and nursing homes accept people needing care for short stays while caregivers are away. [Caregiver Stress: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself - Mayo Clinic](#)

Seek out local Information and services – seek out resources in your community for support groups and assistance.

- Find a therapist – therapy can be a support for caregivers and help you set appropriate self-care goals as well as keep you on track while you are caring for loved ones.
- Keep up with your own medical needs and appointments with your medical providers.
- Give yourself permission to take small breaks. This can be a short daily walk, a date to meet friends for lunch or a quiet time for you to read and have a cup of tea.
- Practice regular self-compassion breaks. Cultivating compassion has been shown to build resilience. Try out this, and other meditations for your own self-care.

HOW TO START LOVING YOURSELF



AFFORDABLE SELF CARE IDEAS

- Journal about how you've been feeling
- Hydrate your body
- Take a warm bath
- Try different types of breathwork
- Clean your space
- Go for a walk in nature
- Stretch it out
- Take a nap
- Write 5 things you are grateful for
- Change the layout of your home
- Get some sunshine
- Put on some comfy clothes and just relax
- Call a loved one
- Put on some music that makes you happy



MINDJOURNAL

**Atlantic Behavioral Health ACCESS Center:
888-247-1400**

**Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention
Services 24/7 Hotlines:**

Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-5078
Hackettstown Medical Center: 908-454-5141
Morristown Medical Center: 973-540-0100
Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-3586
Newton Medical Center: 973-383-0973

Website:
Atlantichealth.org

 **Atlantic Health System**
Behavioral Health



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