



## May is Mental Health Awareness Month: How Is Your Mental Health?

We schedule physicals, get bloodwork done, and check our blood pressure. These tests help us understand our physical health, but mental health doesn't have the same level of routine testing. While screenings exist for conditions like depression or substance use disorders, emotional wellness and emotional fitness are harder to measure. How's your mental health and emotional fitness? Most of us assume we're okay—until we're not.

A practical way to gauge where you stand is to look at four areas:

- 1) Emotional resilience—can you bounce back from everyday stress, or do you stay stuck in sadness or rumination?
- 2) Thinking patterns—are your thoughts realistic and flexible, or increasingly negative and repetitive?
- 3) Behavior—are you following through on responsibilities, or withdrawing from activities you once enjoyed, with changes in sleep or appetite?
- 4) Relationships—are you connecting well with others, or are you pulling away, experiencing conflict, or struggling to set boundaries that protect your time and energy?



Pay attention to ongoing disruption in any of these areas. Mental health can be strengthened, much like physical health, through small adjustments; limit news and social media overload, protect sleep, and stay connected to supportive people. Do small, intentional things each day that align with your values—what matters most to you—rather than living on autopilot. Mental health improves with steady attention, and your EAP can help.

### Stress Tips from the Field: Narrow the Focus to Beat Overwhelm

Overwhelm isn't about having too much work—it's about facing too many competing priorities. This "deer in the headlights" experience causes stress. To exit this state, ask a simple question: "If I complete one task in the next hour, what should it be?" (A similar adage: If you don't know what to do, pretend that you do know, and do that.) Even a little progress creates a sense of control, reducing anxiety. Overwhelm dissipates as your focus narrows and sequencing begins. Once movement is underway, momentum follows.



## Financial Preparedness and Peace of Mind



Few things are as stressful as financial anxiety associated with workplace uncertainty or sudden job loss. Although job security is rarely guaranteed, a little preparation can prevent fear and panic if the worst were to happen. Search “simple apps for managing a budget.” Many apps exist that can be mastered in minutes to get you on track with better managing income and cash flow. Spending on housing, utilities, food, transportation, lattes...you’ll see it all. When you do, you’ll feel more control. Being more empowered equates to less anxiety.

Separate your needs from your wants. Discover where it is easiest to cut back and trim your outgo. Start an emergency savings set-aside, and use any automatic deposit methods your banking institution may offer to make it happen. Like most people, you’ll be amazed by how easily and painlessly your savings pot builds up. Do not allow the fact that it currently contains \$0 to stop you from beginning this step. Key idea: Financial preparedness is not about having all the money you need if something untoward happens. It’s about increasing your sense of control and resilience when it does. Your EAP can lead you to more resources, money tips, and ways to decrease your financial exposure with services in your community, many of which are likely free.

## Connection Matters

Mental Health Week’s focus on social connection highlights something many workplaces overlook: meaningful relationships are not just “nice to have,” they are essential to wellbeing. Feeling connected—to colleagues, friends, or family—can reduce stress, increase resilience, and improve overall mental health. Yet, in busy work environments or during challenging times, maintaining those connections can be difficult.

This is where Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) play an important role. Counselling services offered through EAPs provide a confidential space for individuals to talk, reflect, and strengthen their ability to connect with others. Whether someone is dealing with workplace stress, personal challenges, or feelings of isolation, professional support can help them rebuild communication skills and foster healthier relationships.

Support is available and accessible whenever you need it. Reach out, start conversations, and take small steps toward strengthening your connections. Encourage others to access support when they need it—together, we can help create an environment where people feel supported, understood, and better equipped to connect with those around them

