**Mental Health**

One of the biggest side effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic is that many people who are otherwise happy, healthy, and easygoing find themselves struggling to overcome mental health issues that are completely foreign to them. Whether you’re suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, or simply a general sense of unease or sadness that may be abnormal for you, Houston has a variety of resources to help you—regardless of your insurance or ability to pay.

**Mental Health and Me**

There’s a reason why people have been discussing and promoting mental health awareness in recent years, and that’s because many people may be struggling with this issue and completely unaware that they are a diagnosis away from getting they help they need or deserve. This is especially common amongst the African American community, where mental health is a taboo and members of the community are expected to ‘control themselves’, pray, or suffer in silence. There is a better way, so please consider it…

**MedlinePlus | Mental Health**

Make the first stop on your mental health journey MedlinePlus. This page explains mental health in-depth, and elaborates on why it is so crucial to our overall wellbeing—\*Spoiler Alert: Most of us don’t even realize how we’re relying upon our mental health to function and go about our daily lives.\* This page is comprehensive and links you to all kinds of helpful resources.

The best part? You can do all of this anonymously, so there’s no need to be embarrassed or ashamed—this is a taboo-free zone!

<https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html>

**MedlinePlus | How to Improve Mental Health**

Once you have an understanding of *what* mental health is and *why* it is crucial to your overall wellness, the next step is the maintenance of your personal mental health. Whether your goal is to sustain the high level of mental wellness you have already achieved, or discover ways to improve languishing mental health, you’re sure to walk away from this page with some great new tips.

<https://medlineplus.gov/howtoimprovementalhealth.html>

**UU Mental Health Network | Unitarian Universalist Mental Health Resources During the Pandemic**

This helpful list of online resources is designed to help you mitigate mental health issues that you may be experiencing *specifically* due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<https://uumentalhealth.org/resources/mental-health-resources-during-the-pandemic/>

**Services in YOUR City (Houston, TX)**

While national resources are great, sometimes you need someone who speaks ‘your language’—someone who understands the struggles people in your city are facing. Additionally, as the world begins to open back up and we are able to resume more in-person services, you may *want* or *need* to see a provider directly. The services listed below are good to have in your back pocket during the pandemic, and also, when we achieve our ‘new normal’.

**NAMI - Greater Houston | National Association on Mental Health Greater Houston**

Officially, “The mission of NAMI Greater Houston is to improve the lives of all persons affected by mental illness through support, education, and advocacy based programs and services.” Through NAMI Greater Houston, you’ll find access to peer groups, free programs, and even a list of resources. This is a great stepping stone if you need to not only learn about local mental health options, but mental health on a budget.

<https://namigreaterhouston.org/>

**Family Houston | Mental Health Resources From Family Houston**

Remember when we mentioned that Family Houston offers a variety of categories under their ‘Resources’ tab? Well, ‘mental health’ is one of them. Teens, Veterans, PTSD, the challenges of being a student during the pandemic…a variety of topics (and resources) are profiled. Speaking of, if you’re dealing with anxiety (a struggle shared by many new sufferers due to the upheaval created by the pandemic), then be sure to read Jill’s story <https://www.familyhouston.org/news/how-jill-manages-her-anxiety/> and learn how *she* deals with anxiety.

<https://www.familyhouston.org/houston-counseling/resources/>

**Mental Health America of Greater Houston**

If you think you’re beginning to struggle with your mental health, but have *absolutely no idea* where to begin, Mental Health America of Greater Houston offers a free (and anonymous) online assessment which takes only 5-minutes. This is actually the area’s longest running mental health education and advocacy organization; it was founded in 1954 by Houston philanthropist Ima Hogg. This organization can connect you to a variety of services for *everyone*—including children and veterans.

<https://mhahouston.org/>

**The Harris Center for Mental Health**

Call the COVID-19 line or the Crisis line for assistance with you mental health needs.

COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line: 1-833-986-1919

The Harris Center Crisis Line: (713)-970-7000, Option #1

**University of St. Thomas | Healing Our Heroes: K-12 Teachers**

This expansion of the University’s ‘Healing Our Heroes’ program provides free counseling services specifically for K-12 teachers from the date of this publication through May 2021. To make an appoint at the clinic (located on the University’s campus at 4219 Yoakum Blvd.), please call (713)-525-3879; the number provided will take you to a confidential voicemail. Appointments are available from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

**Printable Mental Health Resources**

Sometimes, all you need is a quick refresher—a little checklist that you can review and keep handy. The resources below will help you do just that…

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration | Tips for Managing Stress During The COVID-19 Pandemic Wallet Card**

A printable PDF, “The wallet card provides stress reduction tips and techniques as well as lists sources for additional assistance.”

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Managing-Stress-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-Wallet-Card/PEP20-01-01-013>

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration | Feeling Stressed or Anxious About the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

Dealing with symptoms of stress *and* anxiety? Download this PDF card full of helpful tips and resources.

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Feeling-Stressed-or-Anxious-About-the-COVID-19-Pandemic/PEP20-01-01-015>

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration | Are You Working to Help People Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

This one’s for the medical professionals! Download this PDF when you need assistance with, “…key Psychological First Aid concepts and resources Disaster Responders and Outreach Workers may use when assisting individuals affected by the pandemic. It also provides resources for further assistance.”

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Are-You-Working-to-Help-People-Affected-by-the-COVID-19-Pandemic/PEP20-01-01-014>

**BONUS**

When you absolutely *must* speak to someone who understands not only mental health, but the unique issues experienced by Black Women, please visit the links below. *Everyone* listed is an African American Therapist or Psychiatrist (respectively), operating *in* or *near* Houston.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/african-american/tx/houston>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/psychiatrists/african-american/tx/houston>

**COVID QUICKSHEET**

Five (5) fast facts about mental health and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**TRUE or FALSE**

If my mental health was strong enough, it would never be impacted by the events I encounter in my life.

**FALSE**

Mental health is malleable, and in fact, it’s largely internal and external factors that shape your mental health and *not* the other way around. From biology and genetics to experiences and lifestyle, your mental health is often a byproduct of what’s going on in your life physically, emotionally, financially, etc. So if you ‘haven’t been feeling like yourself’ due to the pandemic, that’s not only normal right now, it’s common.

<https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html>

**TRUE or FALSE**

My mental health has shifted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and now, I can never get back to the happy person I used to be.

**FALSE**

The CDC states that “…a person’s mental health can change over time, depending on many factors. When the demands placed on a person exceed their resources and coping abilities, their mental health could be impacted.” So, if your mental health has taken a hit due to the ripple effect the pandemic has had on almost every aspect of our lives, rest assured that it *is* possible for your mental health to naturally improve as the state of the world begins to improve.

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

**TRUE or FALSE**

It’s impossible to tell whether or not I may have a mental illness unless I suffer from extreme mood swings, such as manic and depressive episodes.

**FALSE**

Because of the stereotypes associated with mental illness, a lot of people have a very narrow idea of ‘what it looks like’—sometimes to their own detriment. There are all types of mental health issues and they can manifest in a variety of ways. You may experience subtle *or* extreme changes within your life and body—everything from sleeplessness to changes in your eating and drinking habits. Not ‘feeling like’ or ‘being’ yourself is often one of the earliest signs of a change in your mental health, so don't take it lightly.

<https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html>

**TRUE or FALSE**

I can immediately work on improving my mental health *right now*!

**TRUE**

The MedlinePlus page, “How to Improve Mental Health” is a comprehensive resource that includes long-term and short-term options for improving your mental health. Some of them you can implement *today*—regardless of whether or not you can afford to speak to a mental health professional. One of the best things you can do for your mental health is to take a holistic approach—so please make time to practice self-care.

<https://medlineplus.gov/howtoimprovementalhealth.html>

**TRUE or FALSE**

It may be helpful to review mental health information that speaks to the unique experiences and challenges I encounter as a *woman*.

**TRUE**

Mental health can impact anyone and everyone—regardless of age, socioeconomic status, or sex. *However*, that doesn’t mean that the *way* we experience life events doesn’t impact our mental health. The challenges a wife, mother, and career woman has to overcome are going to be different from those that a teenager or businessman must face. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services - Office of Women’s Health has some great information and resources that focus on mental health though the lens of womanhood.

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/good-mental-health/steps-good-mental-health>