

# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

## IF YOU ARE JUDGING YOURSELF FOR YOUR HOLIDAY MENTAL HEALTH

Have you ever heard the phrase, “It’s okay not to be okay”? It reminds us that mental health concerns are common, treatable and nothing to be ashamed of. That’s easy to grasp if you are in a good headspace . . . but what if you’re struggling? How do you remind yourself that it *is* okay? That you’re not “crazy”? That it can get better? Here are some facts to fight off the judgy thoughts in your head — especially ones that come on during the stressful holiday season — and some information on how you can feel better faster.

- 1. You’re not alone.** Whether you are feeling stressed, depressed, anxious, burnt out or you have an official diagnosis, you are in good company. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 5 people in the U.S. had experienced a serious mental health condition, with millions more going untreated.\* Since the pandemic started, that number has increased astronomically, with countless Americans struggling through these uncertain times. And now, with the holidays approaching, many of us will be encountering even more stressors, from additional expenses, to family conflicts, to the pressure of “forced fun” when you’re not feeling the holiday spirit.
- 2. It’s a medical condition.** You wouldn’t judge yourself harshly if you were prone to migraines or back spasms, would you? Similarly, some of us are prone to mental health concerns — sometimes due to genetics, or childhood trauma, or simply because this is the body and brain you were born with. And, all of us can develop mental health concerns when put under enough stress.
- 3. Poor mental health lies to you.** Does diabetes ever whisper, “Pssst . . . don’t test your blood sugar today”? Does a twisted ankle ever say, “Skip the wrap and the ice pack — let’s go for a jog”? Of course not. But one of the most insidious hallmarks of poor mental health is that it actively discourages you from getting better. For example, someone with depression may have thoughts like, “I can’t get better, so why even try? I shouldn’t ask for help because I’ll be a burden. I’ll never escape this.” This is the disease talking — not reality. You *do* have resources and people who want to help, and you *can* get better.
- 4. Give yourself time to find the right treatment.** Everyone responds to mental health care differently, so it’s important to be flexible when finding what works for you. For example, talk therapy is a very effective treatment, but you won’t click with every therapist. Schedule introductory meetings with a few so you can find one who you feel comfortable and safe opening up to. Similarly, medications can be very effective, but one pill doesn’t work for every person. Work with your provider to find the right combination and dosage for your body and brain.
- 5. You can take care of your mental health at home.** You can speed your healing — and prevent mental health issues from recurring — by building resiliency through self-care at home. For example, regular exercise can restore connections and boost hormones in your brain that can help improve your mood. You can also see benefits to your mental health when you maintain a regular sleep schedule, stay hydrated and eat healthy foods, connect with friends and family you care about, and find something outside of work and home that brings you purpose like a hobby or volunteering in your community.



### IT IS OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY ... AND YOUR STATE OF IOWA BENEFITS CAN HELP.

This holiday season, if you feel stressed, overwhelmed, or just not like yourself, you have resources you can use to feel better. Start with a call to your personal doctor; they can refer you for talk therapy and medication management. If you prefer to do your own search, visit [Wellmark.com/Finder](https://www.wellmark.com/finder) to locate in-network providers near you. Or, if you prefer treatment at home, you can schedule a virtual appointment with Doctor On Demand® using the free app or at [DoctorOnDemand.com](https://www.doctorondemand.com).

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