



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

September 2024

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



[Better Together: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month](#)

[Click to Read Article](#) ►



[Lending an Ear: How Active Listening Can Save Lives](#)

[Click to Read Article](#) ►



[Sleep Hygiene 101](#)

[Click to Read Article](#) ►



[Recipe: Tortellini Carbonara](#)

[Click to Read Article](#) ►



Better Together: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and discuss this highly stigmatized topic. This month is dedicated to providing hope and information to people affected by suicide. Suicidal thoughts, like mental health conditions, can impact anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health issue. Suicidal thoughts should not be considered normal and can indicate more serious problems.

Warning Signs

Comments or thoughts about suicide, also known as suicidal ideation, can start small but over time become more explicit and dangerous. Here are a few warning signs to watch for:

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Dramatic mood swings
- Impulsive or aggressive behavior
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Collecting and saving pills or buying a weapon
- Giving away possessions
- Tying up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Saying goodbye to friends and family

Providing Support

Here are a few helping things to keep in mind when approaching someone who may be suicidal:

- Start by expressing support and concern
- Calmly ask simple and direct questions, like “Can I help you call a psychiatrist?”
- Don’t argue, threaten or raise your voice
- Have one person speak at a time
- Try not to fidget or pace
- Remove means (weapons, medications, etc.)

National Resources

The following crisis lines are available 24/7:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call or text 9-8-8
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): call 1-800-950-6264 or text 741-741
- Military/Veterans Crisis Line: call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 or text 838-255
- Trevor Lifeline for people who identify as LGBTQ: call 1-866-488-7386

Your EAP provides free and confidential assessment and counseling resources. Call BHS at 800-245-1150 to learn more today.

Resource: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)



Lending an Ear: How Active Listening Can Save Lives

Many of us forget that we all possess one of the most effective tools to aid someone experiencing a mental health crisis, listening.

We hear a lot about active listening – listening and responding to another person to improve mutual understanding. For people in roles like a nurse or doctor, engaging and responding while listening is an ideal strategy. Checking information during a conversation helps ensure patients receive the correct treatments and medications.

But for situations when someone is experiencing symptoms of a mental health crisis, there is another kind of listening that can be more effective: empathetic listening. For a person experiencing a mental health problem, having an empathetic listener can be calming and reassuring – even healing.

Empathy, unlike sympathy, does not mean we agree with the other person or see things from the same point of view. Instead, it requires taking a moment to step outside of our normal patterns of thinking and feeling to imagine what it feels like to be the person in front of us.

Listening empathetically allows the listener to really hear and understand what is being said. It also makes it easier for the other person to feel they can talk freely without being judged.

Here are some ways to show empathy the next time you encounter someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis:

1. **Focus on conveying empathy** and not on changing the person or their perspective.
2. **Slow down.** Distress often increases the speed of our speech and gestures. Give the person in front of you enough time to express themselves.
3. **Use a relaxed body posture.** Stay close enough to the person to show you care, but do not touch the person without asking first.

Our distress increases when we feel isolated. By showing empathy, you can help the person in front of you calm down.

Remember, the person in front of you shares your human condition – with all its needs, struggles and desires. Although you might fear making someone uncomfortable, remember that many people experiencing mental health symptoms want someone to notice them and offer support.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. BHS is available by calling 800-245-1150 or visiting [behavioralhealthsystems.com](https://www.behavioralhealthsystems.com).

Source: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>



Sleep Hygiene 101

Sleep is just as important for good health as diet and exercise. Good sleep improves your brain performance, mood and overall health. Not getting enough quality sleep regularly raises the risk of many diseases and disorders; ranging from heart disease and stroke to obesity and dementia.

There is more to good sleep than just the hours spent in bed. Healthy sleep encompasses three major points.:

1. **How much sleep you get.** How much sleep you need changes with age. Experts recommend school-age children get at least nine hours a night and teenagers get between eight and 10. Most adults need at least seven hours or more of sleep each night.
2. **Sleep quality:** getting uninterrupted and refreshing sleep. People who work the night shift or irregular schedules may find getting quality sleep extra challenging. Times of great stress can also disrupt normal sleep routines.

3. **A consistent sleep schedule.** A sleep myth is that you can "catch up" on your days off. If you have one bad night's sleep and take a nap, or sleep longer the next night it can benefit you. If you have a week's worth of getting too little sleep, the weekend is not sufficient for you to catch up.

Getting Better Sleep

If you're having trouble sleeping, hearing how important it is may be frustrating. However, simple things can improve your odds of a good night's sleep.

- Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.
- Create a good sleeping environment. Keep the temperature cool if possible. Get rid of sound and light distractions by making it dark and silencing your cell phone.
- Avoid nicotine and caffeine. Both are stimulants that keep you awake. Caffeine can take six to eight hours to wear off completely.

RECIPE: Tortellini Carbonara • 4 Servings • 5 Minute Prep Time • 15 Minute Cook Time

Ingredients • 1 package (9 ounces) refrigerated cheese tortellini • 8 bacon strips, chopped • 1 cup heavy whipping cream • 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese • 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

Instructions • Cook tortellini according to package directions; drain. • Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook bacon over medium heat until crisp, stirring occasionally. Remove with a slotted spoon; drain on paper towels. Pour off drippings. • In same pan, combine cream, cheese, parsley and bacon; heat through over medium heat. Stir in tortellini. Serve immediately.

