



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and Information from the Atlantic County Office

Pride Month, PTSD Awareness, and Men's Health Month

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The 411 on LGBTQIA+
PAGE 3

Tribute to Male Staff of United By Wellness
PAGE 6

PTSD Awareness Month
PAGE 7

Wellness Bulletin Board
PAGE 8

Hurricane Preparedness
PAGE 9

Spotlight on Men's Mental Wellness

The importance of word choice, perspective, and humor

BY SACHIN DOSHI
Director of Development for Mental Health America

A team working with the Man Therapy Campaign contributed to this article.

Hi there. Man here. I've worked for Mental Health America for over three years, and sometimes, I still find it hard to talk about how I'm feeling. Why is this? We have robust evidence showing that men suffer from mental health conditions at similar rates to women. Four out of five people who die by suicide are men. Celebrities like Dwayne Johnson, Ryan Reynolds, and many others have talked publicly about their struggles with anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, or other mental health concerns. So have others in the public eye, like the late John Saunders, journalist with ESPN. So have men who hold more traditional, conservative positions of power, such as Aetna CEO Mark Bertolini.

Yet day to day, as we interact with our friends, our families, our partners, and our professional networks, countless men still experience difficulty with even using the words "mental health" in relation to how they feel. In



Pictured above: Sachin Doshi, Director of Development for Mental Health America

recent years, society has begun to acknowledge the large role that gender norms, social taboos, and cultural contexts play in creating this environment, especially in the United States, but you might not be aware that there are other factors involved as well. These factors are heavily interconnected with gender, society, and culture, but they merit consideration on their own. Here are three less-known reasons why many men (at least in America) still struggle with talking about their mental health.

Research done to develop the *Man Therapy* mental health campaign indicates that men respond more strongly to humor (especially dark humor) and, at least initially, to softer mental health language. Once men are
continued on page 2

engaged enough to learn more, there is often much less resistance to having our concerns contextualized within the lexicon of mental health. Many awareness campaigns fail to take these considerations into account, leading men to “check out” as soon as they see mention of mental health. This can cause men to feel out-of-place or vulnerable when discussing these issues.

Men are much more likely to accept help when there is a chance for reciprocity – that is, when they perceive an opportunity to help the other person in return. This wards off the feeling of “weakness” that is often associated with asking for help. Men also prefer to either fix or at least try to fix issues ourselves when possible, before reaching out for help at all. Instead of seeing this as a barrier, we should look for ways that loved ones, friends, doctors, and others can incorporate this to encourage healthier self-care strategies in men.

A tip: It can seem like an uphill battle to reframe the issues you're experiencing in the context of “mental health.” If this describes you, try thinking about it as just another problem to fix – another car part to replace, a wall to patch up, or a sick kid to take care of – by approaching it this way, you may start to find meaningful ways to feel better.

Although men and women experience similar symptoms of some mental health concerns, how they manifest and present those symptoms can vary. For example, according to WebMD, women often respond to symptoms of depression with a more recognizable affect – they might appear disheartened, sad, or express that they feel worthless. Although men can demonstrate this as well, we are also more likely to present a more irritable affect – we might respond with anger,

Three Lesser Known Reasons Why Men Don't Talk about Mental Health

- Awareness strategies are not targeted well to men
- Men ask for help differently
- Men can express mental health problems differently, leading to mis- or under-diagnosis

Sources: Research from the Man Therapy Campaign, WebMD, and MHA

frustration, impulsivity, or a variety of other behaviors that aren't always considered in the context of depression. In fact, these are often dismissed as “acting out.” Or if we respond with increased drug or alcohol use, these actually are seen as normal American male behaviors! This can play into the first bullet point above, leading both us and the people around us to be less-informed about mental health in men.

During Men's Mental Health Month this June, consider whether these reasons apply to you. ■



**Men's Wellness Group is offered online by
United by Wellness of MHANJ
1st and 3rd Sundays of each month at 12 pm
Call 609-652-3800 or
unitedbywellness@mhanj.org**

PRIDE MONTH

The 411 on LGBTQIA+

BY ASHLEIGH ZAPPALA

Special guest writer

Ashleigh is the Wellness Center Coordinator for MHA in Atlantic County. She spent nearly two years co-facilitating Show Your True Colours, a group for the LGBTQIA+ community as well as allies.



Learning something new is challenging, especially when there is so much pressure to get it right. Even folks in the LGBTQIA+ community are constantly learning the difference between labels.

Even as I type this, I could be giving information that changes tomorrow. I think it is so beautiful that a community can endlessly evolve to be more inclusive and accepting, but that comes with the pressure to understand identities as they change. That is why today I am writing to explain some basics of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I picked some common questions to include in this article with the idea in mind to increase awareness and clear up misconceptions. I am honored to share education surrounding the community so we all can learn and grow together.

What does LGBTQIA+ stand for?

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, and more! Visit the Human Rights Campaign's Glossary of Terms for more information:

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

There is some controversy over the use of labels among the LGBTQIA+ community. Do we like them? Should we use them? Does it make being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community harder or easier? Well, those are matters for each individual to decide. Some people like using a label because it gives them a word to describe how they experience love. Other do not like labels because they feel restricted in a box and want to feel free to love as they choose.

What is the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity?

This is a great question, because they are two different things! Think of it this way – sexual orientation represents how someone feels about other people, and gender identity is how someone feels about themselves. For example, a person might be attracted to people of the same sex, but they feel connected to the gender they were assigned at birth, which is a focus on sexual orientation not gender identity. The reverse also can happen -- someone is attracted to the opposite sex but does not feel connected to the gender they were assigned at birth, and that is a focus on gender identity, not sexual orientation.

Pride month is a special time of year when people like me are reminded that there is space in the world for us. We belong here. I am honored to share education surrounding the community so we can all learn and grow together.

What questions are not appropriate to ask someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+?

First of all, it is okay to ask questions! We are all learning and growing and curiosity should be rewarded. Remember to remain respectful. Questions about someone's anatomy, details about what someone does in the bedroom, and information that someone's identity they are simply not ready to share should be avoided.

What are homophobia and transphobia?

Homophobia and transphobia are negative beliefs, discriminatory acts, or harmful behaviors towards individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community.

How can I be a well-informed ally?

There are many different ways! Do your research with the resources found below. Show love and compassion to the community as a whole, but also to individuals you know who are part of the community. Don't be afraid to ask (respectful) questions!

Additional Resources:

The Human Rights Campaign: <https://www.hrc.org/>

GLAAD: <https://www.glaad.org/>

The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

NEWS

briefs



Senior Outreaches

MHA Atlantic provided a presentation about mental health and environmental wellness for seniors at the Leinweber Nutrition Site, Senior Citizens Center in Northfield. Atlantic's Director, Vicki Phillips, talked to participants and provided resources. Thanks to Angela Krukauskas, Site Coordinator, for planning this event.

MHA Atlantic and the Atlantic Cape Caregiver Coalition shared a table to provide local seniors information and resources at Stockton's University's May 23 event "Celebrating Older Americans Month," which was hosted by the Stockton Center On Successful Aging. More than 300 residents turned out for the fair.

If you are interested in staff providing an information table at an event or speaking to a group, organization, or agency, please contact Vicki Phillips at vphillips@mhanj.org.

Newly Minted WRAP Instructors

About a dozen new WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) instructors received their certifications, including several MHA Atlantic staff members, Seth Edwards, Emily McCall, and Ashleigh Zappala. The certification enables instructors to facilitate classes in the community and through organizations, groups, and agencies.

WRAP is a tool that can help an individual support their wellness and maintain a satisfying life as defined by that person. WRAP can be used to adjust to new responsibilities and routines, address potential problems, and maintain overall wellness. The plan is a personalized wellness and recovery system rooted in the principle of self-determination.

Seth, Emily, and Ashleigh are available to facilitate a WRAP course in Atlantic County. For more information, email wrap@mhanj.org.



A Well-Deserved Honor for a Community Partner

In May, Sgt. Brian Shapiro of the Atlantic City Police Department was honored twice for his work with the at-risk population of Atlantic City and the county. He is a community partner and co-chair for Crisis Intervention Training.

Sgt. Shapiro, the Atlantic County Law Enforcement Coordinator CIT-NJ, won "Coordinator of the Year" at their annual event, which was held at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville on May 25. He was recognized for his efforts to connect individuals to appropriate resources, care and support. By bringing casino security personnel and Atlantic County Casinos into the fold of CIT, he exponentially and positively impacted the health and well-being of countless individuals who are at-risk, including individuals experiencing homelessness, and/or living with addiction or mental health disorders.



Sgt. Shapiro was also honored by the NJ Attorney General's Office with the Outstanding Community Partnership Award at the recent 2023 Excellence in Policing Ceremony.

Pictured at left is Sgt. Brian Shapiro of the Atlantic City Police Department.

HIPAA Speaker TBA

MHA Atlantic staff are working to arrange for a speaker (in-person and/or online) to present information and host a Q&A for family members, consumers, and community partners.

HIPAA is the federal privacy law that was enacted in 1996.

MHA - Acute Care Family Program

Support and assistance for families with a loved one in crisis and in need of linkage to treatment and other services.

**7 days per week
Available 8 am to 8 pm
609-517-8614**

Our team engages families who are often navigating the mental health system for the first time.

Staff educate families about mental illness and offer resources and referrals that can help their loved one

When your family needs help...



**we are a phone call away
609-517-8614**

HAPPY
Father's
DAY
Sunday, June 18

***Thinking of all the
fathers of children
who live with a
mental health
condition.***

***We also remember
all fathers
who struggle with
mental health***



During Men's Health Month, we proudly recognize these dedicated staff members



**Dan McGowan
Thom Mason
Garrett Fitzgerald
Mike Butterworth
Alan Esquite-Hernandez
Seth Edwards**

**Brendan Deal
Mike Leotis
Randy Elfenbein
John "Bud" Buckley
Gary Sheridan
Scott Whittle
Ryan J. *not pictured**

With gratitude to all the male staff of United By Wellness who provide support, encouragement, and inspiration while facilitating and co-facilitating dozens of groups.

We can't count the number of lives they touch



Common types of trauma

- Community violence
- Disasters
- Intimate partner violence
- Physical and emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Terrorism and violence
- Generational trauma
- Death of a loved one
- Combat or war exposure
- Traffic accidents
- Neglect
- System-induced trauma
- Medical trauma

DID YOU KNOW?

Special PTSD ribbon specific for military

Ribbons for Troops created the PTSD and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) ribbon, alternatively called the Military with PTSD ribbon.

- Yellow is the color for supporting the military, a sign of waiting for troops to return home
 - Black represents the dark part and unknown future of the troops and their families
- * Red is not always used in the ribbon. A red stripe or star represents rage and anger, which are common symptoms of PTSD and brain injury



Read more about PTSD

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd>

PTSD Screening is available online - no cost, confidential

mhaac.info/screening
Includes links to information and resources

Here are a few
sample questions

1. had nightmares about the event(s) or thought about the event(s) when you did not want to?

NO YES

2. tried hard not to think about the event(s) or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of the event(s)?

NO YES

3. been constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?

NO YES

4. felt numb or detached from people, activities, or your surroundings?

NO YES

5. felt guilty or unable to stop blaming yourself or others for the event(s) or any problems the event(s) may have caused?

NO YES

Healing Trauma

Online groups meets on
the first and third
Thursdays at 5 pm

Offered through
United By Wellness

For information, call 609-652-3800
or scan this
QR Code to register



Wellness Bulletin Board



LIBRARY

Board game nights at several branches
Arts, crafts for adults and seniors
Book Clubs and more...

"Bond Between Humans and Animals"
Wednesdays in June at 6 pm
Mays Landing Branch
Registration required 609-625-2776 Age 18+

View the complete calendar at atlanticlibrary.org
Click on "Calendar of Events"



Free Summer Concerts

SOMERS POINT Fridays 7-10 pm William Morrow Beach
Starts June 16

VENTNOR Saturdays at 6 pm Newport Beach
*Wednesday nights 6 pm at Ski Beach
*start June 28

ABSECON Sundays at 7 pm - Heritage Park
Starts June 25

EHT Fridays 7-9pm at Tony Canale Park (starts June 23)

ATLANTIC CITY
Sat., June 24 at 1 pm at Gardner's Basin

SJ Wind Ensemble
"Song for my Father" Concert
Sunday, June 11 at 3 pm
ACIT 5080 Atlantic Ave, Mays Landing

U-PICK BLUEBERRY FARMS

EHC - Walking Bird Farm
Hammonton - DiMeo, McCay,
Blueberry Bill and others
Starting mid-June/Call or check Facebook




JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Food, live music, comedy, vendors, youth activities, African dance, drum, storytelling and visual arts. Guest speakers!

Sat., June 17 from 1 pm to 5 pm
Haven Avenue between 7th and 8th Street
Ocean City



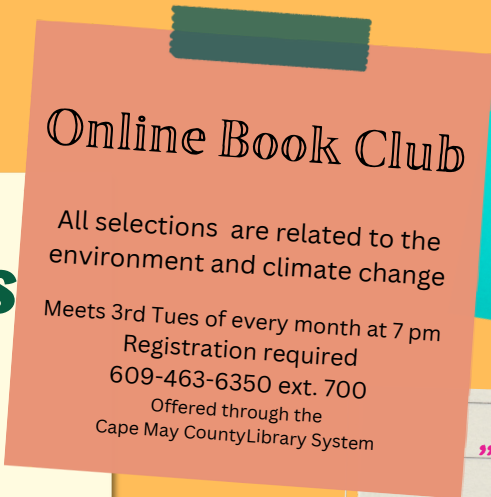
Farm Markets

Ventnor
St. James Church, Newport & Atlantic
Fridays 8:30 to noon

Brigantine
North School Parking Lot on Sheridan
Saturdays 8 am to noon

Somers Point
Somers Mansion, 1000 Shore Road
Saturdays 8 am to noon

Galloway
Smithville Village Greene
Thursdays 4 pm to 7 pm

Online Book Club

All selections are related to the environment and climate change

Meets 3rd Tues of every month at 7 pm
Registration required
609-463-6350 ext. 700
Offered through the Cape May County Library System



"Flowers" Art show and Exhibition

June 7-30

10 am to 5:30 pm M-SAT
10 am to 3 pm Sunday
Art on Asbury Gallery
711 Asbury Ave., OC

609-814-0308



HURRICANE AND WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

NOW IS THE TIME TO GET READY

Build an emergency supply kit with at least a 3-day supply of food and water for each person in your family

- medicines
- personal care items
- safety supplies
- electronics
- copies of important financial, legal, medical and household documents



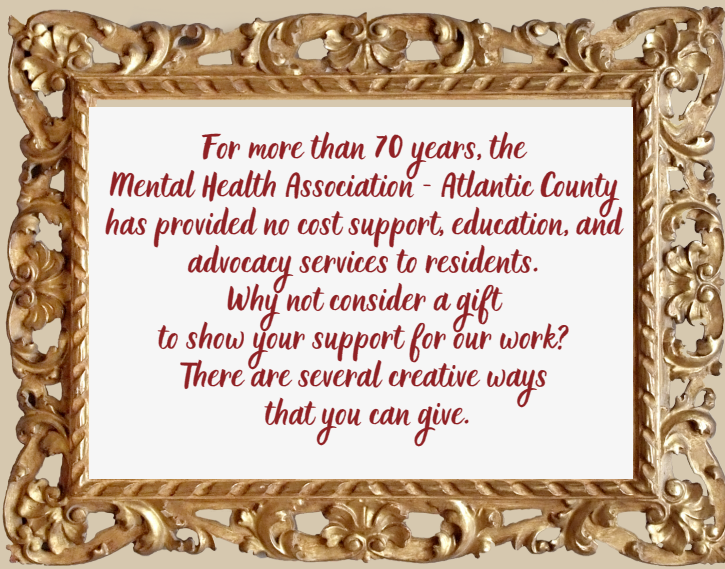
FOR MORE
PREPAREDNESS
INFORMATION VISIT:
readyatlantic.org

- ✓ Know evacuation routes
- ✓ Document and insure properly
- ✓ Make property improvements that reduce risk of damage and prevent potential injuries



Sign up for emergency alerts at atlantic-county.org/oep





For more than 70 years, the Mental Health Association - Atlantic County has provided no cost support, education, and advocacy services to residents. Why not consider a gift to show your support for our work? There are several creative ways that you can give.

How You Benefit from Planned Giving

Planned gifts are charitable contributions that are part of your financial or estate plans.

Including a gift to the Mental Health Association -Atlantic County in your will or trust allows you to create a legacy which provides families like you with the education, support, empathy and options. It only takes 20 minutes or less.

You Get to Leave a Legacy

Making a bequest in your will is a powerful way to leave a lasting impact. Another way to leave a large gift is through establishing your legacy by making a bequest, showing your support for years to come.

You Get a Tax Break

Did you know that bequests can reduce federal estate taxes for heirs? And these deductions are not limited to cash — they can include assets like real estate, IRAs, and stock as well.

Decide How Your Gift is Used

When you leave a bequest in your will to the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County, you can allocate a program where you would like to make an impact.



PEWS

A program for the faith-based community



The PEWS (Promoting Emotional Wellness and Spiritually) program was developed to educate clergy, lay leaders, and faith communities so that they may more effectively support congregants who have or may be at risk of having a mental illness or a mental health challenge.

Staff provide a virtual certificate program through four sessions that are about 90 minutes each. Participants are asked to attend all sessions to receive both a QPR Gatekeepers (suicide prevention) certificate along with the PEWS certificate.

The sessions include information about mental health challenges, effective communication skills, myths and facts, suicide prevention, resources, and more.

To learn how your house of worship can become PEWS certified, please contact Clarissa Wheat, Director of PEWS, at cwheat@mhanj.org.

We recognize and congratulate these Atlantic County Houses of Worship for recently becoming PEWS certified

Beacon Church, Galloway

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Galloway

