

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May

May was Mental Health Awareness Month and to acknowledge it and bring about awareness during these trying times, the Prevention Department at Colonial Behavioral Health conducted a pair of lectures as well as posted a resource sheet on self-care.

On May 5, 2020, prevention specialist, Brendan McDonald, presented Talk Saves Lives for our community partners. Although there were technical difficulties, the presentation was recorded and the audience was able to view it. In the presentation, the participants learned the statistics of suicide both worldwide and in the United States. They learned the death toll and the economic toll that suicide attempts and suicide deaths have on the nation. They learned the warning signs for suicide, what to look out for, such as sudden mood shifts, talks of ending the person's life or fascination with death and becoming withdrawn from their social life.

Then they learned what to do for someone struggling with suicidal thoughts and is in a crisis situation. The first and most important thing is to let them know that you are there for them as a person who cares about them. Separate them from their intended means and be with them during their crisis. Then, find them professional help so that they may better cope and address what is causing their suicidal ideation. Finally, participants learned the importance of listening and time. Listening and validating a person's crisis is important and can help them feel valued and heard. Putting time between them and their intended means, as mentioned before, is essential.



The second presentation made available during the month of May was titled Depression 101 and was presented via Microsoft Teams on May 20th. The presentation focused on a basic introduction to Major Depressive Disorder and covered some statistics about how it affects citizens of the United States, symptoms of depression, what to look for, how to help, and when to seek professional help. Participants learned how depression manifests, how it can seem like sadness or lack of interest in activities, and how it can deeply affect a person's life and upset even basic functions.

Participants learned that helping someone with depression is easy to do, as with suicidal ideation one who wants to help someone with depression must take time to listen and validate the person's emotional crisis. Lastly, participants learned when to contact a professional, which is when symptoms of depression persist past two weeks, there is suicidal ideation, or when there are signs of self-harm. It is important to discuss and keep mental health in mind during the pandemic we face. Many have lost their jobs, place of residence, education, and valuable life experiences due to the lockdown of the nation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is easy for some to slip into a depressive episode or have an upset in their mental health. The goal of the presentations was to remind people to be vigilant of others' health and offer solutions in case someone they know is in crisis. Mental health is an invisible aspect of everyone's life and we, as caring neighbors, citizens, and friends, must be aware of them and look out for one another. We hope you are all well and cared for during this historic and tragic time



**IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE IS IN NEED OF RESOURCES FOR HELP PLEASE CONTACT THE PREVENTION DEPARTMENT THROUGH PREVENTION SPECIALIST BRENDAN MCDONALD (BMCDONALD@COLONIALBH.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION.**