



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Southwestern District  
Health Unit**

# **EMOTIONAL HEALTH TOOLKIT**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Job Burnout.....	4
Stress.....	11
Depression.....	21
Suicide.....	29
Notes.....	35

# 1. JOB BURNOUT

## Introduction

Job burnout is a special form of stress in which a person enters a state of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion caused by doubts about one's competence and insecurity of the value of one's work. (Source: Mayo Clinic)

People suffering from job burnout may feel disillusioned, helpless, and completely worn out or fatigued.



Common signs of workplace burnout are feelings of lack of control over your work, unclear or demanding job expectations, monotonous or overly chaotic work, and an imbalance between work and your personal life. If left untreated, job burnout may take a toll on not only your workload but also on your personal health and well-being. Long-term consequences include depression, insomnia, fatigue, and physical diseases such as heart disease, Type II diabetes and anxiety.

The key to ending work burnout is being able to identify the stressors the job is causing. Proper identification of these stressors allows you to determine a course of action to fight against job burnout and learn how to prevent it in the future.

## Stress and Burnout Statistics

Stress is prevalent in American society. Three-quarters of Americans experience physical or psychological symptoms related to stress in any given month and one-third of Americans feel they are living with extreme stress. Nearly half of all Americans feel their stress has increased over the past five years. The main causes of stress are money and work with nearly three-quarters of Americans reporting those as leading factors.

## Signs and Symptoms of Job Burnout

Before exploring the signs and symptoms of job burnout, it's important to know the difference between general stress and job burnout that is a specific form of stress.

Stress	Burnout
Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being overly involved emotionally</li> <li>• Emotions tend to be over-reactive</li> <li>• Feelings of urgency and hyperactivity</li> <li>• Anxiety disorders are common</li> <li>• Physical damage is the primary consequence (i.e. elevated blood pressure, problems sleeping)</li> </ul>	Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disengagement/lack of involvement</li> <li>• Emotions tend to be blunted</li> <li>• Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness</li> <li>• Lack of motivation and ideals</li> <li>• Detachment and depression are common</li> <li>• Emotional damage is the primary consequence</li> <li>• Increased job injuries due to distraction</li> <li>• Feeling irritated or angry</li> <li>• Loss of empathy</li> <li>• Too tired to care</li> <li>• Becoming negative or cynical</li> <li>• Increase absenteeism</li> </ul>

Source: [www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout\\_signs\\_symptoms.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm)

Understanding the signs and symptoms of workplace burnout is vital. The following questions may help determine if an employee is suffering from job burnout:

QUESTION	Not At All	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Very Often
Have you become cynical or critical at work?					
Is getting to work a struggle?					
Once at work, do you have a hard time getting started?					
Have you become irritable or impatient with coworkers?					
Do you feel run down or drained of physical or emotional energy?					
Are you dissatisfied with your achievements?					
Are you substituting feelings of stress with food, drugs or alcohol?					
Have your sleep habits changed?					

Has your appetite changed?					
Do you feel that the workload is too much and there isn't enough time or staff to handle the workload?					
Do you experience frequent headaches, backaches or other physical issues?					
Are you prone to negative thoughts about your job or work environment?					
Do you feel underappreciated or misunderstood by your coworkers or management?					

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may be experiencing job burnout.

## Causes

The causes of job burnout are varied depending on your profession. One of the most common causes of work burnout is the feeling that you lack control over your work, your job performance or workplace environment. The inability to influence the decisions that affect your job or job environment (e.g. schedule, workload, assignments) is another common cause for burnout. Unclear job expectations lead to discomfort at work which causes increased stress and could eventually lead to work burnout.

Workplace dynamics are also a leading contributor to burnout. If there is tension between employees or between employees and managers, job burnout is likely to occur. Similarly, if you feel your values are mismatched to your work, it has a lasting impact and takes its toll.

If a job requires the same monotonous tasks, this could significantly impact your fatigue and energy levels. Additionally, chaotic work environments can also lead to fatigue and low energy levels. Stress and fatigue are related.

One of the most important ways to combat job burnout is to maintain a healthy balance between work and your personal life. If the job requires a significant amount of time and your family and friends are noticing, burnout can manifest quickly. (Source: Mayo Clinic)

Who is most likely to suffer from job burnout?

- People who identify strongly with work and lack a proper balance with their personal lives
- Those who try to be everything to everyone
- Service professions such as health care, teaching or counseling

- People who feel they have little or no control over their work or workload
- Monotonous or chaotic jobs

## Consequences

The consequences to job burnout can have lasting and devastating impacts if left untreated. Prolonged burnout may lead to:

- Excessive stress
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Negative effects on personal relationships
- Physical impacts include heart disease, high cholesterol, Type II diabetes, stroke, and obesity
- Vulnerability and susceptibility to illness



## Treatment

If you feel you're suffering from job burnout, treatment is possible and managing workplace stress is within reach. First, take time to slow down and step back. When work is overwhelming, it's hard to see the stressors and causes clearly. Slowing down allows you to identify the cause of your burnout.

Once you've determined the causes, ask for help and support. Talking to your family and friends about your stress is vital in relieving the emotional burdens associated with job burnout.

After you've stepped back, determined the causes of your stress, and talked with loved ones, it's time to be proactive in fighting burnout. Reevaluate your goals and priorities both at work and in your personal life. Find ways to address the problems. Sometimes this involves clarity from employers about your job description and requirements. Asking for new duties gives your work more variety and helps alleviate monotonous work. Be careful not to take on more than you can handle and don't be afraid to ask for help from others. Utilize your time off and make time for life away from work. Time away from work allows you to sleep, recharge, and reevaluate.

Set boundaries for yourself (according to job description) in relation to being accessible after work hours. If your position allows it do not take phone calls, emails, or social media when off work. Take allowed breaks at work, use meditation or go for short walks. You may feel you don't have the time but taking these breaks may help productivity and reduce stress.

A helpful method to combat workplace burnout is the "Three R" Approach: Recognize, Reverse, and Resilience.



SOURCE: [www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout\\_signs\\_symptoms.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm)

## Prevention

Even if you've treated and resolved your workplace stress, job burnout can easily manifest itself again. Preventing further burnout is vital. There are a variety of ways to prevent job burnout.

- Start your day with a relaxing ritual such as meditation, journaling, exercise, and a healthy breakfast.
- Exercise, eat healthy and adopt proper sleeping habits.
- Set boundaries both at work and outside of work.
- Take a daily break from technology.
- Find time to focus on family, friends and your interests.
- Properly manage your stress.
- Learn when to step back and when to ask for help.



## Checklist

- DETERMINE YOUR STRESSORS AND THE CAUSES
- MANAGE YOUR STRESSORS
- EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS
- ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE
- SEEK HELP AND SUPPORT
- ASSESS YOUR INTERESTS, SKILLS, AND PASSIONS
- FIND TIME OUTSIDE OF WORK TO PURSUE YOUR  
INTERESTS AND PASSIONS
- EXERCISE AND PURSUE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

## 2. STRESS

### Introduction

Stress is a common human experience that occurs when a threat, challenge or major change happens in one's life or environment. Men and women react to stress instinctually. If stress isn't appropriately dealt with, it may lead to cumulative stress and physical ailments.

One of the most common forms of stress is workplace stress. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in three American employees is chronically overworked and as much as one in four say they've missed work due to stress. Work-related stress is more frequently left unmanaged because employees often fear they will appear weak or unable to handle the job. However, managing stress both in the workplace and outside the workplace will increase job performance and happiness in one's personal life.

### Signs and Symptoms of Stress

The signs of stress vary from person to person and depend on the severity and duration of the stress.

The most common signs include:

#### Physical:

- Fatigue – 51%
- Frequent headaches – 44%
- Difficulty sleeping or changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite – 23%
- Upset Stomach – 34%
- Muscle Tension – 30%

#### Psychological

- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Increased frustration
- Irritability/Anger – 50%
- Depression
- Forgetfulness
- Carelessness
- Decreased job performance
- Feeling Nervous – 45%
- Lack of Energy – 45%
- Feeling as though you could cry – 35%

## **Causes**

Stress has a variety of causes. The Centers for Disease Control outlines three types of stress:

1. Routine stress that is caused by pressures at work, in one's personal life and from other daily responsibilities
2. Stress that occurs from a sudden or traumatic change, such as losing a job, divorce, death or illness
3. Traumatic stress caused by a major accident, disaster, war or assault

In order to effectively treat and manage stress, the cause must be known.

## **Consequences**

Prolonged stress may cause serious physical and emotional problems. Humans are naturally able to deal with stress but if the stress is prolonged and untreated, the normal stress-response cycle is disrupted. The immune system is weakened and digestive, excretory and reproductive systems begin to function abnormally.

The following impacts may be seen if stress is left untreated:

- Lowered immunity and increased risk of illness
- Changes in digestive patterns
- Changes in the reproductive system
- Headache
- Sleeplessness – About 45% of Americans report lying awake at night due to stress
- Depression
- Anger
- Irritability
- High blood pressure
- Anxiety disorders
- Negative impact on personal and professional lives

Since the consequences of untreated, prolonged stress may be severe, it's important to find ways to cope and manage the stress early on in the stress process.

## **ARE YOU STRESSED?**

The following questions and scenarios will help determine if someone is stressed. If these scenarios are almost always true, it's likely you're feeling stressed and should begin implementing steps for stress management.

**Do you prefer to do most things by yourself rather than ask for help?**

**Do you get impatient when you have to wait for someone else or something takes too long?**

**Are you always in a hurry or racing against the clock?**

**Are you irritable and irritated when you're interrupted?**

**Are you multitasking and taking on more than you feel you can handle?**

**Do you over-commit yourself by taking on more than you can handle?**

**Do you feel guilty when you're not working on something?**

**Does it seem that things never move fast enough or get done fast enough for you?**

**Are you losing your temper frequently when things don't work out as planned?**

**Is there tension between you and your coworkers?**

**Are you often angry or frustrated when others don't follow the same process as you?**

**Do you get upset when situations arise that are beyond your control?**

**Is it hard to relax when you're not working?**

**Does your time at work outweigh the time spent with family and friends?**

**Are you noticing physical and health changes?**

## **Stress Management & Prevention**

It is possible to manage one's stress through a variety of methods. Each person should follow the stress management technique that works best for them. By managing stress, feelings of anger, frustration, passiveness and defensiveness begin to become controllable.

The Centers for Disease Control outlines a few methods of dealing with stress:

- Exercise and regular physical activity
- Spend time with family and friends
- Avoid substances such as alcohol, drugs, and tobacco
- Spend time doing things that give joy and happiness
- Participate in volunteer work or leisure activity
- Learn to say no
- Eat healthy foods and maintain a well-balanced diet
- Make an effort to find time to relax
- Meditate
- Make an effort to get regular hours of sleep
- Take breaks when necessary
- Maintain a normal daily routine
- Accept that certain events cannot be controlled
- Ask for help from a professional, family or friends

Stress management varies from person to person. Each individual must determine the cause of the stress and find ways to cope that work best for them.

## **Stress in the Workplace**

One of the most common kinds of stress is workplace stress. Stress from work occurs when regular job pressure overwhelms an employee. High-pressure jobs, such as emergency responders, are particularly susceptible to stress. As is the case with all forms of stress, unmanaged workplace stress can have a negative impact on one's performance and on one's physical and emotional health.

There are several ways to approach work-related stress. Employees should know that it's okay to reach out to managers and other coworkers to discuss the causes and solutions to work-related stress. Employers must make it clear that there is an open-door policy with managers and steps in place to ensure that stress is quickly, effectively and completely dealt with when employees feel stressed. Employers should treat stress as they would any other important issue.

When feeling stressed, employees should:

1. Identify the causes.
2. Tell managers when stress is in an early stage and not when it's escalated.
3. Understand that stress is not a weakness and doesn't make you a poor employee. Know that stress is a normal experience and dealing with it appropriately will only improve your work performance.

Workplace stress is unique in that it usually stems from one of the following causes:

- Demands of the job
- Control over one's work
- The support received from managers, colleagues and employers
- Work relationships
- One's role in the organization
- Workplace changes
- Traumatic situations (particularly in emergency response settings)

Employers should have a system in place and clearly inform employees of that stress management system. The Health Advocate provides the following suggestions for employers:

#### ASSESS

- Look at the facts and figures regarding workplace stress. Gathering an understanding of the scope and commonality of workplace stress will help establish a plan to deal with stress.
- Form a stress management team. If the organization has several departments, have a representative from each department be a part of the team so that each area of the organization has a voice in the stress management process.
- Conduct stress surveys (see the example at the end of this section).

#### ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

- Do NOT single out specific employees who may appear to be stressed. The purpose of a stress management plan is to create an all-inclusive work environment where all employees feel comfortable and feel compelled to participate in the stress management process.
- If necessary, create incentives for employees to participate. Examples include gift cards for a massage or a half-day off.
- Continue communications between management and staff. Newsletters, meetings and activities establish a line of communication and trust in the workplace. If employees feel the employer cares, they are more likely to discuss stress and manage it more effectively.

### APPLY ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Clearly define each workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Create a collaborative work environment.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction. Regular activities are shown to reduce stress. Social interactions and opportunities could be as simple as games or contests or as complex as a retreat.
- Look at and consider changes in the physical environment. Changes such as lighting, noise-masking materials, ergonomic seating and desks, and more open workspaces might have dramatic impacts on creating a stress-free workplace.

### PROVIDE MULTIPLE APPROACHES

- Encourage physical activity and exercise both on and off the work site.
- Set up support groups in which employees and employers can effectively address stress and workplace issues.

### IMPLEMENT WORK/LIFE BALANCE STRATEGIES

- Give employees leeway and flex time.
- If possible, allow occasional work-from-home opportunities.
- Extend lunch hours.
- If possible, offer sick child-care leave.
- Address eldercare and make sure the needs of all ages are met.
- Encourage individual stress management (see above sections on methods and ways to deal with stress).
- Provide employees with access to stress reducing activities.

Once a stress response and management system is in place in the work environment, employers and managers should continually gather feedback from employees. Make sure to keep the response kit current and relevant to the workplace. Many jobs may require outside help in dealing with stress. Employers should consider bringing in counselors and outside help especially if they work in high-risk, stressful jobs.

## **College Students**

College students may be initially excited about their new independence but it may also be a time of great stress. This stress can be related to:

- New found stress from adapting to a new environment (living on their own, academic responsibilities and social influences)
- Many college students experience some form of “home sickness”
- Stress from work, school and/or personal relationships can cause major depression in college students
- Students may turn to drugs and alcohol as a way of forgetting responsibilities, fitting in with social groups or coping with stress and/or depression
- Students may see the college experience as a way of experimenting – be it with sex, drugs or alcohol
- High-risk behaviors can lead to life changing consequences

### PREVENTION

- Maintain relationships with family and friends
- Form relationships with faculty mentors
- Participate in extracurricular activities that foster a safe and fun environment for socialization
- Refuse participation in risky behaviors such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs and engaging in risky sexual behaviors

### SIGNS/SYMPTOMS

- Missing classes or being late multiple times
- Grades slipping or failing classes
- No longer participating in activities that used to be important to them, such as sports or extracurricular activities
- Violation of college policies

### INTERVENTION

- If stress/depression is rooted in a student’s academic performance, students are encouraged to seek assistance from peer tutors and peer mentors that can help facilitate academic success
- As a result of stress and/or frustration/depression, students depicting aggressive behavior should seek out mental health resources and engage in activities that can help suppress the sources of aggression (i.e., exercising at least three times per week, eating a balanced diet, getting adequate sleep, etc.)
- As college students move into a part of their lives that requires higher levels of independents, the key to a safe and successful college experience is balance between activities and a strong support group to further reinforce responsible behaviors

## **Family Caregivers**

### **Who are they?**

- Any individual caring for an adult age 60 or older
- Grandparents or other relative caregivers who are 55 years of age or older and who are caring for a child age 18 or younger
- Grandparents or other relative caregivers who are 55 years of age or older caring for an adult child with a disability between ages 19-59
- Any individual caring for a person with Alzheimer's or related dementia regardless of their age

### **Special Issues for Caregivers**

Caring for a family member in your home begins with the best intentions. However, it can become a tough and tense situation. Here are a few of those situations:

- Lack of privacy – everyone in the family needs privacy including the person being cared for. This can be disrupted especially if the person has dementia or Alzheimer's as there can be a loss or decrease in social appropriateness. The family routine changes and family may feel ignored as so much time and attention is being focused on the person being cared for.
- Ignoring sleep deprivation – this is the result of one person assuming full responsibility for the person needing care. Their own needs are ignored which then impacts them and their family negatively.
- Not anticipating what's coming next – sometimes the focus is on taking care of one crisis after another which leads to feeling out of control. Learning more about the disability (no matter what it is) can give you a better idea of what comes next or at least be prepared for what may be coming next
- Overwhelming care tasks – One of the most difficult areas of care is trying to manage tasks that may be impossible to manage (i.e., heavy lifting, incontinence, wandering behaviors and changes in personality)

## RESOURCES

- ND Aging and Disability Resource:
  - Phone: 1-855-462-5465
  - Email: [carechoice@nd.gov](mailto:carechoice@nd.gov)
  - Website: [www.carechoice.nd.gov](http://www.carechoice.nd.gov)
  
- Regional Aging Services and Family Caregivers Program in Dickinson
  - Phone: 1-701-227-7557
    - Services include: **Information** about local services and supports the community
    - Assistance from a trained caregiver coordinator to help caregivers assess needs and access support services
    - **Counseling, Support Groups and Training** services to meet caregiver individual needs for assistance
    - **Respite Care** for temporary relief to caregivers who provide 24-hour care
    - **Supplemental Services** to assist with cost of certain supplies and assistive devices

## Parents of Individuals with Disabilities

Parents of children with physical or mental disabilities deal with a multitude of stressor derived from the requirements of intense parenting. Parents, especially mothers, are at greater risk of stress or depression. Parents of children with disabilities wrestle with tough issues like managing difficult behaviors, finding services to assist them or their child's needs, bullying, medications, juggling multiple medical appointments while trying to manage employment for themselves, or having to quit their jobs to focus on their child's needs.

### SIGNS/SYMPTOMS

- Not getting enough sleep or sleeping too much
- Fatigue or low energy
- Low self-esteem
- Poor Concentration or difficulty making decisions
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Loss of enjoyment of activities/loss of motivation
- Poor or increased appetite

### WHAT TO DO if you are a parent

- Grieve the loss of the child you expected and develop new dreams for the child you have
- Recognize your child's strengths
- Educate yourself about your child's condition/diagnosis
- Focus on helping your child being **THEIR** very best
- Seek out support (therapy, caring health care professionals, etc.)
- Invest in self-care and realize that putting yourself first **IS NOT** selfish but rather SURVIVAL
- Make contacts with family/friends who will support you by really listening

### **RESOURCES**

- **Badlands Human Services Center** – Developmental Disabilities Department
  - Phone: 1-701-227-7500
- Utilize your child's case manager – Talk to them and ask questions
- **Family Voices of North Dakota** – For parents with children with special health care needs
  - Phone: 1-888-522-9654
- **North Dakota Department of Health** – Children's Special Health Needs Services
  - Phone: 1-800-755-2714
  - Websites: [www.nd.gov/cshs](http://www.nd.gov/cshs) OR [www.ndhealth.gov/cshs](http://www.ndhealth.gov/cshs)

## 3. DEPRESSION

### Introduction

Depression is a medical illness that causes feelings of sadness and loss of interest. Depression may also cause physical illnesses too. More than 17 million Americans develop a form of depression each year and more than 350 million people develop depression worldwide. Women are more commonly impacted than men. Depression is a treatable mental illness but despite the available treatments, a majority does not seek help and leave the depression untreated.

Depression is one of the most misunderstood mental illnesses. One of the most common misconceptions is thinking depression is simply a case of having the “blues” or that people with depression are stuck with it forever. Depression isn’t simply a case of being down or sad and should be taken seriously but it’s also not a life-long illness and can be treated with proper care.

The National Institute of Health lists several forms of depression:

#### **Major Depressive Disorder (or major depression)**

This type of depressive illness is a combination of symptoms that interferes with one’s work, sleep, eating habits and activities that were once pleasurable and enjoyable. Someone suffering from major depression is unable to function normally.

#### **Dysthymic Disorder (or dysthymia)**

This form of depression lasts longer than two years but may not disable or inhibit someone’s daily life. Even though this form of depressive illness is not as severe as major depressive disorder, it may still cause disruptions to a person’s normal daily functions and physical health. Episodes of major depression are possible with dysthymia.

#### **Minor Depression**

Minor depression is a form of depressive illness that lasts longer than two weeks but is not as severe and therefore does not officially meet the criteria to be classified as major depression. If left untreated, this form may escalate into major depression.

## **Signs and Symptoms of Depression**

Signs and symptoms of depressive illness vary depending on the individual and on the circumstances that caused the depression. However, if someone is exhibiting the following, they may be suffering from depression:

- Feeling sad or “empty” for long periods of time
- Pessimism and feelings of hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable, including sex
- Significant decrease in energy
- Persistent fatigue
- Changes in sleep patterns, including insomnia or oversleeping
- Changes in eating or diet, including loss of appetite, weight gain, or weight loss
- Excessive crying
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Persistent aches, pains, cramps, or various digestive problems that are not eased with treatment
- Thoughts of death and suicide
- Suicide attempts

It is important to remember and reiterate that these signs and symptoms vary depending on the individual. The severity, frequency and duration are unique to each person and the causes and circumstances of the depression.

## **Causes**

The causes of depression vary. It’s important to understand the causes in order to effectively treat and recover from depression. Depression may be caused by a combination of factors and may be genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological.

Common causes include (but are not limited to):

- Stressful or traumatic life events, including death and grieving
- Genetics
- Medical conditions
- Personality factors

According to the National Institute of Health, depression may run in families or may occur only in the one individual.

## Consequences

If left untreated, depression may have serious consequences ranging from physical illness to suicide. Initially, depression may affect one's mood, thoughts and behaviors and may negatively impact work performance and one's social and family life. Work performance and daily activities are commonly affected.

The earlier depressive illness is treated, the more effective it will be. The longer it is left untreated, the higher the risk of more severe consequences. Since persistent depression may escalate to the point of suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts, identifying the signs and symptoms early on are vital for proper and effective treatment. (See the section on Suicide for more information.)

## Treatment

It's important to remember that depression can be treated. The National Institute of Health identifies the following steps:

First, getting to a doctor is the most important step in order to rule out any other factors that might cause the same symptoms as depression, such as viruses or a thyroid disorder. Once other medical conditions are ruled out, a doctor will then conduct a psychological evaluation focused on family history of depression and other mental health disorders. Sometimes doctors may refer the patient to a mental health professional.

The doctor will discuss the duration and extent of the symptoms and determine the best treatment and course of action.

The most common forms of treatment are medication and psychotherapy. Antidepressants are medications that work on brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. The hormones serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine are the main targets of antidepressant treatments since these chemicals are involved in regulating mood.

Psychotherapy is a form of treatment in which the individual talks with a professional and works out the emotional issues that caused the depression. The NIH lists two forms of psychotherapy:

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** helps people with depressive illness restructure negative thoughts and thought patterns. CBT allows individuals to view their environment and surroundings in a

more positive and realistic way. CBT also helps identify “triggers” or causes that may push one into a depressive state.

- **Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)** helps people work through and understand troubled relationships that may have caused the depression.

For some, psychotherapy may be enough to fight depression. But in severe cases, individuals may require a combination of medication and psychotherapy to bring the chemicals in the brain into balance and work through the emotional and environmental causes of the depression.

## **Prevention**

Once diagnosed and treated, preventing a person from falling back into depression is vital. Some continue medical treatments of antidepressants and continue regular psychotherapy in order to maintain a balance. Others may find ways to exercise more or spend more time doing the things they find enjoyable including spending time with family. Those who are treating depression will work with the persons’ doctor to find the best course of action in preventing depression.

Knowing and understanding the signs and symptoms of depression can help in a variety of situations including crisis management. After traumatic events, such as death or tragedies, those affected by the trauma may be susceptible to depression. Being able to identify these risk factors and symptoms can help lead to early detection and treatment.

# **SENIORS**

## **Depression in the Elderly**

Depression in the elderly is an area of concern. Too many times, the signs and symptoms described by the elderly are disregarded or dismissed as age-related. Many times, they may describe their symptoms as lack of energy, low motivation or as physical complaints. Rarely do they use terms of sad or depressed. (NOTE: the elderly – ages 65 and older – make up 13.75% of the American population but they account for 16.37% of all suicides in the U.S.)

## **Signs and Symptoms**

- Not eating
- Not sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of interest in activities, such as playing cards, listening to music, going to church, etc.
- Loss of weight
- Tearfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Wringing of their hands
- Slowed movements or speech
- Increased complaints of aches and pains
- Neglecting personal care
- Memory problems
- Health issues
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Not taking medications as ordered

## **Senior Stress**

Stress is a part of life for people of all ages but for seniors, stress can become especially overwhelming. The five most common signs of stress include: changes in eating habits, mood swings, memory issues, body aches and pains with increased episodes of illness, and isolation.

## **Contributing Factors**

- Loneliness, isolation
- Loss of independence
- Loss of home
- Loss of family or friends
- Retirement
- Fears of financial or health issues

## **Grief vs. Depression**

The best way to distinguish between grief and depression is that during grief, the individual will have some good days amongst the bad or 'tough' days and may also have moments of pleasure and happiness.

### **Depression**

- Mental decline is relatively rapid
- Usually know date/time/place
- Difficulty with concentration
- Language and motor skills slowed
- Notice or worry about memory issues

### **Grief**

- Mental decline happens slowly
- Confused, disoriented, lost even when in a familiar area
- Difficulty with short-term memory
- Writing and speaking motor skills slowed
- Don't notice memory problems

## **Resources**

- Discuss with their family physician and review of current medications or consider addition of medications whether it be prescribed or OTC (over-the-counter)
- Counseling:
  - Badlands Human Services Center: 1-701-227-7500
  - Therapy Solutions: 1-701-483-1021
  - Westwinds Consulting: 1-701-225-1050
- Adult Protective Services: 1-701-227-7582
- Talk to other service providers they may already be seeing, such as: home health, physical therapy, caregivers, home aide, public health nurses, etc.
- Northland PACE Senior Services: 1-701-456-7387
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman (if your family member is in a nursing home): 1-701-227-7570

## **VETERANS**

Veterans make up 11% of the total population in North Dakota. Over 10,000 North Dakotans have been deployed since September 11, 2011. About 9% are female, while 91% are male.

Military family life is characterized by unique demands:

- Separation
- Risk of injury or death of service member
- Long work hours and shift work
- Frequent relocation
- Unique organizational culture and norms
- Family separation due to military deployment

While most veterans transition back to civilian life successfully, many still struggle. Securing steady employment in a rewarding, lucrative and long-term career is an enormous part of successful transition. Sixty percent of unemployed U.S. veterans are 45 years of age and older while 35% are 25-44 years of age.

An estimated one in four U.S. veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have reported symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive condition (PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), major depression, TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), etc. Most concerning of all is since the global war on terrorism began, more North Dakota National Guard members have died by suicide than in combat.

### **Risk Factors**

- Some major physical illness, mental disorder or substance use disorder
- Barriers to accessing health care
- Stigma associated with seeking help
- Easy access to lethal means (firearms, poison, etc.)
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Cultural/religious beliefs that accept suicide

### **Protective Factors**

- Counseling
- Support for help-seeking means
- Restrict access to lethal means
- Strong connections to family and community support
- Cultural/religious beliefs that discourage suicide

## RESOURCES

- Veteran's Service Office: 1-701-456-7654
- Community Action Program/SSVF Case Manager: 1-701-227-0131 OR 1-800-359-2243
- Family Assistance Center: 1-701-333-4807 OR 1-701-333-4808
- Fargo VA Health Care System: 1-701-239-3700 ext. 9-3556 OR 1-800-410-9723 ext. 9-3556
- Dickinson VA Clinic: 1-701-483-1850
- Military Family Life Consultant (Office of Chaplain): 1-701-371-6573
- The Vet Center: 1-701-224-9751
- Employment Coordinator: 1-701-464-1793
- Or call ND Job Service in Dickinson: 1-701-227-3100 and ask for a Veteran Job Service Representative
- **VA Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255, press "1" for veterans**

## SERVICES ANIMALS

Service animals are defined as a dog (or mini-horse) that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The ARE NOT pets and no ID is required. Service animals are allowed where any member of the public is allowed BUT must be under the control of the handler at ALL times. They do NOT have to demonstrate their ability as a service animal. Owners can be asked if the service animal is required due to their disability and what work or task has it been trained to perform. They must be housebroken, licensed and vaccinated. Owners are responsible for the care, feeding and cleanup.

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

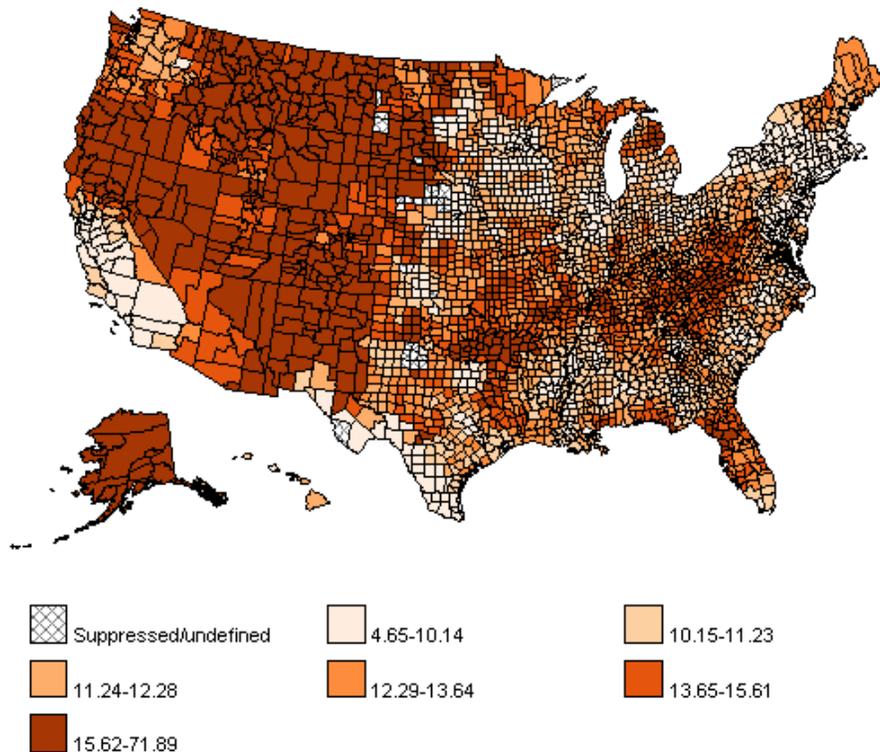
- Typically a dog or cat that provides therapeutic benefit to an individual with a disability
- Requires written documentation from a physician or other healthcare professional
- Are considered a reasonable accommodation in housing units that have a "no pet" rule
- Is NOT granted access to places of public accommodation
- Must be housebroken, licensed and vaccinated according to local and state laws
- Owners are responsible for care, feeding and cleanup

## 4. SUICIDE

### Introduction

Suicide (the act of taking one's own life) is a serious public health problem that impacts and affects all ages and all groups. Responding to suicide threats must be swift and must be taken seriously. According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for Americans resulting in the death of 38,364 people in 2010. However, death from suicide is only one part of the problem. More people survive suicide attempts than those that actually die. In 2010, 487,700 people were treated for self-inflicted wounds in the United States. The statistics are staggering. Nearly every 14 minutes, someone in the United States dies from suicide. About 90% of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable and treatable mental illness at the time of death. Men are more likely to die from suicide than women.

### SUICIDE RATES IN THE UNITES STATES, 2009



(Source: Centers for Disease Control)

**Suicide is a death that can be prevented.** Knowing the signs, causes and ways to correctly respond could save someone's life. Suicide should never be taken lightly.

## **Warning Signs**

Being able to identify and appropriately react to suicide risks could make the difference between life and death.

- Loss of interest in things that once brought joy and pleasure
- Constantly talking about death
- Sudden and immediate switch from being sad or angry to very calm and almost happy
- Frequent comments about loneliness, hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness
- Putting their affairs in order (creating a will, taking care of financial and personal matters)
- Making statements or comments on social media platforms about death or dying
- Increase in risky behaviors such as excessive alcohol intake, drug use and fights

Anyone at any age could be at risk for suicide. However, those who suffered a traumatic experience or life-altering experience (such as veterans) may be at higher risk.

## **Causes**

The causes of suicide and suicide attempts vary. According to the CDC, some risk factors include:

- History of previous suicide attempts
- A family history with suicide or suicide attempts
- History of depression
- Mental illnesses
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Traumatic or stressful life events or changes
- Access to lethal methods (such as firearms, poisons)
- Exposure to suicidal behaviors in others

## Response

The CDC outlines the following steps in responding to suicide:

### **STEP ONE: Define the Problem**

Suicide can only be prevented if the problem is clearly understood and defined.

### **STEP TWO: Identify risk and protective factors**

Once the source has been identified, determine what has brought the person to the risk of suicide.

### **STEP THREE: Follow steps to prevent the suicide (see section below)**

### **STEP FOUR: Seek help**

## Prevention

Become familiar with the warning signs of suicide. When these warning signs appear, act quickly by connecting with the person and work to diffuse the situation.

## WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE ELSE IS A SUICIDE RISK?

If you are faced with the threat of suicide, it's important to follow the appropriate steps. Remain calm and focus. Your reaction could make the difference between life and death.

1. Listen and be supportive
2. Remain patient, understanding and encouraging
3. **NEVER DISMISS SYMPTOMS OF SUICIDE, SUICIDAL GESTURES OR SUICIDAL COMMENTS**
4. Try to understand what they're going through
5. Don't allow the individual to be isolated or away from groups
6. Open a dialog
7. Show genuine love and support
8. Ask them "what do you mean by that?" if they make suicidal comments

If you're ever in doubt, seek help. (See suicide assistance resources below)

## **WHAT DO I DO IF I AM FEELING SUICIDAL?**

If you are feeling suicidal or exhibiting the signs of suicide:

1. Seek immediate help
2. Talk to a counselor
3. Break things down into more manageable parts
4. Reach out, don't isolate
5. Allow yourself space and time to heal
6. Do not make important decisions alone
7. Call a suicide prevention line or call 9-1-1
8. **ALWAYS SEEK HELP**

## **RESOURCES**

- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 (Press "1")
- Emergency Telephone Counseling Service: 1-701-290-5719
- DSU Student Health Services: 1-701-483-2304 (available 8-12 p.m. Mon-Fri)
- DSU Academic Success Center: 1-701-483-2999 (available 7:45 a.m. – 5 p.m. Mon-Fri)
- Residential Life: 1-701-483-2091
- Badlands Human Service Center: 1-701-227-7500
- Emergency Telephone Counseling Service: 1-701-290-5719
- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- Sanford Medical Clinic: 1-701-456-6000
- Great Plains Clinic: 1-701-483-6017
- CHI St. Alexius Dickinson: 1-701-456-4000
- CHI St. Alexius Dickinson Walk-In Clinic: 1-701-456-4200
- Community Action Program: 1-701-227-0131
- Domestic Violence Rape and Crisis Center: 1-701-225-4506
- Emergency Rooms
- Or call 9-1-1

**Remember:  
Suicide is a death that CAN BE PREVENTED.**



## **Special Acknowledgments**

Veterans' Administration  
SW Behavioral Health Coalition  
SW Region Influenza, Utilities, and Disaster Coalitions  
Southwestern District Health Unit  
NDDoH Suicide Prevention Program

# NOTES