May 2020 EAP Notes: Is COVID-19 Pushing Us into a Mental Health Crisis?

The isolation and economic upheaval caused by the pandemic are already resulting in a sharp spike in people seeking mental health help. Experts are warning that a historic wave of mental health problems is approaching: depression, substance use, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide.

Depression and anxiety data are already showing up.
A hotline for people in emotional distress registered a more than 1,000 percent increase in April compared with the same time last year. Talkspace reported a 65 percent jump in clients since mid-February. ***Text messages and transcribed therapy sessions collected anonymously show COVID-19 related anxiety dominating patients' concerns.***

Just as the country took drastic steps to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed by infections, we need to brace for the wave of behavioral health needs by providing widespread mental health screenings and better access to mental health services through telehealth.

When diseases strike, they cast a shadow pandemic of psychological injuries. The shadow often follows the disease by months and even years. Mental health experts are especially worried about the ongoing economic devastation. Even as some states begin easing stay-at-home restrictions, concerns persist about the psychological damage wrought by the pandemic. This virus is messing with everyone. The anxiety, isolation, uncertainty. Everyone's struggling with it in one way or another.

What can you do to stay mentally healthy?

- **Keep up with your routine-**get up at the same time your normally would for work. Shower and dress. Go into work or if you are working at home, go into your office. Sticking to a schedule will help keep you focused on what you can control.
- **Practice mindfulness and positivity-**Come up with a daily mantra or positive saying during this trying time. Practice it, say it out loud,"I will be positive today and make a difference."
- **If you need someone to talk to, call EAP.** This is unchartered territory for everyone. If you need help, pick up the phone. Call us. You are why we are here.
- **If you see someone struggling, speak up!** Now, more than ever – you need to help get the word out. You know the people you work with better than anyone. You know when something is off. Tell that coworker about EAP.

The hotline (800) 801-4182 is FREE and available 24/7. If you are feeling anxious or fearful, call Best Care EAP. Counselors are here to help. **Sessions are also available via telehealth and are completely confidential.**