

PRESS RELEASE

This May is Mental Health Month

Life With a Mental Illness Theme Highlights Importance of Speaking Up, Sharing What #mentalillnessfeelslike

Contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[CITY, STATE] (DATE)—When mental illnesses or disorders are talked about, the language typically used to describe them tends to be clinical and impersonal. These words, while useful for doctors or clinicians, often don't do justice to what life with a mental illness feels like. That is why this year's theme for May is Mental Health Month—*Life With a Mental Illness*—is a call to action to share what life with a mental illness feels like to someone going through it.

May is Mental Health Month was started 67 years ago by (AFFILIATE's) national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone.

Last year, Mental Health Month materials were seen and used by 19 million people, with more than 5,500 entities downloading MHA's tool kits. The 2015 theme -- based off of our *B4Stage4* initiative -- helped individuals understand that when you address mental health symptoms before Stage 4, people can often recover quickly, and live full and productive lives.

This year, we are building off of the *B4Stage4* message and encouraging individuals to give voice to what it really means to live at stages 1, 2, 3, and 4 of mental illness. *Life with a Mental Illness* is meant to help remove the shame and stigma of speaking out, so that more people can be comfortable coming out of the shadows and seeking the help they need.

"Mental illnesses are common and treatable, and help is available. We need to speak up early—before Stage 4—and in real, relatable terms so that people do not feel isolated and alone," said [NAME] [TITLE] of [AFFILIATE]. "Sharing is the key to breaking down the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and to showing others that they are not alone in their feelings and their symptoms."

This Mental Health Month, we are encouraging people to speak up about how it feels to live with a mental illness by tagging social media posts with #*mentalillnessfeelslike*. Posting with our hashtag is a way to speak up, to share your point of view with people who may be struggling to explain what they are going through—and help others figure out if they too are showing signs of a mental illness.

MHA has also developed a series of fact sheets available on its website (www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may) on realizing the critical importance of addressing mental health early, recognizing the risk factors and signs of mental illness, understanding what mental illness is and isn't, and how and where to get help when needed.

Research shows that by ignoring symptoms, we lose ten years in which we could intervene in order to change people's lives for the better. Speaking out about what mental illness feels like can encourage others to recognize symptoms early on in the disease process, and empower individuals to be agents in their own recovery.

"Prevention, early identification and intervention, and integrated services work," concluded [NAME]. "Telling people how life with a mental illness feels helps build support from friends and family, reduces stigma and discrimination, and is crucial to recovery."

For more information on May is Mental Health Month, visit Mental Health America's website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may.

[BOILERPLATE]

