

Department of Defense

# Work-Life Programs

## Health & Wellness



May 2024



## May: Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental Health Awareness Month is a time for the nation to come together to promote acceptance and share supportive information about the vital role mental health plays in our overall well-being. Mental health and diagnosed mental illness are not the same, but millions of Americans are impacted by a fluctuating spectrum of mental health throughout their lives. Individuals who experience mental health conditions may be a colleague, a veteran, an aging family member, or a teen in your life.

When discussing the issue of mental health, many people with invisible and visible disabilities face additional challenges that have little to do with their actual limitations. Discrimination and unequal access to employment, housing, and medical care as well as social and societal stigmas can take a particular toll on mental health.

Take time this month to consider checking on colleagues and loved ones. Perhaps use this month to educate yourself on the resources that may be available to you. Everyone can actively contribute to caring for themselves, colleagues, and loved ones around them.

### Mental health strategies:

- **Understand the unique challenges you face.** Find a counselor or therapist you trust. Speak to a mental health professional or therapist who can provide guidance about the specific challenges associated with your or your loved one's disability.
- **Use self-care strategies** such as breathing exercises, meditation, and spending quality time with loved ones to relax and feel grounded. Many find that engaging in physical activity can be empowering. If you are unable to participate in physical activities, incorporate other hobbies or activities that bring you joy.
- **Seek professional help** as an effective strategy to deal with mental health struggles that may accompany a disability. Mindfulness-based interventions, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and interpersonal therapy are all effective interventions that those with disabilities can benefit from.
- **Connect with others** who may share similar experiences, by joining a support or activity group. When conversations are centered around shared experiences and lifestyles, they can provide necessary emotional and social support while removing a sense of isolation.

### Additional Resources:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/>
- SAMHSA: <https://findtreatment.gov/>
- NAMI: <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/People-with-Disabilities>
- The Ability Toolbox: <https://theabilitytoolbox.com/breaking-barriers-mental-health-strategies-disabilities/>

For additional information, email the DCPAS Work-Life Branch at: [dodhra.mcalex.dcpas.mbx.dod-worklife@mail.mil](mailto:dodhra.mcalex.dcpas.mbx.dod-worklife@mail.mil)

