

Transcript Season 2 Episode 12: Back to Basics with Mental Health

Did you know that May is Mental Health Awareness Month? According to Mental Health America, “46 percent of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.”

Hello, I’m Rachel Chaney, Yell County Family and Consumer Sciences agent. On today’s podcast, I am joined by special guest Rebecca Simon, Family Life and Early Childhood Instructor and Mental Health First Aid Trainer. During this episode, we talk about getting back to basics with mental health.

Podcast Opener:

Everyone needs some advice now and then. If you are getting ready to leave home or have been on your own for a while, Grown Up U: Facts for Success can give you trusted advice that can take the stress out of adulthood. Listen and find some answers to the questions being constantly bombarded at you.

Podcast Script:

Rachel Chaney: Hello, all, welcome to the Grown Up You podcast!

Rebecca Simon: Woohoo!

Rachel Chaney: Thank you for listening. Yeah, that “woohoo” is our special guest. Hello, I’m Rachel Chaney, the Family Consumer Science Agent in Yell County. Today, I’m with Rebecca Simon. She’s a Family Life and Early Childhood Instructor, as well as a Mental Health First Aid Trainer. We both work for the University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service.

Thank you, Rebecca, for joining me today to talk about a very important topic, which is mental health. Since the theme for this year’s Mental Health Month, is “Back to Basics.” I appreciate you joining me to help share some basic information and resources related to mental health. So, Rebecca?

Rebecca Simon: It’s great to be here. Thank you so much. This is the first time I’ve done a podcast, and so hopefully I’ll be invited back or will continue to do these. The jury will be out.

Rachel Chaney: I've already decided, and you can come back whenever you want. And I think this is a great topic, especially with it being a mental health month, to talk about. But of course, mental health is something we need to be thinking about year-round.

So, one of the things that I wanted to maybe have us go into first is talking about the signs of mental health problems. Sometimes I think it's hard to kind of distinguish what may be just a bad day or a stressful time versus a mental health issue, something you may need to get professional help for. So, I would like if you don't mind sharing what some of the signs would be for maybe a mental health problem.

Rebecca Simon: So, some of the signs that you may see from a loved one or friend or loved one is maybe confused thinking. You may notice prolonged periods of depression and that can include sadness or irritability. They may have extreme highs and lows in regard to the emotions that they exhibit. Also, excessive fear, worries, and anxieties.

One of the things you could notice is social withdrawal like they were very active at one point in a social setting, and all of a sudden, they withdrawal. Now, you know, there could be something going on that's an immediate stressor that is, you know, not long term, but this is whenever you notice some habitual things happening.

They may also have dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits. Either sleeping too much or not enough, staying up for days or sleeping seeming like they can't get out of bed for extended periods of time. They may also have this growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities.

I also want to say that these are things that you may notice, and it's several things. It's not just one thing, and it's progresses over a period of time. So, it's not just short term. So, these are some stressors.

These are some warning signs and symptoms that you may notice that whenever you need to reach out to them. And sometimes if you just ask them, like, "Hey, how's it going? I've noticed this particular behavior from you and I'm just making sure you're OK." They will probably really appreciate it, that you have been intuitive enough to ask them that.

It might be something they can easily explain as I'm having to take care of my loved one and take care of my parent or I have more responsibilities doing this so I'm not able to participate in this. But then they may also surprise you with "Yeah, I'm really struggling, and it's with this and what do I do?"

Rachel Chaney: So, it's kind of basically if it's more long term it's something to be concerned about. If it's more short term or situational, you may not notice it, but it sounds like it can build

up, even though situational things can turn into a mental health problem down the road. And so, something else that goes along with that is trying to stay mentally healthy.

So, is there some ways that we can stay mentally healthy? Is there some things we can do to kind of help maintain good mental health?

Rebecca Simon: So, there's something that I was reading and it kind of struck a chord. It was whether we realize it, or not mental health plays a big role in our overall well-being. When we're mentally healthy, we're able to enjoy life and the people in it and feel good about ourselves and keep up good relationships and also deal with stress.

But it's normal for our mental health to shift over time, and so we all face difficult situations in our lives. So, creating those positive habits is a great way to support your mental health when you're doing well, and it helps you build skills to use if you do face symptoms of a mental health condition. And that could be eating nutritious foods, exercising, being physically active, and getting outside. Even taking that walk for 10 minutes every day at your lunch break.

There are so many added benefits to eating healthy, to eating good, nutritious foods and to being outside and to exercising. It makes you feel good. It makes me feel good whenever I'm able to be physically active and to eat healthy foods.

So those are just two ways that you can stay mentally healthy. Positive coping skills, finding the best way to manage your stress. And that takes time, that's not something that you're going to do overnight. Figuring out what is stressful, how your body responds to it, and then ways that you can battle that stress or handle that stress.

Also, sleep. Now I know you feel like it's not important right now, but it is. And so, getting the sleep that you need helps you mentally as well. Because I mean, I can imagine how I felt like whenever I was up past my bedtime, not having that adequate amount of sleep, it almost sets my day off the next day like I already feel like I'm losing.

Building a support system is another great way to stay mentally healthy. So, building that support system, having a good group of friends. You have your family. You have your faith community. And also, it could be you have a mental health professional that you speak with.

And I think there's so much to be said about not being alone in any of your mental health challenges that you may face. There's a lot more out there, I feel like, than there was 20 years ago. We talk about it more.

So those are just some things I'd say food and nutrition, exercise, managing your stress well, coping skills and building that support system, but then also sleep. That's what I would say would help you stay mentally healthy.

Rachel Chaney: Yeah. And I think about my job as a family consumer sciences agent. We kind of talk about us living well and it's kind of all those things. Health, nutrition, family life and managing of stress and then also financial management too. Kind of identifying the things that can be stressful for you and trying to make a plan. It is a journey. It's not something that you can solve overnight.

Another thing that kind of goes along with that is self-care. I don't know about you. I feel like that's something I've heard a lot more recently. Rebecca, what can you tell me about self-care and what that means to someone?

Rebecca Simon: So, self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical and mental health. So, when it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress. There is that word. Lower your risk of illness and increase your energy.

So even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact. Again, that's the exercise that's eating healthy, making sleep a priority. Try a relaxing activity. This can also be setting goals and priorities. Practicing gratitude. Focusing on positivity.

But self-care is different for everyone and is important to find what you need and enjoy. May take trial and error to discover what works best for you. In addition, all those self-care is not a cure for mental illness understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.

Rachel Chaney: I think it's important. It says self-care, so you're making of making that priority to take care of yourself. I think a lot of times, depending on what our situation is, we start slipping on taking care of our self and doing the things that we should be healthy. And that goes hand-in-hand with mental health.

What are some good mental health resources? There may be tools out there that maybe they should go check out.

Rebecca Simon: I would definitely suggest starting with Mental Health America. It's mhanational.org. There is so much information out here. There is an online screening tool. I believe I saw things that you can click on that you can assess yourself and then you can also find information about mental health professionals if you wanted to connect with them on that way.

Also, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. I know that is a mouthful, but it's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It's SAMHSA. They have a lot of information. They also have information about May being Mental Health Month.

In regards to mental health challenges and staying mentally healthy, I would also say that the National Institute for Mental Health is a great resource as well. There is a text line, so if you're in crisis, you would text "MHA" to 741741 or call 1- 800 273 talk, but it's one 1-800-273-8255 to reach a trained counselor.

I was also reading some information on the Mental Health National website about it's called warm lines, and so need to talk to someone warm lines. It's a phone number you call to have a conversation with someone who can provide support during hard times.

But in Arkansas, there is a warm line and it's the Arkansas Crisis Center, and it is 888-274-7472. While warm lines are available 24/7, some are only open on certain days and time. But it does say if there's not a warm line available, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800 273-TALK or text "MHA" to 741741.

Also, I will say that there's some new developments in regards to reaching out. Starting July 16, 2022, call 988 for matters of mental health crisis. Calling 988 will connect you directly to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is staffed by train crisis counselors 24/7 and 365 days a year. Again, that does not take effect until July 16th of 2022.

Rachel Chaney: Another resource that I thought of you may also want to check out, depending on where you work. Sometimes, like our organization, has a partnership with the Employee Assistance Program that has resources for people with mental health. Depending on where you work, you may have something similar to that.

So, what are some tips for talking about mental health with your loved ones? And this could be family, friends or everything in between?

Rebecca Simon: So, some tips for starting a conversation about mental health, you want to do that whenever there's an open window of time to have an in-depth discussion. And neither of you, neither you or the person you're talking to will have to cut the conversation short or take care of other obligations. So, plan to set aside 30 minutes to an hour.

If that face to face is something that can be intimidating for you, start with a text. It could be a plain text message with the note that says, "I have some important things on my mind and need to need to make time to talk to you about them."

Find and share info. So, utilizing these resources that we talked about in regards to mental health. Find some information online that might help you explain what you're going through, print it and bring it with you when you're ready to talk. And then also there's a screening tool that we talked about on MHA. So, it's MHAscreening.org. So, you can print your results and share it, share with that person.

And also, you know, it's uncomfortable, but it's very important because you're not alone. Recovery is possible. Recovery is the endgame. That's what we want to see happen.

Rachel Chaney: Yes. And I will say that we talked about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. They actually had a kind of SAMHSA Conversation Starters that had, let's say you're worried about your friend or family here are some conversation starters to have. So, if you're a loss of words and not sure how to just start the conversation with that person that you're worried about. It had something that you could talk about. So, one of the examples was "it seems like you were going through a difficult time. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Having that conversation while it may be a tough conversation, whether you're the person telling someone that you are struggling with mental health or whether you're somebody that's worried about someone, I think it helps. It's a big help to know that someone cares about you and is wanting to know how they can help you with what's going on. I think that's important to think about those tips that you just talked about talking with someone about mental health. And if you are having those thoughts about suicide, remember the suicide prevention hotline?

Rebecca Simon: It is 1-800-273-8255. And again, you can reach a trained crisis counselor 24/7 365 days a year. For Spanish speakers, it's 1-888-628-9454. And then for deaf and hard of hearing, there's a user preferred relay service or dial 711 and then 1-800-273-8255.

Rachel Chaney: So just remember you're not alone. Talk with someone, whether it's your support system or with someone at this hotline. Just want to say Thank you, Rebecca.

Rebecca Simon: Oh, well, thank you for inviting me.

Rachel Chaney: Yes, for coming on and talking with me and talking with our listeners about mental health. But be sure to check out those resources if you want to learn more. And that's all the questions I have for today. Rebecca, do you have any final thoughts or anything else you wanted to add?

Rebecca Simon: Just that you're not alone and figuring out those resources that are available and talking about it puts you on the right path to recovery or to increasing your mental health.

Rachel Chaney: And I will say, Grown Up U, we have a wide variety of sessions out there of our podcasts that we've recorded. This is actually season two of the podcasts. And if you're new to Grown Up U podcast, I highly recommend you check out our website. We have a wide range of topics out there, but just in season two alone, we do have one on getting enough sleep, which relates to mental health, as well as stress of finals and graduating.

So those are just some of our podcast sessions that are already uploaded that you can go and listen to. You can also follow us on social media. We have a Facebook and Instagram page. So,

you can go to @UADAGrownUpU and find us on Facebook or Instagram. And then just check out our website to just learn more.

Thank you again, Rebecca, for joining me and thank you to our listeners. We'll see you next time.

Podcast Closer:

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