



EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

July 2023



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

July On-Demand Seminar

Overcoming Parental Guilt

*Available OnDemand starting July 18th
Access via deeroakseap.com*

Table of Contents

Keeping an Open Mind • P. 2

Prioritizing Minority Mental
Health • P. 4

Beat the Heat: Staying Safe
in the Summertime • P. 7

Controlling Mosquitos at
Home • P. 9

KEEPING AN OPEN MIND

To be open-minded is to be receptive to new ideas and information, even when they challenge your beliefs and understanding of the world. Open-minded people consider differing views and opinions with curiosity and a desire to understand. They seek out new perspectives in their efforts to learn, grow, and make more informed choices.

Open-minded people can have strong beliefs and deep expertise, but they are willing to question their beliefs and knowledge when presented with new evidence and new thinking. Having an open mind is an important element in critical and rational thinking. It's also a foundation for creativity, learning, empathy, and personal growth.

Why It's Hard to Be Open-Minded

While being open-minded has tremendous benefits, it's not easy. For most people, it takes conscious effort. That's because the human mind tends to streamline perceptions and reactions with energy-saving shortcuts. For example, people tend to sort information into categories based on their previous experience and interpret new information based on their beliefs. When new information or ideas are encountered that don't fit those categories or that challenge those beliefs, it's easier to reject the new information or distort your understanding of it than it is to rethink your categories or beliefs. Other mental shortcuts include stereotyping people, judging people based on first impressions or single characteristics, and making snap decisions.

Being open-minded can involve reevaluating memories, past experiences, and beliefs in the light of new information. It might require you to admit that you've been wrong. That can take real mental effort. It can also be uncomfortable—at least until you experience the benefits of an open-minded outlook.

How to Be More Open-Minded

- **Be humble about what you know and don't know.**

Researchers call this practicing intellectual humility:

- Recognize that your understanding of the world isn't perfect and that perspectives other than your own are valid.
- Accept that there are gray areas in life, where choices aren't black and white.



- Be aware of your biases—the ways your thoughts and perceptions may be distorted by your brain's shortcuts or your past experiences. Key among these is confirmation bias, which causes people to favor information that fits with their existing beliefs and to dismiss information that doesn't.
 - Be willing to admit you have been wrong and revise your views.
 - Practice saying, "I don't know," or introducing your thoughts with "I could be wrong, but..."
-
- **Be curious.** Cultivate your desire to inquire, explore, learn, and understand. People tend to have a strong natural curiosity in childhood, then allow it to weaken as they grow older. That's partly from fear of being embarrassed by showing ignorance. To be more open-minded, push past that hesitation and rediscover the joy of natural curiosity:

- Be open to all information, not just information that confirms what you already believe.
 - Read a variety of books, articles, and online content. Fiction can put you in the shoes of other people and help you become more empathetic to different life experiences and viewpoints. Nonfiction and journalism can introduce you to new areas of knowledge and new information about the world. Online information is easy to access, but you need to be alert to the ways search engines and social media limit your exposure to different views by curating what you see to match what you already believe.
 - Seek out other perspectives. Make a point of talking with people and reading the writings of people who have views or backgrounds that are different from yours, or who have discovered information that challenges your understanding and beliefs.
 - Ask questions to understand new information and different perspectives. Push past your desire to appear knowledgeable, and overcome your fear of coming across as uninformed or naive. Learn something new from everyone you meet, whether it's about their lives or backgrounds, or lessons they have learned through experience or study. Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to tell you more. Ask yourself questions, too: "How do I know this is true?" "Are the sources I rely on trustworthy?" "Have I considered different ways of explaining this?"
 - Listen to learn and understand. It's common to listen with only partial attention as you think about what you want to say in reply. Let your curiosity take charge from your ego as you really listen to what others have to say. Turn off or set aside any distractions and focus on the other person. Test your understanding of what they are saying by putting what they say in your own words and asking whether you have heard correctly.
- ***Spend time with people who have different ideas and perspectives.*** Widen your circle of friends to include people who are different from you. Find the areas where you agree, but don't be afraid to explore those where you don't. Being a good listener with someone who agrees with you or has a similar background is easy. Challenge yourself to really listen to friends and acquaintances when they share ideas, opinions, and experiences that don't fit easily with your own view of the world.



- ***Slow down.*** Initial reactions and snap judgments are often driven by emotion, habit, and unconscious bias. Sometimes they're right, but not always. People's brains make it hard to recognize when this is happening. It's common to make a snap judgment based on rapid unconscious thinking, emotion, or bias, then have the conscious mind create, more slowly, a rational reason to explain the judgment—which may have nothing to do with the actual emotional or biased reaction. Some researchers characterize responses based on emotion, habit, or bias as "fast" thinking, and rational responses as "slow" thinking. When you have a quick reaction to something, especially a negative reaction, slow down and consider why that might be. Challenge your rational self to consider more positive and accepting responses.

- **Calm down.** When you're anxious, upset, or under pressure, it's hard to be open-minded. Snap judgments and quick negative reactions tend to take over. When you find this happening, step back from the situation and calm down. Reconsider the issue, or reengage in the conversation later when you are more relaxed.
- **Reframe negative thoughts.** Positive reframing is the technique of looking at things in new ways to find the positive in them—the opportunities in change, the good in other people, and the strengths in yourself. When you have a negative reaction to a new idea, an event, or another person, consider the merits of the idea, the good qualities of the other person, other explanations for what is happening, or how this might lead to something positive.
- **Embrace new experiences.** Step out of your comfort zone. Try something new. Do something spontaneous. Listen to a different style of music. Try food you've never had before. Accept an invitation to lunch or coffee with a new neighbor or work colleague. Take a class in something you know nothing about. Read books written by people from other cultures. Learn another language. Travel to another country. Breaking out of your routine and trying new experiences can help you realize that there is more than one way to live life and view the world.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is a form of meditation in which you focus on what you are experiencing as you meditate, accept those feelings and sensations, and bring yourself to be in the present moment, without thoughts of the past or future. With its focus on acceptance and being in the present moment, the practice of mindfulness can help you let go of worries about the future, regrets about the past, and negative thinking about new experiences. Mindfulness can help bring out your natural curiosity and open your mind to new perspectives and ideas.

Source: Morgan, H. (2022, December 30). *Keeping an open mind* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).



PRIORITIZING MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month is observed each July to bring awareness to the challenges that some racial and ethnic minority groups face regarding mental health (<https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/minority-mental-health/index.html>).

Mental health matters! Mental health includes your emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects how you think, feel, act, handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is just as important as physical health at all stages of life. Mental health issues are common—about one in five American adults experiences a mental illness each year.¹ Mental health issues are treatable and often preventable. However, people in some racial and ethnic minority groups face obstacles to maintaining positive mental health.

Obstacles to Mental Health for Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

The mental health of some racial and ethnic minority groups worsened after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic relative to that of non-Hispanic white people.^{2,3} The COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge for everyone, and racial and ethnic minority groups were placed at higher risk for COVID-19 infection, COVID-19 severe illness or death, and pandemic-related stressors.² These stressors, such as unemployment, loss of a loved one, and COVID-19 stigma, caused emotional distress and may have led to new or worsening mental health issues. Mental health issues may increase when people face additional stressors and lack access to the resources and support needed to navigate these challenges.

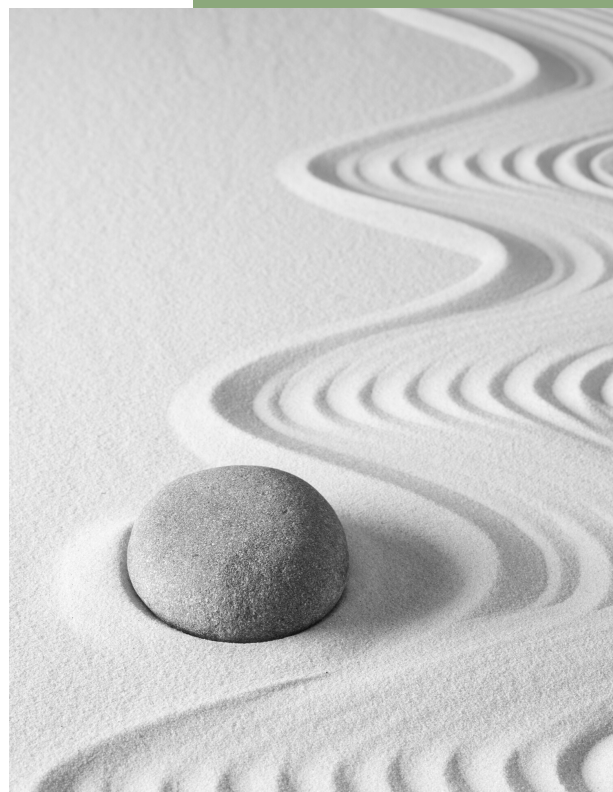
Mental health care is important for mental wellbeing, yet many people from racial and ethnic minority groups face obstacles in accessing needed care.³ These obstacles may include lack of or insufficient health insurance, lack of racial and ethnic diversity among mental health care providers, lack of culturally competent providers, financial strain, and stigma.^{3,4}

Racism negatively impacts mental health.^{2,5,6} Racism contributes to unequal access to resources and services, including mental health care. First-hand experiences of racial discrimination, as well as witnessing or hearing about discrimination from others or in the media, can cause or intensify stress and racial trauma.

Working Together for Mental Health Equity

All of society benefits when people from racial and ethnic minority groups have access to mental health care, supportive social conditions, freedom from stressors that can compromise mental health, and access to other resources needed for health. Everyone has a role to play in promoting health equity. Individuals can do the following:

- Learn about healthy ways to cope with stress and respond to loss. When possible, engage in these practices.
- Get help for mental health issues through free and confidential resources.
- Learn about mental health and take the mental health quiz (<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/quiz/index.htm>).
- Share information on mental health, healthy coping skills, and resources with family, friends, neighbors, and other members of your community.
- Encourage open conversations about mental health, and use nonstigmatizing language when talking about mental health issues.
- Learn about implicit bias, microaggressions, and other forms of discrimination, and make efforts to avoid perpetuating them.
- Mental health equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to reach their highest level of mental health and emotional wellbeing.



Public health organizations can do the following:

- Ensure mental health programming incorporates perspectives, ideas, and decision-making from appropriately representative people of racial and ethnic minority groups at all stages of programming—from planning to implementation to evaluation.
- Consider the data on mental health when developing organizational priorities and programs.
- Prioritize action on and meaningfully account for the potential influence of social determinants of health when designing mental health programs.
- Measure the impact of racism on mental health, and develop best practices for reducing racism and its consequences.
- Ensure mental health educational materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and follow health equity principles for communication, such as using plain language.
- Take intentional steps to increase the reach of mental health information to racial and ethnic minority groups through culturally responsive communication outlets.
- Establish and foster partnerships with other organizations to fill gaps in reach or expertise.
- Verify and promote available free and low-cost mental health resources.
- Explore referrals to mental health services to ensure those served can be efficiently connected with needed resources.

Health care systems can do the following:

- Screen patients for depression and other mental health conditions, and refer patients to accessible mental health care services.
- Make mental health educational materials available to all patients during their appointments, via patient portals and in waiting rooms.
- Make efforts to recruit mental health care providers that reflect the race and ethnicity of the populations they serve.
- Provide cultural humility training to mental health care providers.
- Ensure mental health care services are culturally and linguistically appropriate.



States and communities can do the following:

- Expand community-based mental health care that provides culturally responsive mental health services at low or no cost for youth and adults.
- Evaluate policies for their differential impact on social determinants of health, and, when needed, modify these policies or create new policies that ensure equitable access to resources for people from all race and ethnicity groups.
- Evaluate policies for their potential to reinforce mental health stigma, and revise or remove stigmatizing policies.
- Encourage community and faith-based leaders to have positive dialogues and discussions around mental health issues to help reduce stigma.
- Make efforts to ensure decision-makers reflect the races and ethnicities of the populations they serve.

References

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (Updated 2023, April 24). Mental health myths and facts. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/myths-and-facts>
2. Thomeer, M.B., Moody, M.D., & Yahirun, J. (2023, April). Racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and mental health care during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 10(2), 961-976. doi: 10.1007/s40615-022-01284-9
3. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). (Reviewed 2023, January 25). Household Pulse Survey - COVID-19. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/health-care-access-and-mental-health.htm>
4. American Psychiatric Association. (2017, December 19). Mental health disparities: Diverse populations. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Physiatrists/Cultural-Competency/Mental-Health-Disparities/Mental-Health-Facts-for-Diverse-Populations.pdf>
5. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for PTSD. (Updated 2023, February 9). Racial trauma. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/types/racial_trauma.asp
6. Mpofu, J.J., Cooper, A.C., Ashley, C., Geda, S., Harding, R.L, Johns, M.M. et al. (2022). Perceived racism and demographic, mental health, and behavioral characteristics among high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic – Adolescent behaviors and experiences survey, United States, January–June 2021. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Supplement*, 71(Suppl-3), 22–27. doi: 0.15585/mmwr.su7103a4

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Office of Health Equity & National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP), Division of Population Health (DPH). (2022, July 12). Prioritizing minority mental health. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov>



BEAT THE HEAT: STAYING SAFE IN THE SUMMERTIME

After a long winter cooped up, the arrival of sunny days can make you eager to be outside. Getting outdoors can be good for you in many ways. It provides opportunities for exercise. It can also boost your mental health.

As the heat rises, some health risks also increase. Intense heat can put strain on both your body and brain. Too much heat can cause a heat-related illness called hyperthermia. Mild hyperthermia can cause discomfort, like muscle cramps or swelling in the ankles and feet.

Heat exhaustion is more serious. It occurs when your body can no longer keep itself cool. You may start to feel dizzy or nauseated. Other symptoms include feeling thirsty, weak, or uncoordinated.

The most extreme form of hyperthermia is heat stroke. Heat stroke is life-threatening, so seek medical help right away. Symptoms include fainting or having trouble walking. You may start feeling confused or agitated. You can also feel very hot but not sweat or have dry, flushed skin.

Some people are more at risk for heat-related illness than others. That includes infants and young children, and those with certain health conditions, such as heart, lung, or kidney disease. Older adults are the most heat sensitive. That's because the body's ability to cool itself changes as people get older.

There are two main ways your body regulates its temperature, explains Dr. Craig Crandall, who studies heat effects on the body at the University of Texas (UT) Southwestern Medical Center. "One is increasing how much blood flows to the skin. The other is how much we sweat."

Neither of these works as well in older adults, Crandall says. That makes it more difficult for them to cool off. His research has shown that sitting in front of a fan increased older adults' body temperature in extreme heat. That's because they weren't sufficiently sweating when the hot air was blowing over their skin. This suggests that older adults may need to use other ways to keep cool, such as going to an air-conditioned place.

Too much heat is not safe for anyone. If you're outside in the heat, drink lots of water. Don't try to exercise or do a lot of activities outdoors when it's hot.

If you start to feel sick in the heat, rest in a cool place and drink plenty of fluids. If you think someone has heat stroke, get them to a cool place and call 911.

"Shade is your friend," Crandall says. "If you're going out to exercise or mow the lawn, take breaks in the shade." If possible, go into an air-conditioned room for a while. "That time you're inside, your core temperature is going to be cooled," Crandall explains. "If you stay outside, it may just go up and up and up."

If you want to exercise outside in the summer, start slow. "It takes about 10 days to two weeks to get acclimated to hotter temperatures," Crandall says.

Heat isn't the only hazard during the summer. It's also important to protect your skin and your eyes from the sun. See below for tips to keep safe in the heat.

Wise Choices: Protecting Yourself from the Heat and Sun

- Do outdoor activities during the coolest part of the day, in the early morning or evening.
- Exercise in an air-conditioned space if possible, or do water workouts.
- Try to stay in the shade when outdoors during peak sunlight.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water. Avoid drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine.
- Wear protective clothing, such as hats, long-sleeve shirts, and long pants to block out the sun's harmful rays. Choose light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Use sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB radiation. Choose a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, preferably 30. Reapply frequently.
- Use sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB.
- If you don't have air conditioning, keep your home as cool as possible. (If you need help paying your electric bills to run an air conditioner, visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/fact-sheet/liheap-brochure-english>.)

Reference

Gagnon, D., Romero, S.A., Cramer, M.N., Jay, O., Crandall, C.G. (2016, September 6). Cardiac and thermal strain of elderly adults exposed to extreme heat and humidity with and without electric fan use. *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, 316(9), 989-991. doi: 10.1001/jama.2016.10550

Source: Wein, H. (Ed.). (2021, June). *Beat the Heat: Staying safe in the summertime*. NIH News in Health. Bethesda, MD: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). Retrieved June 29, 2022, from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov>

CONTROLLING MOSQUITOS AT HOME

Controlling Mosquitoes Outside Your Home

Remove standing water where mosquitoes could lay eggs:

- Once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out any items that hold water, like tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpot saucers, or trash containers. Mosquitoes lay eggs near water.
- Tightly cover water storage containers (buckets, cisterns, rain barrels) so that mosquitoes cannot get inside to lay eggs.
- For containers without lids, use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.
- Use larvicides to treat large containers of water that will not be used for drinking and cannot be covered or dumped out.
- If you have a septic tank, repair cracks or gaps. Cover open vent or plumbing pipes. Use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.

Kill mosquitoes outside your home.

Use an outdoor insect spray made to kill mosquitoes in areas where they rest. Mosquitoes rest in dark, humid areas like under patio furniture, or under the carport or garage. When using insecticides, always follow label instructions.

Controlling Mosquitoes Inside Your Home

Keep mosquitoes out:

- Install or repair and use window and door screens. Do not leave doors propped open.
- Use air conditioning when possible.



Kill mosquitoes inside your home:

- Kill mosquitoes inside your home. Use an indoor flying insect fogger or indoor insect spray to kill mosquitoes and treat areas where they rest. These products work immediately but may need to be reapplied. When using insecticides, always follow label directions. Only using insecticide will not keep your home free of mosquitoes.
- Mosquitoes rest in dark, humid places like under the sink, in closets, under furniture, or in the laundry room.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID), Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD). (Reviewed 2019, August 13). Controlling mosquitoes at home. Retrieved June 12, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov>