MHA PUTNAM
Mental Health Association in Putnam County

The Mindful Messenger:

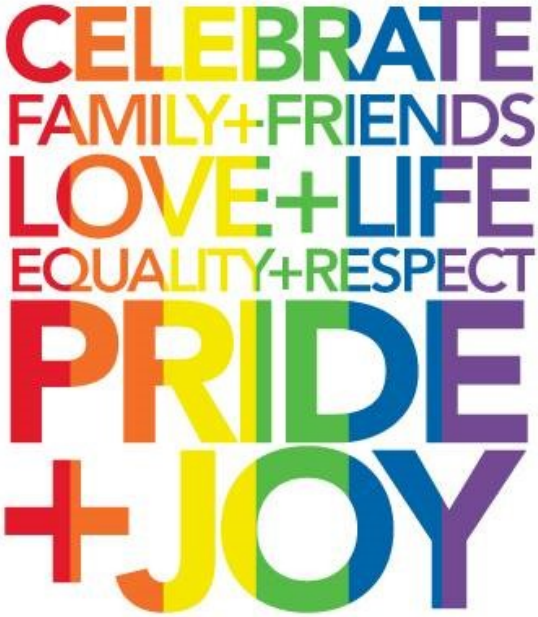
June 2021

When I first found MHA I was very unwell. My depression had backed me into a corner and I didn't see a way out. I was unemployed, questioning my faith for the first time, and dealing with my sexuality as a self-hating lesbian. I couldn't stand myself and I desperately needed help. I went to MHA to find a group just to have people to talk to but found that the group wouldn't be meeting until the next week and I started to panic. That was too far away, I needed help right then.

I left the building as fast as I could and started to cry and a split second later one of the staff members comes running after me and ask if I want to talk now. I took them up on the offer and continued to meet with them once a week for a few months. Those meetings saved my life, pulled me away from a very dark edge. I stayed so long that they made a group for me and others like me and I got to help create it. After 2 years of being in a group, I was hired on to help run a different group called "Junior Warr;ors" and eventually running the very group I started in called "Peer Cafe."

MHA helped rebuild me and I don't say that loosely. My back is straight and I have power over what I do with my emotions. I have coping mechanisms and emotional literacy and a safe place to go when I need it. And I am forever grateful.

-Brittany C.



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Check out our expanded schedule before the summer break

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As this tumultuous school year comes to an end, please note our youth groups will be meeting in June, over the summer and into the fall. Please help us connect youth with their peers so they can have the social support we know is so important for good mental health!

Information on MHA Youth Groups

Junior Warr;ors ages 8-12

Meets virtually the 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month at 4:30pm

Warr;ors ages 13-17

Meets virtually the 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month at 4:30pm

Peer Cafe ages 18-26

Meets virtually the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 5:45pm

Our virtual youth programs consist of a small network of youth in Putnam County who may be struggling with their mental health, as well as those who have family members struggling.

Through these programs, youth are empowered by gaining knowledge and experience through group activities and peer support.

Youth are encouraged to see the value of living a purposeful life, as well as supported in developing positive group norms and making healthy decisions.

For more information please contact Amanda B. (475) 228-6656

SPECTRUM age 13-18

meets virtually the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm

SAGE age 19 & up

meets virtually the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm

Young adult/adult focused social forum and support group for LGBTQ+ individuals looking for a safe space to receive peer support,

community resources, and acceptance.

These are confidential, validating, and affirming groups dedicated to serving the specific need of the LGBTQ+ community.

Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)

By John Bourges. Program Coordinator-Dwyer Vet2Vet Putnam

The idea of someone being changed or behaving differently because of an event in their life has been around since time began. As we gain better insight as to how we cope with these life events, the idea of Post-Traumatic Stress and the Disorder has gained in identification, acceptance and understanding. June is PTSD awareness Month.

As far back as in the writings of Sophocles (450-440 BC)in his tragedy 'Ajax' or before him with the Iliad and Achilles there are the images of individuals suffering from their experience in war. Whether it is the loss of a friend, or their perceived honor by others, some scholars have seen this as early descriptions of PTSD. Madness and depression can be seen in the warrior characters as they struggle through life after the battle has ended. In Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' written in 1598 the character Hotspur has nightmares of war.

During and after the American Civil War there are descriptions of 'Nostalgia' and 'Soldiers Heart' vividly described in Stephen Crane's "*Red Badge of Courage*" as early descriptions of PTSD in the American experience of war. Not just limited to war at this time another form of PTSD was described as "Railroad Spine" due to the increased number of severe and tragic railroad accidents. Railway collisions of heavy locomotives and flimsy railroad cars also saw complaints of injuries although no 'physical' injury was noted and their complaints were then claimed to be a fraud. Charles Dickens wrote of 'Railway Shaking' and a phobia of train travel after being involved in a wreck and witnessing people die. He was no fraud.

As wars progressed with better documentation, PTSD has been described as 'War Neurosis' and 'Shell Shock' during WWI. As 'Battle Fatigue' and 'Combat Stress Reaction' in World War II. Think of the famous scene in "*Patton*" where the General strikes a soldier describing him as a coward. But it is not limited to just war and authors, but painters such as Goya and his paintings of war and what he saw, show even more vivid images of the devastation.

In 1980 the American Psychological Association added PTSD to the DSM-III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) stemming from research of Vietnam Veterans, rape victims and Holocaust survivors. They noted several common and consistent signs and symptoms: *Reliving the Event*, with flashbacks, nightmares and invasive thoughts. *Avoidance* and removing oneself from situations that remind them of events or numbing. *Changes in Feelings,* such as lack of joy, feeling alone and alienated and without enjoyment from normally pleasant events. *Hyperarousal* always scanning, looking, seeking threats, exits and sources of danger. All four types of symptoms need to be present, lasting over a month and that they cause significant distress or problems in day to day living. It is one thing to recognize Post Traumatic Stress after a significant event. It is another when the behavior interferes with your life so much that it then becomes a disorder. Many sufferers dislike the label of 'disorder' and efforts are being made to re-evaluate our 'labeling' of individuals with a mental health issue.

Many embrace negative coping skills such as alcohol and drug use, risk taking and isolation as a means of dealing with the stress. Instead, suggestions such as exercise, a healthier lifestyle, outdoor activity, volunteering, mentoring and forcing yourself out of the isolation as better ways to combat PTSD along with therapy and support groups.

In my own struggles with PTSD I can tell you that it came as a surprise almost 8 years after my experiences in a trauma center during the Iraq War. The most significant thing I can say about the experience was that it scared me. In over twenty years in the New York City Police Department and most of those years as a Homicide Detective, nothing prepared me for war and it was images of war that invaded my life. But since then I've learned something else. I am not alone. Which means you are not alone. The next hardest thing for me to do was reach out my hand for help. Trust me there will be someone there to take it. Have faith. JB

International Yoga Day-June 21st

by Jessica Ryan

June 21st is International Yoga Day. This day intends to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing Yoga. United Nations Organization designated International Yoga Day in 2014 because of massive public demand. International Yoga Day is celebrated in India, the USA, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, China, Australia, and countries of South Asia.
The date of June 21st was chosen because it was the Summer Solstice.

Yoga is around 6000 years old. It's an ancient physical, mental, and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word 'yoga' derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing body and mind coming together. Although started in India, Yoga is now practiced throughout the world as an exercise to improve physical and mental health.

About 36 million Americans claim to do Yoga regularly.
It's an inclusive exercise. People of all age groups and fitness levels can practice. There are modifications for every yoga pose and beginner classes in every style. Yoga has become popular as an exercise and relaxation method. It can improve a person's mental well-being. Regular practice can create mental clarity and calmness. Some physical benefits are weight reduction, balanced metabolism, and increased flexibility. International Yoga Day is an opportunity to join the practice with people around the globe.

If you would like more information on International Yoga Day 2021 visit: https://nationaltoday.com/international-yoga-day/

Yoga has been part of my wellness routine for many years. I've been able to practice consistently because of how low maintenance it is. When practiced, you get back to the basics. But even though you don't need much equipment, the exercise is powerful. Yoga is an essential tool that I use to support my mental health. Its ideas promote deep understanding for me. The connection between mind and body that I experience grounds me. Yoga gives me structure; when I practice, I become aware of the strengths of my mind and body. A Gentle Yoga class is a great way to start.

-Jessica