

# Mental Illness Awareness Week - Depression

written by CPH Insurance | June 15, 2016

The week of October 5th - 11th is this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week. Tuesday, October 7th, was the National Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding Day, and Today, October 9th, is the National Depression Screening Day.

Back in 1990, the US Congress established the first week of October as the Mental Illness Awareness Week to recognize the efforts of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to raise awareness of mental illness.

NAMI is fighting a worthwhile cause, for there are many obstacles to overcome on the road to Mental Illness Awareness. While millions of Americans living with mental disorders or conditions, far fewer seek treatment, or even recognize a problem.

The first and foremost obstacle to overcome in educating the public on the subject of Mental Illness is the stigma associated with mental disorders. Unfortunately, we live in a society where most still believe that mental illness is something voluntary, and more often than not, a sign of weakness.

Depression is one of them most commonly-occurring and misdiagnosed conditions that arise in our society today. Those surrounding a person with a mental condition such as depression tend to lash out and blame the sufferer on their condition as if they are choosing to be depressed. We are all social creatures — the unfortunate consequence of clinical depression is that others around the person who do not suffer from the same condition do not understand the change in mood, and attribute it to the person's own choice, their own choice to withdraw from their friends and loved ones. Quite simply, nobody wants to be around a sad person, so loved ones get mad, friends give up, coworkers ignore... the person suffering from depression winds up being ostracized, ignored and feeling guilty for something they have very little control over.

The aim of Mental Illness Awareness Week is to change this downward spiral of behavior. Overcoming depression is not an insurmountable hurdle. Depression can be battled through changing behaviors; starting an exercise routine, changing diets, picking up a hobby or even getting rid of bad habits could help the an individual break out of depression's vice grip. If a case is more serious, help from a mental health professional could be the best solution. Remember, seeking treatment for a mental illness is just like treating any other illness — it should be encouraged, supported and helped. Instead of ostracizing a person suffering from depression, help them, support them, listen to them, encourage them to seek help. Once they break out of the fog, they'll be forever thankful, and you will have your friend or family member back to how you remember them!