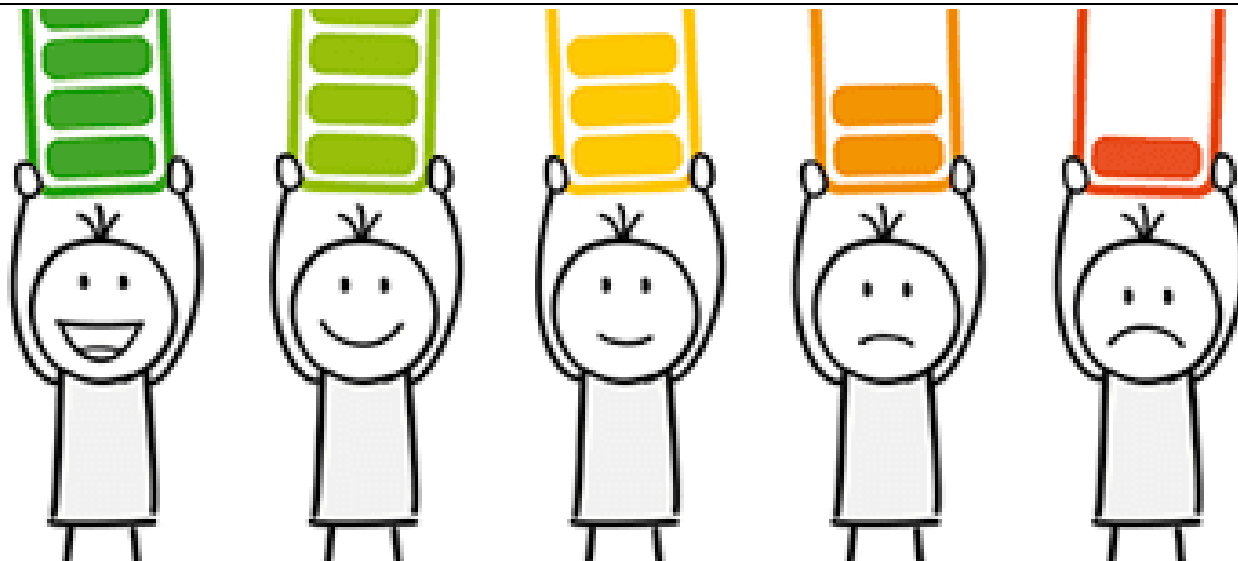




Berkshire Health Group

# Wellness Connection



## Improving Thriving; Improving Mental Health by Angela, Wilson, LMHC

Mental health is a growing concern in our country and community. The National Institute for Mental Health has produced research showing that tens of millions of people in our country suffer from some kind of mental illness, with only about half receiving treatment. Two of the most common mental health conditions are anxiety and depression. In fact over 31% of adults have experienced some kind of anxiety disorder in their life and 17 million adults have had a depressive episode in the last year. In addition, as a subset of depression, burnout is also on

the rise—particularly impacting our health care workers and overall leaders. And sadly suicide is one of the leading causes of death for several age groups.

treatments for mental illness—from therapy to medication to meditation. And there is much less stigma about mental illness today than there was 50 years ago.

If you are experiencing some struggles with mental health there is no reason to go it alone. There are a variety of ways to find help, get support, and feel better.

In this issue we will explore the symptoms of some of the most common mental health conditions, ways that might help prevent them, tools to help you cope if you are having mental health concerns and additional resources to have on hand if you find yourself continuing to struggle with a mental health condition.



Yet there are increasingly a number of different treatments and adjunct

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- ⇒ Move Your Body! Check out the 15 Minute Exercise Routine on page 3.
- ⇒ Complete the 6 Foundations of Health Challenge, April 20th-May 31st
- ⇒ Stay connected and like us on Facebook! [Click here.](#)
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## Symptoms, Risk, and Tools to Manage Two Common Mental Health Conditions

by Angela, Wilson, LMHC

Two of the most common mental health conditions are anxiety and depression (with a subset in depression of burnout). Anxiety is

best described as a state of “being on edge”, amped up, or just generally tense for long periods of time. It can cause rapid heart rate and a sense of impending doom.

Depression on the other hand is a state of losing interest in the things you enjoy, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and sometimes even thoughts of suicide.

Burnout can be triggered by constant stress at work, without relief, a sense of constant demands that you cannot meet, and feeling emotionally drained by the work you do.

### Who’s at Risk?

People who are most at risk for one of these mental health concerns are those who have a family history of the condition, those who have recently lost a loved one, those experiencing interpersonal conflict, and a history of previous traumas. Healthcare workers or anyone in jobs where there are ongoing demands and emotional strain can be at risk for burnout (though really anyone can experience it). In addition, experiencing multiple stressors all at once can drain ones inner resources and resilience making it more likely to experience symptoms.

## Helpful Tools to Manage Mental Health Conditions

There a whole variety of things you can do for yourself to help cope with difficult or strong feelings. In DBT therapy, coping skills are taught to help people cope with strong feelings. These coping skills include:

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## TYPES OF COPING SKILLS

<p><b>Self-Soothing</b> (Comforting yourself through your five senses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Something to touch (ex: stuffed animal, stress ball)</li> <li>2. Something to hear (ex: music, meditation guides)</li> <li>3. Something to see (ex: snowglobe, happy pictures)</li> <li>4. Something to taste (ex: mints, tea, sour candy)</li> <li>5. Something to smell (ex: lotion, candles, perfume)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Distraction</b> (Taking your mind off the problem for a while)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Opposite Action</b> (Doing something the opposite of your impulse that’s consistent with a more positive emotion)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affirmations and Inspiration (ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images)</li> <li>2. Something funny or cheering (ex: funny movies / TV / books)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Emotional Awareness</b> (Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing / art supplies</p>	<p><b>Mindfulness</b> (Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises.</p>	<p><b>Crisis Plan</b> (Contact info of supports and resources, for when coping skills aren’t enough.)</p> <p>Family / Friends Therapist Psychiatrist Hotline Crisis Team / ER 911</p>

**Self-soothing:** Finding ways to calm and sooth your nervous system. This could include taking a warm bath, trying some yoga, or using aromatherapy. Whatever helps you feel more calm or soothed through your senses.

**Distraction:** While sometimes people can downplay the use of distraction—like TV watching or using your iPhone to cope, at times this can be effective in managing difficult feelings. If feeling really upset, turn on one of your favorite shows and just let yourself zone out. Your problems, of course, won’t go away, but maybe a little space from them will give you a chance to see things in a new way.

**Opposite Action:** This one involves doing the opposite of what you feel you want to do. Feel isolated? Go out for coffee with a friend instead. Feel like being sluggish on the coach? Try going for an easy walk and see what

happens. Opposite action means going against the grain and noticing how you feel.

**Emotional Awareness:** This involves becoming more aware of your own emotions. Sometimes mental health symptoms can mask as hidden feelings. For example, you may feel really depressed, when you are

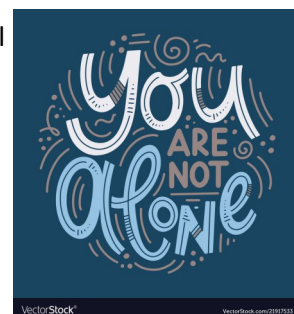
actually quite angry.

Or you may feel quite angry when you are really feeling scared or vulnerable. Knowing how you really feel can help you identify what is bothering you and how to move towards positive action. If this is new to you find an emotion chart to help you sort through what you might be feeling.

**Mindfulness:** This goes along with emotional awareness in that mindfulness can help you pause, take

stock of you how are doing, and learn to be with different feelings. In mindfulness we are trying to be more aware of how we are, and trying to better tolerate difficult feelings until they just pass on their own.

**Crisis Planning:** Know who to go to and what to do when none of these practices are helpful is important to know and to write down. Who can you call or talk to? A good number to have is both the suicide hotline at 1-800-273-8255 as well as the Brien Center Crisis number at 1-800-252-0227. Please note that you do not have to be suicidal to call the Brien Center, it is for anyone feeling overwhelmed.



## Improve Your Mood Through Movement

There is no doubt about it, exercise can be a quick way back to mental health. Numerous studies highlight the benefits of exercise to reduce depression and anxiety while also improving sleep and increasing mental capacity. There are lots of reasons why exercise is so good for mental health—it changes our brain chemistry, strengthens our muscles, gets our hearts pumping and fresh oxygen circulating. So if you want a near sure fire way to help manage your stress try moving your body.

Remember, it does not have to be a lot of movement to start to feel the benefits. While moving more often does lead to more benefits, even

moving a little can help improve mood. Here are a few ideas on how to get moving: Park further away from work and walk in, lift weights for 8 minutes, walk for 10 minutes 2-3 times a day, try walking meetings, just put on your walking clothes or shoes, even if you don't do anything else.



*It may be raining now,  
but the sun always  
comes out again.*

## Mood-Boosting Omelet

### Ingredients

- 2 large eggs free-range, organic
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic finely chopped
- 1 large bunch spinach leaves removed and cleaned
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 an avocado sliced
- salmon \*optional



### Directions

1. Prep all of your ingredients for filling. In a large saute pan, heat 1 teaspoon olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and saute until soft, about one minute. Add the washed spinach leaves. Saute until tender. Remove cooked spinach from heat and set aside to cool a bit. When the spinach is cool enough to handle, squeeze out any excess water to avoid a watery omelet
2. In a separate bowl, whisk 2 large eggs. Add a pinch of salt and pepper to taste.
3. Warm pan over medium heat, add in remaining oil. Tilt pan to coat all sides then pour in eggs. Again, tilt the pan to spread the eggs evenly over the bottom of the pan.
4. Using the spatula, lift the edges of the eggs to let any excess egg run off and cook. Then add in the spinach, fold the omelet in half. Then flip that omelet out of the pan and you are ready to eat.

Layer with avocado, diced tomatoes, and some salmon! Enjoy!  
<https://healingtohappy.com/mood-boosting-breakfast/>

## Wellness Challenges

### 6 Foundations of Health Challenge April 20th-May 31st

This 6-week challenge will provide you with the 6 foundations of health that support optimal wellness. Each week focuses on a pillar of the foundation with suggested ways to provide you the tools you need to be successful.

### 30 Day Full Body Weight Challenge

May-June

Regular exercise is an important part of getting in shape and living a healthy lifestyle. Your own body weight is all you really need to firm your entire body. Over the next 30 days, you'll work on strengthening and toning your chest, arms, legs, glutes, and abs with these challenging and highly effective total-body exercises. Complete this 30 day challenge and you'll reap major physical rewards. Plus, these moves can be done anytime, anywhere...so no more excuses!

### Take Advantage of your Wellness Benefits!

- [Diabetes Care Program](#)
- [Colonoscopy Incentive Program](#)
- [BCBS Fitness Reimbursement](#)
- [BCBS Weight Loss Reimbursement](#)
- [BHG HERO Coaching Program](#)
- [BHG 2020 Wellness Program Menu](#)
- Visit [Berkshirehg.com](http://Berkshirehg.com) for more info

### For more information regarding any BHG Wellness Programs, please contact:

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