Memorial Day and Mental Health: Taking Care of Ourselves

Memorial Day is a special holiday in the United States. It’s a time to remember and honor those who have died serving in the military. While it’s important to honor their sacrifice, Memorial Day can also be a difficult time for many people. For some, it brings up feelings of sadness and loss. This can be especially true for veterans, their families, and anyone who has lost a loved one.

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly one in five adults in the U.S. lives with a mental illness. This can include conditions like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Impact of Memorial Day

Memorial Day can trigger strong emotions. It’s normal to feel sadness, grief, or anxiety during this time. For veterans, this day might bring back difficult memories of their service or the loss of fellow soldiers. For families, it can be a reminder of loved ones who are no longer with us.

Taking Care of Your Mental Health

Here are some ways to take care of your mental health during Memorial Day:

Talk About Your Feelings: Sharing your feelings with friends or family members can help you feel better. Sometimes just talking about what you’re going through can be a huge relief.

Practice Self-Care: Make time for activities that you enjoy and that help you relax. This could be reading, going for a walk, or listening to music.

Stay Connected: Spending time with loved ones can provide support and comfort. If you can’t be with them in person, try to connect over the phone or through video calls.

Seek Professional Help: If your feelings become overwhelming, it’s important to seek help from a mental health professional. Therapists and counselors are trained to help you manage your feelings and can provide support and guidance.

Limit Alcohol: While it might be tempting to drink alcohol to cope with difficult emotions, it can often make things worse. Try to limit your alcohol intake and find healthier ways to cope.

Resources for Mental Health Support

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, it’s important to reach out for help immediately. Here are some resources that can provide support:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or text HELLO to 741741. This service is available 24/7 for anyone in crisis.

Veterans Crisis Line: Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, or text 838255. There is also an online chat available at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net).

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. This free service is available 24/7.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Call the NAMI Helpline at 1-800-950-NAMI (1-800-950-6264) for free, confidential support and information on mental health resources.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357) for free and confidential treatment referral and information services.

Statistics on Mental Health

Understanding how common mental health issues are can help us see that we are not alone. Here are some important statistics:

About 19% of U.S. adults experience some form of mental illness each year.

Nearly 7% of adults have had at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

Anxiety disorders affect about 18% of the adult population each year.

PTSD affects about 3.5% of U.S. adults every year, and it is more common among veterans.

Conclusion

Memorial Day is a time to remember and honor those who have served and sacrificed. It’s also a time to be aware of our own mental health and the well-being of those around us. By taking steps to care for our mental health, we can better support ourselves and each other. If you or someone you know is struggling, don’t hesitate to seek help. Remember, taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

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The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. If you are in crisis or think you may have an emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately.