

SAFE SPACE

May Newsletter, 2014



May is Mental Health Month

Mental health, like physical health, is an important part of everyone's wellbeing. Without proper care and maintenance, a person's emotional and mental state may decline, resulting in loss of energy, loss of interest in enjoyable activities, and a general sense of dissatisfaction or frustration with one's life. Major disruptions to a person's mental health may even create feelings of profound despair, hopelessness, loss of control, or loss of security which can be very difficult to alleviate. Most of us deal with occasional times in our lives when we feel depressed or confused. For people with mental illness, however, these difficult periods aren't occasional obstacles but a constant and recurring struggle.

What is mental illness? A mental illness can be classified as any condition which significantly affects a person's mood, thoughts, or ability to cope with life's everyday demands, social interactions, and stimuli. Some commonly-known mental illnesses include depression, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), autism, anxiety and panic disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Though the range of disorders is wide and diverse, mental illness is often characterized by one common theme...

It carries social stigma. Media portrayals of "psychotic killers" and news outlets reporting on "crazed gunmen" create a public perception that people with mental illness are unpredictable and dangerous. But this is more sensational fantasy than reality. The truth is, most people who are violent or abusive or who commit sexual assault don't have mental disorders.

Major mental illness can be attributed to

less than 5% of all violence, meaning most people who are violent are not mentally ill. In fact, the primary risk factors for violence are being young, male, single, or of lower socio-economic status. Substance abuse also contributes to up to one-third of all violence, but this is true whether the offenders suffer mental illness or not.

On the contrary, people with mental illness are actually 4 times more likely to be victimized by violence and sexual assault than people without. Furthermore, experiencing the trauma of assault can result in severe and persistent mental distress, often manifesting as PTSD. This means that people who have been victimized are often at increased risk of being re-victimized in the future.

Some reasons people with mental illness may be subject to greater risk of assault may be that mental illness generally entails difficulty navigating interpersonal relationships or communicating with others as well as decreased emotional and physical defenses, decreased ability to attend to one's daily needs, and even discrimination creating barriers to housing, education, and employment due to social stigma.

It's important to spread awareness, then, and remind others that people struggling with mental illness and traumatic distress deserve compassion, understanding, and support rather than the fear and judgment that stigmatization creates. If you would like to help others with mental illness, you should listen to them, believe them, don't judge them, and affirm and validate

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SHELTER

- * 24 hr. crisis line
- * (406) 782-8511

ADVOCACY

An advocate can help with:

- * Locating financial resources
- * Court accompaniment
- * Brainstorming plans for getting away

SAFETY

If you feel unsafe in your home but are not quite ready to leave, call us to discuss safety planning options that might keep you safe until you are ready. Crisis line is available 24 hours/day!



their experiences. Also, you might consider talking with members of your social circle about mental illness in order to dispel damaging myths.

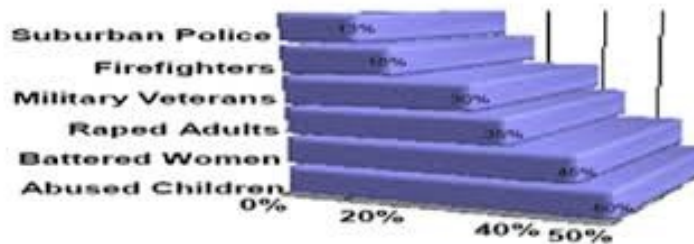
Safe Space offers a support group for female-identified victims of domestic and sexual violence looking for help coping with their traumatic experiences. The group meets every Tuesday at 5:15 PM at the shelter. Call the Safe Space office for directions. (406) 782-9807.

References:

Violence and mental illness: an overview, Heather Stuart; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1525086

Mentally Ill Often Targets of Violence, Crystal Phend; <http://www.medpagetoday.com/Psychiatry/GeneralPsychiatry/31383>

PTSD OCCURANCE



Upcoming Volunteer & Advocacy Training



Please join us for our 2014 Volunteer Advocacy Training event beginning on Tuesday, May 20, at 6 p.m. Every Tuesday, beginning May 20 and continuing until June 24, we will meet from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Jacob's House. At that time, participants will be provided a list of multimedia materials that can be viewed and/or read during the week as time permits. This material will be discussed the following Tuesday when we meet again. If Tuesdays are not good, a repeat

of the Tuesday class will also be held on each Thursday. You only need to attend one of the classes each week to complete Advocacy Training and receive your certification.

This year, the cost will be \$15 for each participant. If interested, please call Jancee at 782-9807 to reserve your spot as space is limited. We look forward to hearing from you.

**If finances are a concern, please speak with our office to request assistance.*

Flamingos Have Fled for the Year

Safe Space is very thankful for all of the amazing support during the month of April (National Sexual Assault Awareness Month).

Safe Space flocked 414 lawns last month, bringing each location valuable information on sexual assaults, prevention, and intervention services.

Safe Space couldn't have completed the flocking without the valuable volunteers that helped to migrate the flocks throughout the community.

If you would like to know more about the information presented during the month of April, contact an advocate by calling our hotline at

406-782-8511



Here is some facts about Safe Space shared during the flocking season:

2013 Statistics

128 survivors served

69 Financial Assurances

511 Shelter Nights

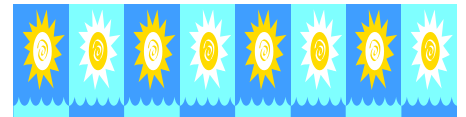
2014 1st Quarter Statistics

51 survivors served

33 Financial Assurances

410 Shelter nights

Safe Space has seen an increase in the use of our program. Volunteers can help to provide advocacy! See more about volunteer training on our website.



The U.S. Department of Justice has concluded its investigation into how sexual assaults are handled at the University of Montana in Missoula. The resulting report is a mixed bag of some disturbing findings along with the encouraging news that changes which have been initiated in the past year are making a positive impact on campus. A key element to this story is the fact that similarly poor handling of sexual assault has been happening on campuses around the country for far too long. Perhaps the conclusion of this investigation signals a new beginning for the state of Montana? We hope so. (The missoulian.com, 5/10/13)

Safe Space

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Coming up!

May 3—Safe Space's 3rd Annual Flock at the Mystic Ballroom. Visit website for more details~

May 7—Beautify Butte Day at Shelter! Sign up to help clean up the shelter lawn and maybe do some planting.

May 8—Beautify Butte Day at Jacobs House! Sign up to help clear the Jacobs House Lot and organize!

May 11—Happy Mother's Day!

May 20 & 22—Week 1 of 2014 Volunteer/Advocacy Training, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Jacob's House

May 27 & 29—Week 2 of 2014 Volunteer/Advocacy Training, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Jacob's House