

MAY 2021 | ISSUE NO. 2

# THE ADVOCATE

Health tips and resources for MCG employees and their families

## MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Exploring the connection between mental and physical health.



YOU ARE  
**NOT**  
ALONE

## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

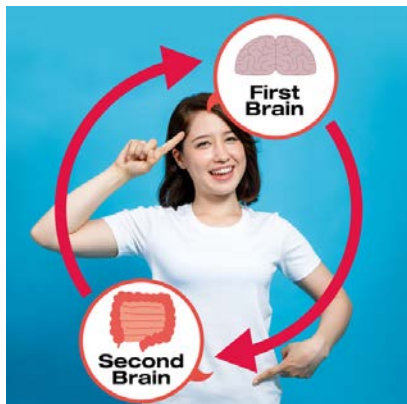
For 2021's Mental Health Awareness Month, Manatee County Employees are being asked to share the message by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, (NAMI): **"You Are Not Alone."** More than 40 million people in the U.S. face the day-to-day reality of living with a mental health condition. But many suffering from emotional distress are suffering in silence. Some common reasons that people don't feel comfortable sharing their struggles with mental health are:

- They are afraid it will adversely affect their employment.
- They don't want to admit that they're unwell.
- They are embarrassed due to the stigma of emotional distress and mental illness.

Stigma and discrimination have caused many of us to suffer. This month, let's break down stigma so no one struggles in silence.

# TWO BRAINS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

## The brain-gut connection



You have a second brain and its in your gut. No kidding. It's called the Enteric Nervous System and consists of neurons which line our 30-foot-long digestive tract. In addition to the business of digesting our food, this second brain communicates with the brain in our head and plays a role in determining our mental state.

We know gastrointestinal issues (gas, bloating, diarrhea, constipation) can create anxiety, stress and depression; we also know that anxiety, stress and depression can make gastrointestinal problems worse. That's because of the brain-gut connection. In fact, mental health treatment techniques have been shown to help with gastrointestinal distress.

Within our Enteric Nervous System live healthy gut bacteria which produce neurochemicals and hormones that the brain uses to regulate mental functions, such as serotonin, the "feel good" chemical. This healthy bacteria also produces substances that nourish the cells in the Enteric Nervous System known as prebiotics and probiotics. Research has established associations between gut microbes, digestive function, and mental wellbeing. When our gut is well, our brain is more likely to be well.

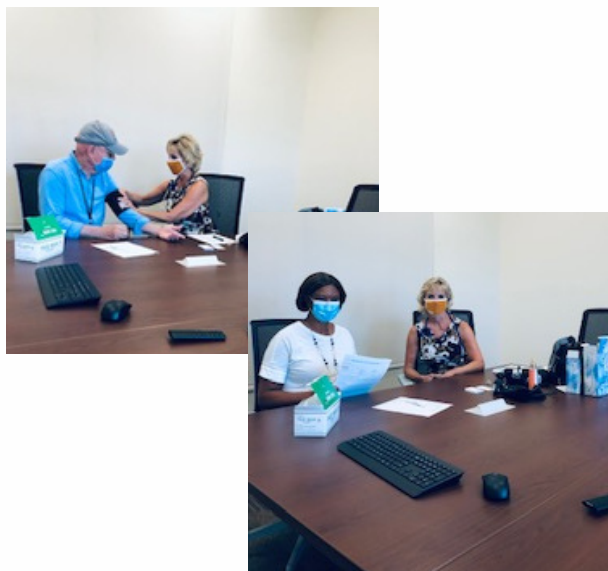
Eating a high-fiber diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables will help keep your gut bacteria healthy, and including foods like yogurt (with live cultures), pickles/olives, sauerkraut, and kimchi provides pre/probiotics, or consider taking a probiotic supplement. If you would like to talk to a Registered Dietitian about how to adapt your diet for optimal gut health, or for guidance in reaching your personal nutritional goals, all YourChoice Medical Plan members get their first five visits at no cost to you. Learn more at [manateeyourchoice.com/wellbeing-programs/nutrition](https://manateeyourchoice.com/wellbeing-programs/nutrition) or call Florey Miller at (941) 748-4501 x6410



## SPOTLIGHT ON TRANSIT

On Friday, April 30th, Tina Friddle, Wellness Champion, hosted a Blood Pressure clinic at Transit with Nurse Advocate Debbie Miskell. During this event, 21 individuals met one-on-one with Nurse Debbie to review their blood pressure and discuss other health concerns. Members expressed how helpful it was to have a Nurse Advocate on-site who could offer advice for managing their health or refer them to other Advocates or network providers.

If you are interested in hosting a health clinic at your worksite, talk to your Wellness Champion or contact Allison Minardi, Worksite Wellbeing Manager at x3667 or [aminardi@manateeyourchoice.com](mailto:aminardi@manateeyourchoice.com).



# MOVE FOR YOUR MIND

We all know that our physical bodies benefit from movement and exercise. Did you know that there is also a powerful mental benefit? 30 minutes of daily moderate exercise is recommended for heart health, but our brains can respond even quicker, **releasing “feel good” chemicals in as little as 10 minutes.** These chemicals (serotonin, dopamine, and noradrenalin) can improve your mood and relieve feelings of depression and anxiety. So the next time you are feeling stressed or anxious, go for a walk, try a group fitness class, or do a quick weight training workout and take notice of how much better you feel both physically and mentally. Aim to make movement a part of your daily routine and enjoy the positive, scientifically-proven effects that exercise can have on your overall mental health. It's not just about a stronger body, it's also about a clearer and more resilient mind.

**Ready to move?** Our Fitness Advocates can help you get started with a personalized workout based on your fitness abilities and interests, an introduction to the gym equipment at the fitness center, or even one-on-one personal training. Learn more at [manateeyourchoice.com/fitness](http://manateeyourchoice.com/fitness) or call the Fitness Center at (941)748-4501 x3979.

me going on a stupid little daily walk  
For my stupid physical and mental health



You don't have to like it - just do it anyway.

## ICU

ICU is an awareness campaign designed to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and foster a workplace culture that supports emotional wellbeing.

The ICU Program makes the point that just as people with a physical injury or illness may require help through an Intensive Care Unit, people with a psychological/emotional injury or illness also need help to put them on a path to healing. Therefore, "ICU" becomes "I See You."

The ICU Program suggests three steps you can take to help those affected by mental health issues:

- Identify the signs of distress.
- Connect with the person experiencing distress.
- Understand the way forward together.

You CAN help make a difference! Visit [manateeyourchoice.com/ICU](http://manateeyourchoice.com/ICU) to learn more and to watch a five-minute video that teaches employees about emotional wellness and how to connect with distressed peers at the workplace who may need support .

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Understanding the way forward together can be as simple as having a conversation with a co-worker or suggesting that they call the LAMP line to inquire about Manatee County Government's mental health benefits and resources.

**CONFIDENTIAL LAMP LINE:  
(941) 741-2995**



Financial concerns are one of the most common sources of stress. Not only does it cause anxiety and worry but it can also hurt your relationships. SmartDollar can help you take back control of your finances and is a FREE benefit available to all MCG employees. It is a Web based portal that provides education, tools and a step-by-step plan to help you create a budget, get out of debt, and plan for the future. It's time to make your money work for you!

Sign up for free at [smardollar.com/enroll/manatee3320](https://smardollar.com/enroll/manatee3320)

## MEDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

**Serotonin**= “happy chemical”, regulates mood, emotions, appetite, and digestion.

**Norepinephrine** = “fight or flight chemical”, regulates emotions, attentiveness, sleep, and pain.

The 2 major types of medications that treat depression are **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)** and **Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)**. In addition to depressions some, but not all, of these medications can treat the following conditions: anxiety, bulimia, musculoskeletal pain, nerve pain, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder, and social phobia.

**SSRIs work by increasing the levels of serotonin, and include:**

- Citalopram (Celexa)
- Escitalopram (Lexapro)
- Fluoxetine (Prozac)
- Paroxetine (Paxil)
- Sertraline (Zoloft)

**SNRIs work by increasing the levels of serotonin and norepinephrine, and include:**

- Desvenlafaxine (Pristiq)
- Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
- Levomilnacipran (Fetzima)
- Venlafaxine (Effexor XR)

It may take 4 to 6 weeks and sometimes up to 8 weeks to begin seeing results from these medications. Please be patient with your treatment and realize that there is not a one size fits all treatment when dealing with mental health. Everyone responds different to medication treatment and it takes time to find the ideal medication for each individual.

Alma Leon, your Pharmacy Advocate, is available to answer any questions or concerns regarding treatment options and side effects. You can reach Alma at (941)748-4501 x6406 or [aleon@manateeyourchoice.com](mailto:aleon@manateeyourchoice.com).



We invest in a holistic wellbeing approach and offer programs and services in the areas of physical, emotional, financial, community, and career health. When each of these areas are well, our employees are able to bring their best selves to work and help us make Manatee County a premier place in which to live and work and play.

# TOBACCO USE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Did you know that adults with behavioral health conditions are more likely to use tobacco products? Approximately 25% of adults in the United States have behavioral health conditions, and they account for 40% of all adult cigarette smokers. Many people with behavioral health conditions turn to cigarettes to self-treat their symptoms and these smokers tend to smoke more cigarettes than people with no behavioral health conditions.



Smoking can cause an increase in behavioral health symptoms and make the treatment more complicated. Additionally, cigarette smoke can interact and interfere with many medications taken for behavioral health conditions. Smoking can decrease the concentration of medications such as antipsychotics and antidepressants in the blood, which can cause the medications to be less effective. The tar in cigarette smoke can affect the way the liver processes medications which can also cause the medications to not be as effective. This may result in higher doses of medication to get the desired results, increasing the side effects from the medications.

As if that wasn't enough, did you know that the most common causes of death of people with behavioral health conditions are heart disease, cancer, and lung disease - all of which are known to be caused by smoking?

When you are ready to quit, we are here to help. Reach out to Vanessa Rene at (941) 748-4501 x6418 or [vrene@manateeyourchoice.com](mailto:vrene@manateeyourchoice.com) for more information.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **May - Move Through May Challenge** ([click here to download](#))
- **June 11 - Survival Skills Wrap Up Session** (For people with diabetes). More dates available. Sign up at [manateeyourchoice.com/register](https://manateeyourchoice.com/register)
- **June 24 - T1 Listening Session** (for people with T1 diabetes). Sign up at [manateeyourchoice.com/register](https://manateeyourchoice.com/register)
- **June 30 - QE Labs Due**
- **July 1 - Quit Team** - a 4-week virtual program to build support and quit tobacco together. Contact Vanessa at x6418 for more info.





Effective 1/1/2021

# Talk to a doctor or counselor

by phone or video 24/7



Your Manatee YourChoice Medical benefit includes Teladoc, 24/7 access to U.S.-licensed doctors and counselors for non-emergency conditions like the flu, rashes, sinus issues, anxiety and more.

**Medical:**

- Ultimate and Best Plans \$25 copay
  - Better Plan 25% coinsurance after deductible
  - Basic Plan 50% coinsurance after deductible
- Teladoc Therapy**
- Follows your standard LAMP benefits (no more than a \$25 copay)

## With Teladoc you can:

- Talk to a medical doctor, therapist, or psychiatrist anytime, anywhere by phone or video
- Get a prescription sent to a pharmacy of your choice when medically necessary
- Save time and money by skipping the ER
- Send your Teladoc visit results to your primary care physician

## Talk to a doctor anytime

Call 1-855-TELADOC (835-2362) | Visit [Teladoc.com/Aetna](https://Teladoc.com/Aetna)

Download the app



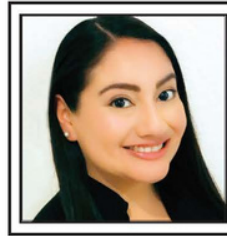


# YourChoice Advocates Are Available to Help!

**ALLISON MINARDI**

Worksite Wellness Manager  
aminardi@manateeyourchoice.com  
x3667

- Ergonomics & Desk Station set up
- Posture Assessments
- Pre-Work Stretch program

**ALMA LEON, PHARM D, RPH**

Pharmacy Advocate  
aleon@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6406

- Consultations
- Prior Authorizations
- Cost Saving Opportunities
- Compound Prescription Reimbursement
- Pharmacy or medication related questions

**CLARIBEL GILL, MS**

LAMP Counselor & Psychiatric Clinic Coordinator  
cgill@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6408

- Individual, couples, and family counseling.
- Schedules appointments for in-house counseling, Psychiatric ARNP, and assists with medication management calls.

**DEBBIE MISKELL, RN**

Nurse Advocate  
dmiskell@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6407

- Pre-authorizations
- Proper sleep, bone health, & heart health
- Healthy Pregnancy
- Provider Referrals
- Nurse Related Questions

**FLOREY MILLER, CDE, RD**

Nutrition & Diabetes Advocate  
fmiller@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6410

- Help managing diabetes
- Discuss nutrition and diet
- Assess risk for diabetes

**JENNIFER RUIZ, RN**

Nurse Advocate & Health First Coord.  
jruiz@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6409

- Nurse Advocacy
- Health First
- Bariatric Program Coordinator
- Healthy Weight Resources
- General Health Guidance
- Community Physician Referrals

**JULIE DRACKETT**

Fitness Coordinator  
jdrackett@manateeyourchoice.com  
x3966

- Learn stretches and strengthening moves to support mobility and decrease discomfort
- workspace ergonomic assessments
- Fitness Programs

**RANDI MCDOWALL, LCSW**

LAMP Supervisor/Care Coordinator  
rmcdowall@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6469

- Worksite programing regarding Behavioral Health Topics
- Help finding in-network Therapists/ Psychiatrists
- Coaching sessions for members participating in certain wellbeing programs

**VANESSA RENE, CPHT, RPHT**

Pharmacy & Tobacco Advocate  
vrene@manateeyourchoice.com  
x6418

- Tobacco Cessation Aids
- Prior Authorizations
- Vaccination Questions
- Compound Reimbursements
- Pharmacy Related Questions



**Visit us at [manateeyourchoice.com](http://manateeyourchoice.com)**