

## Learn to Throw a Lifeline

What comes to mind when you think of the word “health”? If you’re like most people, you probably associate health with some aspect of your physical self – but mental health is equally important to our overall well-being, and we sometimes forget that.

If we have a physical symptom such as a sickness or a pain, it’s a sign to get medical attention. But all too often, psychological pain goes unrecognized. It gets dismissed as a bad mood, blamed on external factors or begrudgingly accepted as “just the way life is.” Thanks to myths and stigmas, we are often reluctant to seek appropriate help for our mental pain.

### More than just feeling sad

Psychological pain can be confusing. Take the word “depression.” We use it in every day conversation to express sadness. We do this with other conditions too – we say “I almost had a heart attack” when we are startled. Few would confuse a startle reaction with a real heart attack, but many people make the mistake of confusing depression with sadness.

Sadness is a real human emotion and an appropriate response to difficult life events. It is generally temporary. Depression in the clinical sense is a more serious illness that can’t be willed away. The CDC estimates that one in 10 U.S. adults suffers from depression. Untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide.



**Depression is treatable and treatment is quite effective.** But people who suffer from depression often need intervention by a spouse, friend or family member to get that help.

Most homes have First Aid kits in case an accident occurs. It would be great if families equipped their homes with first aid kits for mental health too – by learning the signs of depression and throwing a lifeline to people we love when we spot problems.

It starts with recognizing the symptoms. These often include:

- Feeling sad or "empty"
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious or guilty
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Feeling very tired
- Inability to concentrate
- Inability to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Overeating, or not eating at all
- Thoughts of suicide or attempts of suicide.

If you or a family member is depressed or just deeply sad, why not get help? As a Member of the EAP, **your benefits include access to a counselor 24/7/365** – just pick up the phone!