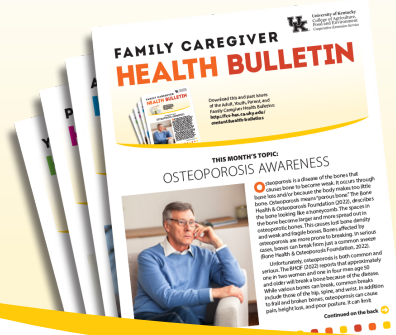




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



JUNE 2023

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

EMOTIONAL HEALTH: SEEKING THERAPY FOR OLDER ADULTS



Experiencing anxiety and depression related to life changes and transitions associated with aging can be heartbreaking for many older adults and their family members. If such issues have you or a loved one feeling down for an extended period, there may be something more serious going on. Taking care of emotional health is important. When ignored or left untreated, poor mental health can lead to confusion, decreased concentration, cognitive and physical decline, heart disease, issues with sleep and nutrition, noncompliance with medications, increased risk of infection, and increased risk of suicide.

Continued on the next page →



Depression and anxiety are not a normal part of aging. Mental health services can enhance life quality and independence.

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According to Matthia Kelley, a registered nurse and director of Senior Life Solutions at Bluegrass Community Hospital, risk factors for being emotionally frail include:

- Physical limitations
- Social isolation
- Fear of leaving home
- Traumatic events
- Loss of loved ones
- Family stress
- Chronic health issues
- Lacking self-worth and/or purpose
- Feeling hopeless
- Anxiety
- Feeling sad or blue for more than two weeks
- Changes in appetite
- Loss of energy
- Adjusting to a new environment
- Feeling fearful
- Loss of independence
- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy

According to the American Psychological Association, acknowledging and addressing mental health issues can enhance overall health and well-being. Accessing mental health services can lower the number of doctor visits, medical procedures, and medication use.

Therapy services specific to older adults are provided in a variety of settings including health-care facilities, community-based organizations, long-term care facilities, hospice, private practice, and telehealth. Therapists may work independently or as part of a team to be sure the most comprehensive care is provided.

If encouraging a loved one to seek therapy, Kelley reminds family members to be patient, non-judgmental, and supportive. It is important to let a struggling family member know that you recognize their struggles and that you care. To discuss therapy with a loved one, Kelley has the following recommendations:



- Pick a private place.
- Choose a time that your family member might be more receptive to talking.
- Listen to your family member.
- Understand potential fear and/or resistance.
- Recognize that you cannot force someone to go to therapy.

Most older adults experience positive emotional well-being and mental health. But it is an important reminder that depression and anxiety are not a normal part of aging. Accessing mental health services can enhance life quality and independence.

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- American Psychological Association. (2023). Psychology and Aging. Retrieved 4/14/23 from <https://www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/guides/psychology-and-aging>
- Matthia, K. (2023, March). Emotional Health. Presentation for the Lexington, Kentucky Aging Consortium. Matthia Kelley, BSN, RN, Program Director Senior Life Solutions at Bluegrass Community Hospital.

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