



Ten Facts About Mental Health and Aging

1. Mental health problems are not a normal part of aging.

- While older adults may experience many losses, deep sadness that lingers may signal clinical depression. Similarly, an anxiety disorder is different from normal worries.
- One in four American adults have a diagnosable mental disorder during any one year.
- About 6% of older adults have a diagnosable depressive illness.

2. Mental health is as important as physical health.

- Good mental health contributes greatly to an overall feeling of well-being.
- Untreated mental health disorders in older adults can lead to diminished functioning, substance abuse, poor quality of life, and increased mortality.
- Research shows mental illness can slow healing from physical illnesses.

3. Healthy older adults can continue to thrive, grow and enjoy life!

- Reading, walking and socializing are just a few of the activities that many individuals enjoy at any age. Exercising your mind and body and maintaining social connections are good for your mental health, too!

4. Mental health problems are a risk for older adults, regardless of history.

- While some adults go through life managing a chronic mental illness, mental health problems also can appear late in life.
- Sometimes mental health deteriorates in response to a stroke, Parkinson's, cancer, arthritis or diabetes, and even some medications.
- Older adults without a history of substance abuse may abuse medications, alcohol or drugs.

5. Suicide is a risk among older adults.

- Older adults have the highest suicide rate in the country. Those aged 85 and over have the highest suicide rate; those aged 75-84 have second highest.
- Older adults' suicide attempts are more lethal. For those 65 and older, there is one suicide for every four attempts compared to one suicide for every 20 attempts for all other age groups.