

Healthy Life Minute: Let's Talk Transcript

Rachel: Hi, I'm Rachel Wright.

Stephanie: And I'm Stephanie Reed.

Rachel: Welcome to a special edition of the Healthy Life Minute. Normally on these segments, we share quick tips to help you eat well, get active and stay healthy all in a minute or less but today our topic is a little more complex. May is Mental Health Awareness month, so we have Stephanie Reed here with us. She is one of our healthy life navigators, and she has a background in mental health. So, what are we talking about when we talk about mental health?

Stephanie: Well basically when we talk about our mental health, we're talking about the cognitive, the behavioral and the emotional. It's kind of how we think, how we feel, how we act and how that all goes together. Hopefully in a good, healthy way, but sometimes there are some things that happen that cause one or the other or a few pieces of the puzzle just to be a little out of place so that's kind of what we're talking about is kind of what's our level of those things and how are they working together for us.

Rachel: I feel like there is sometimes a stigma around mental health and that people aren't always comfortable talking about it, but why is it so important that we kind of push past that and move beyond the stigma?

Stephanie: Exactly, and like you said that is so important and most of what it is, is really I think the stigma is people feeling alone, like they're different or something is wrong with me because I'm not doing the things I feel like I should be doing. But in actuality, it's not a difference, it's actually very similar for most of us. We're all in that together, and just like we have varying levels of physical health, we kind of have varying levels of mental health as well so it's really important to keep a check on that and understand that not necessarily just because maybe something is different that doesn't always mean, I'm diagnosed with depression or I'm diagnosed with anxiety. You don't have to wait to that point to talk about it or to get help or reach out or to get support, whatever the case may be or whatever is going on. So, just like your physical health, it is so important to be mindful and to talk about those things with other people because really it makes us more the same than we are different.

Rachel: So, what I feel like I'm hearing is that we all experience mental health, and it's something we all have, the same way we have our physical health. What are some things that can negatively impact mental health?

Stephanie: Some of the most common things I talk about as a healthy life navigator are first the physical. Are you getting enough exercise, are you getting enough rest and your diet, things like are you eating fresh fruit and vegetables or is it a lot of processed foods, a lot of fast foods? That can definitely weigh on our mental health and emotional well-being and then there's our emotions and that's a big part of it, too. Sadness, happiness and all the in-between, kind of

figuring out where we are with that and being mindful of really noticing “how am I feeling?” and not just putting your head down and moving forward every day. Circumstances can have a lot to do with it. Is work really stressful, home stressful, has somebody lost their job, did somebody lose a family member, have you lost a pet? All kinds of different situations definitely impact your mental health and emotional well-being and then there are conditions and there’s a difference in kind of experiencing circumstantial depression or anxiety with a route cause that you can point out and then having a diagnosis of generalized anxiety, generalized depression or major depression disorder, that might not necessarily have a reason that you can pin point but it’s there. Support is so important and a relationship with your doctor and all those kinds of things definitely go into that as well.

Rachel: That makes a lot of sense and thank you for sharing all of those different factors. I know that once a year, we are encouraged to go out and get our physical and check in with our doctor on our physical health. Is there something similar we should be doing for our mental health?

Stephanie: Yes, exactly. Just the same as we recommend keeping up with your doctor with your physical health, you should definitely let your doctor know about your emotional health as well. Any changes, any differences, it is so important. A lot of people think, no I don’t need to bother my doctor until I can’t get out of bed or I’m crying all day every day or just think that they need to wait until the most extreme circumstances to talk to their doctor, but that’s not at all the case. The same with same with the physical, something that’s coming on that you know it’s different, hopefully you have a relationship with your doctor that you can share the mental health elements as well, you can go in when you’re getting your yearly physical and when he asks how you’re doing, tell him. Openly and honestly, they’re not just asking to check the box, they’re asking because they want to help and mental health is just as important to talk about as that physical health component.

Rachel: If you notice that maybe you were feeling a little off, I think that was something you talked a lot about, not waiting until it’s such an extreme situation, but if you are kind of starting to notice something it’s different, what do you recommend for people and where can they go to find resources or support?

Stephanie: The doctor is number one a great resource. If you’re not ready or not comfortable with that and you happen to be one of our Mohawk employees, spouses, all that good stuff, we do have Employee Assistance that is available, and that’s a wonderful place to start as well. They have all kinds of varying needs that they can meet from financial needs to legal advice, all kinds of things, but also as far as relating to mental health month is that you do get with your insurance six free face-to-face visits each calendar year with a counselor of your choosing, you just give them your zip code, and they give you a list of people that take it and then you can try that out. And like I said, you don’t have to wait until it’s extreme and unmanageable to reach out for support. It’s always a good idea to try it out, see the counselor, see how it goes because you can’t lose anything since it’s completely free. So, that’s a great option for support, and then the other part of course for me that’s near and dear to my heart is the Healthy Life Team. For

me, I'm mostly telephonic so you'd just call us on the phone, make an appointment the same as you would for healthy eating or whatever, and ask to speak a behavioral health coach, and we would be happy to help you out and see what's going on and see what other resources we might be able to come up with together to get you where you want to go.

Rachel: Coming up later this month we'll share another video where we highlight two really common conditions with mental health and those are anxiety and depression, so make sure you're keeping an eye out for that and checking back in to see those. And while you're here, make sure you're visiting myMohawk regularly for more health tips, business news, product features and more.