

Suicide prevention at Lake Tahoe: Mental health screenings, reducing stigma

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Special to the Bonanza



Advocating for yourself and your physical and mental needs is one of the most important things you can do.

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HELP IS A CALL OR CLICK AWAY

If you or anyone you know is experiencing mental health distress or thoughts of self-harm, please call the anonymous Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a trained counselor 24/7. For further resources, please visit tahoelifeline.org.

TAHOE-TRUCKEE, Calif. — With all of the discussion around mental health that is present today, why does the idea of seeking mental health help still cause such great unrest? It is likely linked with personal biases and judgments toward expressing a personal mental health concern.

Compare this to scheduling an appointment with the dentist. It is recommended that we visit the dentist twice a year, for good health and maintenance. Why don't we take the same effort to get professional evaluations of our mental health and wellness?

Perhaps, the age old adage of "ignorance is bliss" applies here, and not taking the time to assess mental wellness helps us to remain ignorant of our true state of being.

As people, we all desire acceptance and have a primitive fear of rejection. These biases can go so far as even our personal biases toward ourself.

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One way to counter this is to figure out your reluctance toward receiving a mental health screening or reaching out for help.

Are you afraid of how people will see you? Are you afraid of the implications of even receiving a mental health screening?

By taking the time to be introspective and consider personal resistances to the ideas of mental health help, one can begin to move forward in a positive way.

Mental health professionals recognize the normalcy of a certain level of anxiety and depression. It is important to be able to recognize and understand healthy levels and how to cope with unhealthy levels in ways such as requesting a mental health screening or evaluation.

Therapy is a safe place to connect with a caring, open, trained professional. It gives you the opportunity to focus a full hour on yourself.

As a culture, we are deprived of self-focus. We are taught to work hard and work through difficult times. But therapy can help you to embark on self-exploration and create a state of positive mental wellness.

Mental health screenings provide:

The hope of connecting with a caring provider that is concerned and nonjudgmental.

The hope of connecting with someone that senses the difficulties you may be experiencing in life.

The knowledge that this individual can connect you to resources and provide coping mechanisms to aid in achieving a level of mental health you are aspiring to.

Full confidentiality.

While mental health screenings are widely offered, the screening is just that- a screening- and just the first step on the road to mental health and wellness.

Advocating for yourself and your physical and mental needs is one of the most important things you can do for yourself and our future generations.

A shift in our discussion around mental health will allow us to encourage the future generations to better communicate their mental health needs and remove the shame from the discussion around mental health.

Sarah McClarie is the facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition. And , Outreach Facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Task Force. Contact her at smcclarie@ttusd.org or by calling 530-582-2560.

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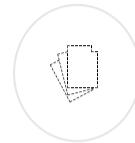


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