A Healthy Mind survey revealed that nearly two out of five Americans rated their mental health as only fair or poor. More than one in four reported they anticipated experiencing more stress at the start of 2023, up from one in five last year.

The good news is that 29 percent of American adults indicated they’d adopt new year’s resolutions related to their mental health and increase from last year. Some of these resolutions included exercising more, meditating, seeing a therapist, or focusing on spirituality.

On Wednesday, January 18 at noon, The Anti-Stigma Coalition hosts a Facebook Live event titled: Mental Wellness Strategies for the New Year. The discussion is about how to make mental health a priority in 2023.

“...”

I actively focus on doing my part to help family and friends to get to a state of being healthy mentally and to remain there. It’s important to me because when I suffered from depression, I didn't have the help that I needed for a long time, and I also didn't have the tools necessary to find help. It wasn’t until I received the support and the tools that I was able to reach a healthy state and for that I am forever grateful.

Carlette Bradley
Life Coach
Panelists include Sawrie Becker, life coach and owner, SBB Life Coaching, Carlette Bradley, learning and development consultant, motivational speaker, and coach, and Jim Mollosky, Owner, The Runners Movement and Excelsior Orthopedics.

The event is free and open to the public. Karl Shallowhorn, Mental Health Advocates, is the moderator.

Becker says the new year brings new opportunities to improve our mental health and well-being.

“Before you jump into those opportunities, take a moment to reflect on the past year and acknowledge yourself for three things that you did well and feel good about. Looking ahead, consider creating an ‘Intention’ rather than a resolution, for a specific area of your life that you would like to impact, such as career, health, finances, family, or education,” she said.

An intention implies action and acting helps you feel powerful and creates results! Take an action right now and write down three “Intentions” you will focus on in 2023.

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Karl Shallowhorn, Mental Health Advocates of WNY and past chair of the Anti-Stigma Coalition, was interviewed by WKBW-TV, WBFO, and other media outlets about reactions to Damar Hamlin’s injury.

“Anyone who is prone to anxiety or depression could be triggered, and trauma can be experienced by anyone,” he said.

Karl encourages everyone to reach out for help if they need it and assured viewers that there is no shame in doing so. Finding people in your life that you can talk to is very important along with allowing yourself to unplug from social media can help relieve stress. He explained how the constant funnel of information received from social media can add to stress.

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According to Elizabeth Hole, LCSW, director of outpatient operations, Horizon Health Services, as a society, we have faced three years of unprecedented difficulty sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus on wellness is more important than ever.

Caring for your individual wellness starts with making small changes. Find time each day for focused breathing and quiet meditation. Think of it as a mini-vacation for your mind.

“During this time, pay attention to your breath and allow your thoughts to come and go without judgment,” Hole said. “It can be difficult to prioritize this, so consider starting this practice first thing each morning, or when you get into bed at night.”

Stigma continues to be a barrier for individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

Carlette Bradley, a panelist for the upcoming Facebook Live, believes there are many reasons that people neglect their mental health.

“It’s been my personal experience and through helping loved ones that some folks still struggle with the stigma attached to mental illness, some just don’t realize that they need help because the signs have been ignored for so long, and a lot of people agonize over the cost of getting help and/or the obvious disparities in their communities,” she said.

As an antidote to stigma, Hole suggests considering sharing your mental health struggles with others. If you aren’t facing mental health challenges, listen to others with an open mind and ask open-ended questions about what you can do to help.

She suggests saying ‘I’ve noticed you’ve been quiet lately. How are you? What can I do to support you?’ It’s also important to normalize seeking professional help and encourage us and those around us to receive support.

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Why is it important to focus on your mental health?

Becker says that focusing on our mental health means that we are taking responsibility for the quality and wholeness of our lives. It means we are being proactive in what life brings our way instead of reactive to challenges and difficulties which may help to reduce stress. Focusing on our own mental health also sets an example to others who are important to us about how to live a happy, whole, and stress-free life.

According to Bradley, focusing on our mental health gives space for us to realize that we need help, seek help, and then to get the necessary help. When there is less focus on our mental health, there are more instances of mental health emergencies.

“At the end of the day I believe that there are three main entities that we engage with, and they should all have a mental health focus. That includes church (houses of worship), school, and work,” Bradley said.

She also says more education is needed for family members and caretakers around symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments.

1. Be kind to yourself.
Change can be hard and often takes time. Allow yourself to have feelings and forgive yourself for mistakes.

2. Make sleep a priority.
Studies have found that sleep and mental health are connected. In fact, approximately 65 to 90% of people with major depression also experience a sleep problem. This year, try to go to sleep a little bit earlier every night and give your body the rest it needs.

3. Limit your screen time.
Spending too much time on your phone or computer can impact your quality of sleep, your relationships and even lead to feelings of depression and anxiety. Be conscious of how much time you’re spending online and the impact it has on your mental health and adjust, if needed.

4. Learn more about mental health.
One of the best ways to improve your mental health is to understand it. There are online resources available that provide information about common mental health and substance use conditions or you can talk to medical professional to learn more about your specific situation. You can also take a Mental Health First Aid course which teaches people how to understand, identify and respond to signs and symptoms of common mental health and substance use challenges.
As a society, we have faced three years of unprecedented difficulty sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus on wellness is more important than ever. Caring for your individual wellness starts with making small changes. Find time each day for focused breathing and quiet meditation. Think of it as a mini vacation for your mind. During this time, pay attention to your breath and allow your thoughts to come and go without judgment. It can be difficult to prioritize this, so consider starting this practice first thing each morning, or when you get into bed at night.

Elizabeth Hole
Director of Outpatient Operations, Horizon Health Services
We recently spoke with Mike Telesco, owner of Telesco Creative Group and a founding member of the Anti-Stigma Coalition.

Why did your organization become a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition?

Telesco Creative Group was asked in 2015 to help consult on an anti-stigma campaign centered around mental illness. We were just going to one meeting...but we never left. The cause and the people around the table inspired us to help make a change in our community. It was a real grassroots effort and we all rolled up our sleeves and just made this happen. A five-year campaign has turned into 7+ years and we are still going strong. There is still work to be done, but I believe, we are helping to change perceptions, language and actions around mental health and illness in our community.

How are people with mental health challenges impacted by stigma?

Stigma is a barrier to treatment for anyone in need or unsure if they even need help. Fear of people looking at you differently. Fear of someone thinking you are less able to do a job. Fear that you will look weak. Sean McDermott said it best this week after the Damar Hamlin health emergency and a grueling week after, seeking help “is not a sign of weakness. If anything, it is a sign of strength.”

How does your company support mental wellness?

We try all kinds of things. Flexible schedules, hybrid options, an office pool table, open conversations, and this year, we are starting a 7th-inning stretch at 3pm every day. I think most of us are aware of the goals of the campaign since we are all very vested in it and being part of the campaign keeps the doors to conversations open. We try our best. We are there for each other. And hopefully, when someone is having a bad day, we can listen.

“There is still work to be done, but I believe, we are helping to change perceptions, language and actions around mental health and illness in our community.”

Please consider becoming a member of our Coalition at letstalkstigma.org/membership.
**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

1. **SHARE EMAIL NEWSLETTERS**
   Share the monthly newsletter to your team, Request PDF to print for distribution.

2. **SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**
   Share posts to your professional and personal networks, Help promote Facebook Live events.
   
   - @talkstigma
   - Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition

3. **REQUEST MATERIALS TO DISTRIBUTE**
   Brochures, Conversation Starter Cards, Counter Displays, Pop-up Banners, Add logos and graphics to your website or other collateral.
   
   - karen@LetstalkStigma.org

**WHERE TO FIND US**

**NEW MOBILE DISPLAY**
Our new information display is up at the Buffalo Central Library!

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**JANUARY 18, 7 PM-8:30 PM:**
NAMI Family Support Group

**JANUARY 21, 3 PM-5 PM:**
Mental Health Advocates Writing & Well-Being Workshop

**JANUARY 25, 9AM-12:30PM:**
Spectrum Health and Human Services

Visit [letstalkstigma.org/events](http://letstalkstigma.org/events) for more

**ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION FOUNDING MEMBERS**
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