

For some, getting help from a mental health clinician may be an easy step to take. There are a variety of reasons why individuals seek mental health care, including learning to develop new coping skills, improving our ability to tolerate difficult emotions, such as intense guilt, sadness or anxiety, or helping with the mourning of a loss. For many, however, getting mental health care is a difficult step to take. During this time of crisis, we would like to encourage you to take advantage of the many mental health resources available to you. But, first, we'd like to address some of the common misconceptions which might stop individuals, who could potentially benefit the most, from seeking mental health care.

- **Getting mental health care is evidence that “I am crazy”:** Getting help to learn more about yourself and improve your ability to cope with a difficult situation or emotion does not mean you are crazy, but rather evidence that you are being responsible and healthy. Getting help is a positive coping skill that is useful to apply. It is true that mental health clinicians treat individuals who are not in touch with reality, but this is only a minority of patients being treated.
- **I am not ill enough to get mental health care:** You do not need to be experiencing a mental illness in order to seek mental health care. Frequently, individuals benefitting from mental health care do not meet criteria for a mental health illness. You do not need to wait until you are suffering in order to get care.
- **I will not be able to afford mental health care:** In NYC and within the Mount Sinai Health system, there are many treatment options, some free. Most insurance companies cover mental health care with co-pays usually from \$0-\$30. If you don't have insurance, many providers can see you on a sliding scale fee depending on your income. If you have concerns about cost, you can speak with the mental health provider and they should be able to work with you and find an arrangement that works.
- **I am taking the space of someone who really needs it:** Remember, your mental health is important. When you come in for an initial consultation, the clinician will recommend how frequently you should come in and the length of treatment. Sometimes, if clinically indicated, mental health treatment can be short-term. And the more you take care of yourself, the better off you will be in being able to care for others.
- **I do not have the time to get care:** It is important to prioritize our mental health care. In the end, feeling emotionally well and confident saves time because you can become more efficient in dealing with difficult matters.
- **Does this mean that I have to be in mental health care forever?** For a majority of individuals, life-long care is not necessary and not recommended. As a matter of fact, most treatments are time-limited. With mental health care, your interactions with family and friends can improve, enhancing your ability to derive support from those relationships when you need it.

- **I do not like depending on others, I can take care of myself:** Relying on another person for some support does not make you dependent or “needy.” Even if you are seeking mental health care, you are still taking care of and working on yourself, just getting some support and guidance while doing so. Even the most independent, capable person should sometimes rely on others for help.
- **As a health care worker, I’m more comfortable taking care of others:** It is difficult to switch to being cared for, if you are usually the one caring for others. But, remember that getting care for yourself will allow you to better care for others as well.
- **I am concerned that my employer will find out that I am getting mental health care:** Your employer or supervisor does not have access to your medical record. Also, Mount Sinai employees can request to have a “break-the-glass” added to their charts which provides added security and creates a record when anyone tries to access your chart. You arrange for this by directly contacting EPIC. In NYS, mental health patient notes are treated with even more protection than other non-mental health patient notes. Mental health professionals are aware that they are not allowed to disclose any information about the care that you are receiving without your consent.
- **What if I am forced to take medications?:** Mental health providers want to be your partners in care. Any decisions about taking medications or not will be made in conjunction with you.
- **I am afraid that I will learn something about myself that frightens me:** It can be quite therapeutic to learn that even those aspects of yourself that you dislike the most, are not as bad as you imagine them to be. Your mental health provider has been trained to help you understand why these emotions appear frightening to you. In the end, you may discover that those thoughts or feelings you fear the most are commonly experienced, and that having those emotions just makes you human.
- **I once saw a therapist/psychiatrist and did not have a good experience:** Like in any relationship, sometimes the patient-therapist relationship is not a good fit. We encourage you to not allow a past experience discourage you from trying to find someone else who may ultimately trust and find can be helpful to you.

Whatever your reasons for delaying or not getting support from a mental health professional, we encourage you to think about those reasons and try taking the first step towards getting support during this time of crisis.