

Lead Story

Mind Your Hearts: How Stress, Anxiety Can Lead to Heart Disease



February is Heart Health Month



It's a feeling we've all had. Something sets us off, and before we know it, our blood pressure is rising and our heart pounding. It's our body's response to stress.

"That's good, that's what we want. We want that fight or flight response," said Dr. Sharyn Comeau, a Monarch psychiatrist, who explains it's a natural reaction, but understanding what is causing it and how to react is crucial.

A Harvard Medical School report reveals that many studies have linked heart disease and depression, but heart problems may also go hand in hand with anxiety. Several studies have shown that

about a quarter of people with cardiovascular disease suffer from some kind of anxiety and, in some cases, the anxiety can worsen the heart condition.

Along with Valentine's Day, February marks American Heart Month, a great time to commit to a healthy lifestyle that can lead to a lifetime of heart health and mental wellness.

Researchers have reported, for example, that heart patients who have generalized anxiety disorder — constant, pervasive worrying, even about mundane matters — are more likely to have heart attacks and serious heart problems than heart patients who don't. They're also more likely to engage in behaviors that accelerate heart problems.

"It will start with not sleeping, some people will smoke more, they might get palpitations, they're very short with others, easily angered," said Dr. Comeau. All signs of stress, which can lead to other risky behaviors, she explained.

In addition to stress and anxiety, smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol are the leading risk factors for heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S.

Other lifestyle choices, such as a lack of exercise, poor diet, weight gain and substance use, are also major risk factors. While more studies need to be done to show the direct link between stress and heart disease, Dr. Comeau said there is undoubtedly an indirect correlation, because stress leads to increased adrenaline flow. Regular triggers from a job or challenging relationships for example, can keep adrenaline at perpetually elevated levels.

"It's the adrenaline that causes the heart to pump faster, and that's the release of this constant fight or flight state that causes the heart to work harder," Dr. Comeau explained.

Monarch offers individual and group therapy sessions that include how to cope with stress and anxiety. The Stress Reduction session focuses on mindfulness, how to identify triggers and how to respond to them in a healthy way. Studies have shown meditation alone can reduce blood pressure.

Although medication can be necessary in some cases, Dr. Comeau also encourages yoga and other practices that teach positive thinking to keep our minds, and ultimately, our hearts at ease.

SAVE THE DATE: *Join Dr. Sharyn Comeau during a live Twitter chat about the link between heart disease and mental health at 12 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 28.*

Headlines

Are You Feeling SAD? Monarch Expert Shares Ways to Cope With the “Winter Blahs”



Ever find yourself dreading the time change each fall? Do the long, cold winter nights seem endless?

If you feel this way year after year, you might be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. According to the Cleveland Clinic, a small percentage of the population — about 4 to 6 percent — may have SAD during the winter months.

“It has to do with the loss of sunlight,” says Judith Chappell, MA, LCAS, LPC, CSI, CSOTS, a behavioral health therapist at Monarch and clinical operations manager in the Stanly office. “I have patients who will tell me, ‘Every year at this time, I get the blahs and I don’t

understand this.' When the time changes and we're spending more of our waking hours in darkness, people can be affected."

This can happen especially if you enjoy being outdoors, explained Chappell. "If you're a person who's been used to being outside all summer, the dark and cold can really make a big difference. For some people, it's just really a stark contrast."

If you're wondering how to combat these "blahs" we sometimes feel during the fall and winter months, here are some tips:

- Increase natural sunlight. Chappell recommends bundling up and going outside for a walk or run, for about 30 minutes or so. Around 10 a.m. seems to be the optimal time of day to get the most sunlight. And increasing the amount of time you exercise, Chappell points out, is always a good idea.
- When you're inside, sit near a window as often as you can. There are also therapy lights available, which some patients find are helpful.
- Learn to enjoy the winter weather. Go out with friends whether it's light or dark.
- Stay on a regular routine, keeping your sleeping habits the same, and choose healthful foods. Eating too many sweets or carbohydrates can increase SAD symptoms.
- Talk with your doctor about whether taking a Vitamin D supplement is right for you.
- For people who run year-round, Chappell recommends making sure to wear reflective gear if running in the early morning or evening hours.

"I have bright light in my office, and it's awesome," Chappell said.

If you suspect you have SAD, Chappell says, don't try to self-diagnose the condition, but check in with a counselor or therapist. "It's always a good idea to do an assessment of what's happening, and make sure the symptoms you're having are not clinical depression."

For those who need support, Monarch's Open Access service allows individuals who are new to Monarch to simply walk-in for the first visit. For details or to schedule an appointment, call Monarch at (866) 272-7826.

To see a series of other related tips from our experts, [Click Here](#) to check out our January Facebook video campaign, "Battling the Winter Blues."

Let's Celebrate: National Caregiver's Day is February 17



Whether you are a caregiver by trade within our organization or by circumstance and are taking care of a loved one, it can be a highly stressful and thankless job, but one of the most important roles we will ever take on in our lives.

On any given week, Monarch's more than 825 direct support professionals dedicate 33,000 hours as caregivers. They are the selfless team of men and women across the state that ensure the people we support live their best lives at Monarch. And with National Caregiver's Day just around the corner on Feb. 17, we take the opportunity to extend our sincerest gratitude for all that they do and share two inspirational perspectives from our very own team members.

One of those caregivers is Sheila Brown who has worked in the healthcare industry for more than 31 years. After graduating from college, Brown took a tour of Stanly Industrial Services and recalls she was impressed with the programs and services offered. "I submitted an application all those years ago and the rest is history," she says.

Brown, a residential team leader, currently oversees Moss 1 home in Albemarle as the qualified

professional and says what has always inspired her is seeing the people she works with grow, get married, get jobs, or find an apartment.

“Every challenge society says the people we support can’t overcome is what inspires me to come to work every day. I make sure they do accomplish everything they set out to do,” added Brown.

Yvonne Daugherty is one of our recent Dream Maker Award recipients and shares that some of the most memorable moments in her career have been bringing families together. “I helped one of the people we support connect with her twin brother after 20 years of no communication,” she says.

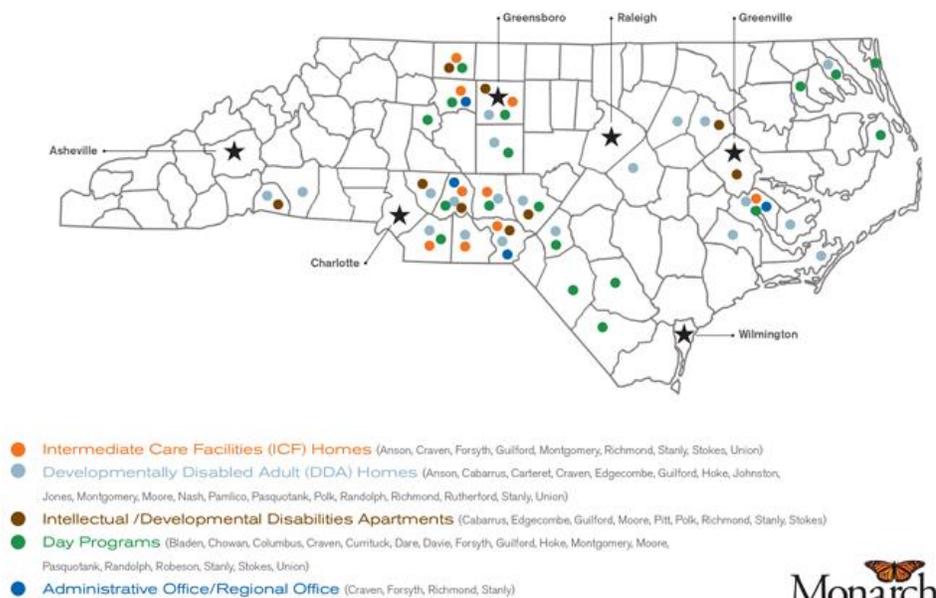
As a behavioral specialist at Parkland home in Forest City, Daugherty has worked with Monarch for 11 years. “I truly miss the people we support when I am not at work. They all have goals they want to achieve and seeing them feel the accomplishment when those goals are met brings me so much joy,” adds Daugherty.

So in light of amazing people like Shelia Brown and Yvonne Daugherty on this special day, be sure to thank those who you know work in a direct care capacity for all that they do, and please know that Monarch appreciates you always!

Inside Monarch

REC Services Gets New Name to Align With Healthcare Nomenclature

Monarch Service Locator Map
Long-Term Services and Supports



11/2016

Long-Term Services and Supports is new standardized industry term. As the healthcare industry becomes more sophisticated, Monarch will make another move toward more closely aligning the organization with the industry.

Our services now known as Residential Employment and Community or REC, now have a new name: Long-Term Services and Supports or LTSS.

The mental health and human services system continues to migrate toward operating more like the “physical” healthcare system, as it has long been excluded from services offered in mainstream health insurance plans. Mental health, psychiatric and residential long-term services for people who live in group homes, attend day programs, and vocational workshops are among the services that have always been carved out from Medicaid and other health

plans, creating the two separate systems we know today; one for human services and behavioral health, the other for physical health.

“That has created the system that manages the funding, the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), for providers like Monarch,” said Blake Martin, executive vice president and chief development officer at Monarch. “We have been proactively working to develop a systematic integration of health care services that will appropriately join or combine behavioral health with physical health. It’s important that these services are connected because we should focus on treating the whole person and the whole body – and not segregate care.”

According to a report by OPEN MINDS, Medicaid was the first to initiate the term LTSS. The term covers a broad group of medical and non-medical services that help with daily living activities, such as hygiene and nutrition, to people with mental, cognitive and physical disabilities.

“As a company, we want to position ourselves to be the leader in the industry in the North Carolina market for behavioral or mental health services, we want to make sure that our nomenclature is correct,” said Martin.

As Monarch moves toward an integrated model working with more health systems, it’s crucial that the organization is using the same language as those systems so that everything from billing to data exchanges, meetings and other common practices are standardized as much as possible.

“Long-Term Services and Supports really just makes more sense. It’s nationally accepted, it’s regionally accepted, it’s industry accepted and it more accurately highlights what we do and how we talk about what we do,” Martin explained.

Michelle Ibrahim, Lee PSR Gets Key to the City of Sanford for National Night Out Event



Each year, Michelle Ibrahim, program manager of Monarch's Lee and Harnett Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSRs) programs, and the participants of the PSR in Sanford plan and host National Night Out, an event that promotes safety awareness, community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. Recently, the site coordinators of the 2016 event received a special recognition.

In a recent ceremony, the City of Sanford recognized Ibrahim, site coordinator for the NNO event held at Monarch's PSR in Lee County. She was among five people honored by the city for their NNO efforts. The City of Sanford is home to 31 NNO events and has been recognized as second in the nation for its outstanding participation in 'America's Night Out Against Crime.'

National Night Out is an annual community building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood connections to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. Neighborhoods across the nation host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and other various community events with safety demonstrations, seminars, and visits from emergency personnel.

Since 2012, the people supported at Lee PSR have helped to plan and take on active roles during the event, like distributing school supplies, and operating game and food stations.

National Night Out brings everyone from police officers, fire fighters and other first responders, to local businesses and other organizations together for a night out that families and the community can enjoy.

“It gets them more involved in the community, kind of breaks down some of those fears they may have of being in the community,” said Ibrahim, of how the event benefits the people supported at Lee PSR.

Ibrahim said many of the children who attend the event each year look forward to seeing the PSR participants, making the event that much more enjoyable for everyone involved.

“I see a lot of change from the first year from those (when the people we support) who didn’t want to run the games but are now like, ‘Do I get to run that game again this year?’ so it gives them more confidence and self-esteem to do things in their community with community members,” said Ibrahim.

This year, Ibrahim is coordinating with the City of Sanford to expand the event with a pre-National Night Out gathering to bring the community to Monarch’s Lee Psychosocial Rehabilitation for mental health awareness.

“Hopefully, it will bring more awareness and maybe, help build up the people we support and help break the stigma associated with mental illness,” said Ibrahim.

Sanford Mayor Chett Mann recognized Michelle Ibrahim, site coordinator and Lee/Harnett PSR program manager (pictured far left), as well as coordinators from other organizations as second in the nation out of 31 National Night Out sites.

Joint Commission Update: What We Need to Know



We have heard a lot about Joint Commission and its importance to Monarch. This national accreditation, which is one of the most recognized honors in the health care industry, will increase our reputation as an industry leader and help us to secure more private insurance pay sources and better pay rates for our services.

The mock survey visit in November helped us to determine some of the areas where we need to improve. But a team of Joint Commission surveyors will soon visit to decide if we meet the accreditation standards. The standard includes the “tracer” method, which uses our service plans and procedures to follow the experience of care, treatment or services for a number of people we support through Monarch’s health care delivery process. Staff performance and knowing company expectations are critical to the Joint Commission survey process. Surveyors will give us a 30-day notice and to prepare, we must continue to do our best work and follow all policies and procedures.

Monarch’s Infection Control Nurse Angie Bjorklund has been a key part of our Joint Commission accreditation team and is among a core group of staff members helping us to prepare for the surveyors’ visit. Bjorklund shared the following information below as reminder of what we need to know for the Joint Commission survey visit, and always:

Rights

How are the people we support rights and privacy maintained in our various locations/settings?

Safeguarding Protected Health Information (PHI) means keeping all PHI out of sight (review fact sheets/check in sheets/medical records secure); and providing for private rooms for assessments/meetings.

Suicide Precautions

- **How do you assess, monitor, and intervene for the people we support at risk for suicide?**
Suicide screening upon intake and anytime a person exhibits symptoms/signs of suicidal behavior or comments we would reassess.
- **Are staff trained and competent?**
Assessment trainings and “Getting it Right” Training is crucial.
- **What is your ongoing continuing education for staff caring for suicidal patients?**
Initial training with licensed clinician and initially and annually for non-licensed clinicians with “Getting it Right” training.

Infection Control

- **How do you monitor and address hand hygiene compliance for staff, families/visitors and the people we support?**
Monthly audits with staff and people we support; individualized plans for the people we support if handwashing has been identified as a goal for the person we support.
- **How do you educate the people we support regarding hand hygiene and infection prevention and control principles?**
Policy for staff, reminders for staff, visual cues (handwashing posters-for people we support)
- **How is this documented?**
If hand hygiene is identified as a goal on the treatment plan for the person we support, we document on the actual treatment plan.
- **Do you intervene if you see an issue (for example: If staff didn't perform hand hygiene after contact with a person supported, how would you handle?**
Talk with staff member, remind of hand hygiene policy at Monarch, goals of handwashing for the people we support (goal = perform hand hygiene after every identified opportunity).

Medication Management

- **What are high alert medications?**
Policy on SharePoint; High Alert Medications: Medications that bear a heightened risk of causing significant patient harm when they are used in error. Although mistakes may or may not be more common with these drugs, the consequences of an error are clearly more devastating to the people we support.
- **Do you provide education on medications for the people we support? How do you document it?**
Yes, we talk to the person we support about the medication given and document any education /updates in ECHO or notes. Training for staff members giving medications; Also part of the person specific training.
- **How do you know if you're competent to administer medications?**
You have successfully completed the Medication administration class.
- **What are look-alike-sound-alike medications?**
See medication poster for list of look-alike-sound-alike meds. These should be posted in the appropriate locations.

Words to avoid during the JC commission survey

- Usually
- Attempt
- Try
- Sometimes

Points to remember for continuous readiness

- Keep up the diligent EOC rounding.
- Speak to your own expertise.
- Give brief answers. Don't elaborate, or give opinions. Just answer what is asked; your practice speaks for itself!
- All hands on deck! Don't disappear or go to the staff area when the surveyor arrives at your location...this is your chance to shine.
- When talking with surveyors, groups of two are better than one.
- Say, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" instead of guessing. Refer to resources such as Sharepoint for policies/forms/Standard Operating Procedures or your manager.
- It's okay to look at hanging documents for answers (for example, if asked about high alert medications, you can show the surveyor the med room poster that you use for reference).
- If asked for a policy or document, refer to the hosts to assist you.
- Monthly fire extinguisher checks must be done at all sites during monthly rounds.
- Continue daily refrigerator/freezer temperature monitoring and recording.

- Complete all ESS training and assessments.
- Thorough and complete documentation.
- Waived testing—ensuring all controls are completed and documented as required.

More important Joint Commission information can be found in the [Hot Topics folder on SharePoint](#)

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Meet Maggie Edwards

Maggie Edwards, the administrative assistant at the front desk in the behavioral health office in Winston-Salem, greets everyone with a great big smile. A Monarch employee for three years, Maggie is known for providing exemplary customer service to the people we support and other visitors, and takes great pride in helping to create a positive and welcoming environment for all who walk into that office. Dr. Angela Adkins, clinical operations director for Forsyth and Davidson counties, recently received a letter about how wonderful Maggie is at what she does, and Adkins adds: “She is amazing and treats everyone with respect.”

What does a typical workday look like for you?

A typical day for me would be to open up the building! I hit the ground running right at 8 a.m. We have a walk-in clinic as well as appointments throughout the day; so many people we support find it beneficial to get here when we open. I schedule appointments, assist people supported with questions and concerns, answer phone calls, and I am also a source of information for staff. I do upkeep on staff schedules (to make sure everyone gets a lunch break).

What is the most important aspect of your role, and why?

I am the only person at our front desk so I see every person that comes in for any of our services. It is important to maintain a happy, warm composure when greeting anyone who comes through our doors. I am the first impression the people we support get when they come in. I take the time to listen to their goals, find out what services they are looking for, and find the best possible way to get them where they need to be.

What has been your most rewarding, or proudest moment, while working here?

It is hard for me to choose just one rewarding moment from my time spent at Monarch. It's satisfying for me when people tell me they have been through so much and are upset with the way they have been jerked around by other behavioral health facilities until they receive our services. It is heartwarming to hear that my being nice to them and taking a moment to listen has made their day better!

What do you enjoy when you aren't working?

When I am not at work, I enjoy spending time with my family, my cats (definitely a cat lady), and exercising. These activities help me to unwind from the everyday thing we call "life."

What movie or song best describes you?

A song that I would think describes me would be "[Walking on Sunshine](#)." I try to always keep a positive attitude with people supported as well as staff!

MONARCH IN THE NEWS

The Coastland Time – [Dare County Arts Council Leases the Power of Art](#)

Southern Pines Pilot – [Monarch 'Found Balls' Benefit Lives On](#)

The Robesonian – [Defeating Child Hunger Is A Challenge](#)