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The mental health crisis of moms: what you need to know

BY STATEPOINT

A new survey reveals that the mental health of American moms is going largely unattended, with many living under a near-constant state of stress and few seeking support to ease the burden.

The research, commissioned by MDLIVE, an Evernorth company and leading provider of virtual care services in the United States, finds that 33 percent of mothers feel stressed or overwhelmed by their responsibilities as a mom at least five days a week. Drivers of their stress and anxiety may include financial concerns, ripple effects of the pandemic, including the mental health crisis among teens, work responsibilities and being a caregiver simultaneously to both children and aging parents.

Yet, for many moms, the prospect of managing their mental health has become a source of stress in and of itself. For 37 percent of moms, concerns about their own mental health are among their biggest stressors, second only to finances (40 percent).

Possibly even more concerning is that 70 percent of moms admit to holding back their feelings and not telling their partner or family when they’re stressed, and 61 percent feel that they have no one to turn to or confide in for help.

“Our research shows that many moms are suffering in silence and not getting the support they need,” says Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, who brings more than two decades of direct practice experience to her role as behavioral health medical director at MDLIVE. “I cannot stress enough how important it is for them to prioritize their own well-being.”

To help moms manage their mental health, MDLIVE offers the following tips:

1. Prioritize self-care: Recognize that practicing self-care is not selfish. In addition to things like eating well, exercising, practicing good hygiene, getting enough sleep, and seeing a health care professional for preventive screenings and other care, self-care also means taking time to pursue hobbies or personal interests that bring you pleasure or relaxation, offer you a way to relax and unwind—activities you may have abandoned after having kids because it would mean time away from family responsibilities. Practicing self-care puts one in a better position to help care for others because your own well-being is in check.

2. Make time to cultivate relationships: Connecting with people who are important to you is essential to mental health. Make it a priority to spend time with partners, family, friends, colleagues, or anyone else who may be important to you, away from the house and kids, even if it’s just for a short period of time.

3. Seek help when struggling to manage stress and anxiety: If your emotional state is interfering with your daily life—if you’re having difficulty controlling your mood, withdrawing from loved ones, feeling fatigued, having trouble sleeping, lacking motivation, or frequently “zoning out”—it’s definitely time to seek professional help.

Acknowledging the importance of mental healthcare, many health plans and employers have expanded the resources available to their members and employers in recent years. New options include digital tools that can help with tracking mood, support meditation, help build life skills, and provide self-care advice. Additionally, telehealth visits with behavioral health professionals offer private, convenient, quality care quickly. For example, MDLIVE’s platform makes it easy to search for providers and schedule appointments with one of their psychiatrists or licensed therapists. MDLIVE is a covered benefit for more than 60 million Americans through health insurers such as Cigna, Aetna, certain Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, and many regional and local plans. To learn more or to register, visit www.mdlive.com.

“Although it’s natural to feel like you need to be a superhero, it takes a toll. You should never feel like you’re alone in your mental health journey. If you need to prioritize your own well-being,” Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, MDLIVE behavioral health medical director
Acupuncturists aim to help relieve pain, treat various conditions

BY CAROLINE BEACH

Tuning forks and an ear sculpture sit on the treatment bed inside of Holistic Healing Solutions acupuncture treatment practice. Dr. Jo Ann Turner is the owner of Holistic Healing Solutions and uses this room to treat clients.

“Tapping into your own body’s ability to heal itself is what acupuncture is all about,” Turner said.

When a patient’s body is in a state of imbalance, acupuncture can help restore balance. Acupuncture uses thin needles inserted into specific points on the body to stimulate the body’s natural healing mechanisms.

“Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese medicine that aims to balance a patient’s flow of energy — through pathways in the body called meridians. It is not restricted to but most commonly uses the insertion of thin needles in strategic patterns to unblock the flow of energy and restore balance.”

“Acupuncture is a complementary therapy that can provide relief for a wide range of conditions, including chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and digestive issues.”

Although commonly misunderstood, acupuncture is a safe and effective treatment option. It is not a substitute for medical care, and patients should consult with a healthcare provider before starting any new treatment.

“I really talk with patients and listen to them. I found a passion for acupuncture through ticks that makes anyone infected allergic to any mammalian food products.”

“Nothing is ever completely yin and nothing is ever completely yang,” said Claire Mallory O’Nan, owner of Holistic Healing Solutions Acupuncture. “So if you are in an excess state, you are in a yang state. If you are in a deficiency state, you are in a yin state.”

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Tunefork and Ear sculpture on treatment bed - from Dispatch Staff

New to the gym? Here’s some ways to get started

BY THEO DBERSO

Area gyms help new members "plug in"

Cynthia Match has seen it before. The membership and marketing director for the Frank P. Phillips YMCA in Columbus has seen new members struggle to fit in. Instead of joining an exercise class or meeting their fears with the gym’s weight machines, they’ll walk on the treadmill alone.

Eventually, they stop coming. “If you don’t see the results happen,” Match said. “If you are a beginner, they’ll say the YMCA and gyms around Columbus are too daunting to start. “So there’s this apprehension and self-awareness and self-consciousness that is very normal to people who are just first coming in the gym.”

Match and Nuckolls both said those classes are the first steps for novices to become engaged with a gym. The Sanderson’s fifty-four classes are among the best ways for new members to congregate. Before and after fitness classes at the Sanderson, students typically pack with plenty of companionship going on.

“Linsey Upton works out on the elliptical at the YMCA in downtown Columbus.”

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FITNESS coordinator at Mississippi State University’s Sanderson Center, Cynthia Match has seen it before. The membership and marketing director for the Frank P. Phillips YMCA in Columbus has seen new members struggle to fit in. Instead of joining an exercise class or meeting their fears with the gym’s weight machines, they’ll walk on the treadmill alone.

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The dual cable cross machine at the Sanderson Center in Starkville comes with dial settings that allow users to adjust the resistance. "When setting up an exercise program, it's important to start with something that is simple and can be adjusted as needed," said Brown. "For example, you could start by doing seated rows, which work well for most people, and then progress to standing rows as you become more comfortable with the machine and your form."

"Getting plugged in and starting to feel like you belong is a vital step," said Fitness Coordinator Meridith Nuckolls. "At the YMCA, a personal trainer will meet with new members for an orientation, showing them how to use each piece of equipment and demonstrating how to use them safely and effectively. "We want to make sure that everyone feels comfortable coming to a gym," she said. "The equipment is designed to accommodate everyone, and we're here to help you get started.""

"The most important thing is to get started and feel good about your efforts," said Nuckolls. "Consistency is key, and you'll see progress if you stick with it."

"Changing habits to be more healthy is not as hard as you think," she said. "You can walk around with an elevated blood pressure and not even know it. But the American Heart Association recommends doing something every day that helps reduce your risk of high blood pressure."

"High blood pressure is one of the main causes of kidney failure," said Nuckolls. "Most people probably don't know what normal blood pressure is. It's important to know your numbers and take steps to keep them under control."

"If your blood pressure is consistently high, it can cause headaches, mild vision or hearing changes, and sometimes a mild tingling in the hands or fingers," said Nuckolls. "Getting plugged in and starting to feel like you belong is a vital step."
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Get Better.
Under pressure: the corrosive effect of hypertension

Changing habits to be more healthy is not as hard as you think

BY BRIAN JONES
bjones@cdispatch.com

We've all been there: at a doctor's office, tight band around our arm, a nurse taking in numbers. Continuing, what do those numbers even mean? How high is too high?

INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST Dr. Eric McClendon, who is affiliated with Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle, is here to help.

Most people probably don't know what normal blood pressure is," McClendon said. "You want a blood pressure where the first number is less than 120 and the second is less than 80. That's the normal range.

Blood pressure that creeps over that can be dangerous, especially because they can't necessarily see any symptoms to make the condition clear. While elevated blood pressure can cause headaches, mild vision or hearing changes, and sometimes a mild tingling in the hands or fingers, it doesn't show up.

"You can walk around with an elevated blood pressure for years and never know it," he said. "But all the while it is causing damage to your blood vessels, your heart, your kidneys. Everything. It's too late when you start to notice symptoms.

Some concerning symptoms can develop, such as severe headaches and chest pain.

"Sneezing headaches can be a sign that someone is in the verge of having a stroke, or even having a stroke," he said.

"If you go so long and you don't know, you could have a stroke or a heart attack.

Kidney damage can result from high blood pressure, he said.

"High blood pressure is one of the main causes of kidney failure," he said. "People think kidney problems cause back pain, but that's not really the complete story of how you get kidney failure. You could have no problems with sensation or anything, but you go to the doctor and they check your lab work and your kidneys are abnormal.

McClendon said one easy way to keep blood pressure down is to eat less.

People should limit their salt intake to about two grams per day," he said. "People are more acclimated to that before they even season food, they already have the two and a half grams for the day. That's one teaspoon of salt. The way you cut off the salt is to cut out the meat you take out of the package to cook. It's already go sodium in it.

Many people are probably getting four grams of salt or more a day, he said.

"That's especially true of fast food," he said. "Fast foods and processed foods have an even higher amount. If you're not sure of yourself," it's best to go off the chart. Keep it under control.

Strength training is also helpful.

"Exercise and nutrition don't have to be elaborate as long as they're manageable," McClendon said. "Start with a leisure walk, Brown said, and then increase the intensity over time.

"The recommendation is between 7000 and 10000 steps on average," she said. "However, if someone is walking a thousand steps a day now, and they increase it to 20000 or 10000 they will still see a lot of health benefits.

Strength training is also helpful.

"Just move more weights maybe twice a week," Brown said. "It would recommend having a coach just to get them started on something that would be a very simple, total body fit that they can do at home if they are not comfortable coming to a gym.

Everyone and everybody don't have to be elaborate as long as they are consistent, she said.
Acupuncturists aim to help relieve pain, treat various conditions

BY CAROLINE BEACH cbeach@cedispatch.com

set down the road from Mississippi State University, Dr. Jo Anne Turner spends her days treating patients out of the small oasis built in the back of her Starkville home.

Turner — an acupuncturist and member of the Diplomate American Board of Medical Acupuncture — has devoted her life to an endless array of needles and energy exchange since 2003.

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine that aims to balance a patient’s chi — or flow of energy — through pathways in the body called meridians. It is not restricted to but most commonly uses the insertion of thin needles in strategic patterns to unblock the flow of energy and restore balance.

“In a natural way, acupuncture opens up this flow by stimulating different needles in different places in your body,” Turner said.

When balancing a client’s chi, says Turner, there are two different components: an individual’s yin and yang.

“Nothing is ever completely yin and nothing is ever completely yang,” she said. “If you are in excess state, you are in a yang state. If you are in a deficiency state, you are in a yang state.”

Although commonly misunderstood, acupuncture treatment is grounded in a search-based practice that can provide relief for a wide variety of medical issues including chronic and acute pain, menstrual cramps, shoulder and back pain, allergies, stress and more, said Claire Mallory O’Nan, owner of Starkville Acupuncture.

There is a wide variety of treatment acupuncture techniques experts use such as acupressure, acupressure, traditional acupuncture and personal evaluations. Therapists often use a patient’s emotional, spiritual and physical state to lead to a highly personalized acupuncture treatment approach.

“Really talk with patients and listen to them,” Turner said. “It’s all about listening to you finding out what makes you who you are and how you can get the most value out of life.”

Acupuncture treatment can cost hundreds of dollars depending on the type of treatment and the number of sessions a patient schedules. The first session typically covers diagnosis and testing to determine the appropriate needles to use for a patient.

Acupuncture treatment can be used to help relieve pain associated with a wide variety of medical conditions. People that have allergies to any mammalian food products. More and more people are getting this in our area because we have so many tick-hunting people. Western medicine can diagnose it but not treat it and my medicine can treat it.

To treat the Alpha-gal allergy a tiny 2mm needle is inserted slowly into the ear and stays there for three weeks. Surgical glue is put on top of the needle alongside adhesive bandages.

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New to the gym? Here’s some ways to get started

BY TROY DEBOS tdebos@cedispatch.com

Cynthia Match has seen it before. The membership and marketing director for the Frank P. Phillips YMCA at Columbus has seen new members struggle to fit in. Instead of joining an exercise class or exercising themselves with the gym’s weight machines, they’ll walk on the treadmill alone.

Eventually, they stop coming. “There still is that apprehension and self-awareness and self-consciousness that is very normal to people who are just first coming in the gym,” said Meridith Nuckolls, fitness coordinator at Mississippi State University’s Sanderson.

In roughly 15 years as a Sanderson director, Nuckolls has seen it before. “There still is that apprehension and self-awareness and self-consciousness that is very normal to people who are just first coming in the gym,” said Meridith Nuckolls, fitness coordinator at Mississippi State University’s Sanderson.

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The mental health crisis of moms: what you need to know

BY STATEPOINT

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The research, commissioned by MDLIVE, an Evernorth company and leading provider of virtual care services in the United States, finds that 33 percent of mothers feel stressed or overwhelmed by their responsibilities as a mom at least five days a week. Drivers of their stress and anxiety may include financial concerns, ripple effects of the pandemic, including the mental health crisis among teens, work responsibilities and being a caregiver simultaneously to both children and aging parents.

Yet, for many moms, the prospect of managing their mental health has become a source of stress in and of itself. For 37 percent of moms, concerns about their own mental health are among their biggest stressors, second only to finances (40 percent).

Possibly even more concerning is that 70 percent of moms admit to holding back their feelings and not telling their partner or family when they’re stressed, and 61 percent feel that they have no one to turn to or confide in for help.

“Our research shows that many moms are suffering in silence and not getting the support they need," says Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, who brings more than two decades of direct practice experience to her role as behavioral health medical director at MDLIVE. "I cannot stress enough how important it is for them to prioritize their own well-being.”

To help moms manage their mental health, MDLIVE offers the following tips:

1. Prioritize self-care: Recognize that practicing self-care is not selfish. In addition to things like eating well, exercising, practicing good hygiene, getting enough sleep, and seeing a health care professional for preventive screenings and other care, self-care also means taking time to pursue hobbies or personal interests that bring you pleasure or fulfillment or offer you a way to relax and unwind – activities you may have abandoned after having kids because it would mean time away from family responsibilities. Practicing self-care puts one in a better position to help care for others because your own well-being is in check.

2. Make time to cultivate relationships: Connecting with people who are important to you is essential to mental health. Make it a priority to spend time with partners, family, friends, colleagues, or anyone else who may be important to you, away from the house and kids, even if it’s just for a short period of time.

3. Seek help when struggling to manage stress and anxiety: If your emotional state is interfering with your daily life – if you’re having difficulty controlling your mood, withdrawing from loved ones, feeling fatigued, having trouble sleeping, lacking motivation, or frequently “ zoning out” – it’s definitely time to seek professional help.

Acknowledging the importance of mental healthcare, many health plans and employers have expanded the resources available to their members and employers in recent years. New options include digital tools that can help with tracking mood, support meditation, help build life skills, and provide self-care advice. Additionally, telehealth visits with behavioral health professionals and other private, convenient, quality care quickly. For example, MDLIVE’s platform makes it easy to search for providers and schedule appointments with one of their psychiatrists or licensed therapists. MDLIVE is a covered benefit for more than 60 million Americans through health plans and employers in recent years.

Visit www.mdlive.com to learn more or to register.

“Although it’s natural to feel like you need to be a superhero, it takes a toll. You should never feel like you’re alone in your mental health journey or that you need to suffer in silence,” Dr. Espada-Campos.
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