

52 BLOG POST PROMPTS: MENTAL HEALTH

I want to make blogging on your practice website easier for you! A common complaint from therapists is, "I don't know what to write about!" No more excuses, my fellow therapists. Here is ONE YEAR of WEEKLY mental health related blog topics. Use these topics to spark ideas and inspire you to blog regularly as part of your practice building! Feel free to use them in any order you'd like. So get blogging! For more blog topics join my therapist blog challenge at <http://www.privatepracticetoolbox.net/therapist-blog-challenge/>

Please do not share this list with others, as it will be available at a later date for purchase. Thank you!

TOPIC 1: Mental Health Awareness

In order to maintain both your mental and emotional health, it's vital to stay aware of your own needs and feelings. Never allow your stress and emotions to build up. Attempt to maintain a good balance between your normal responsibilities and the things you enjoy. Do things that positively impact others. Being useful to others and being valued for what you do can help build self-esteem.

- 1) *Practice self-discipline.* Self-discipline leads to a sense of happiness and accomplishment, which can help you overcome feelings of helplessness and other negative thoughts.
- 2) *Learn or discover new things.* Think of them as "intellectual sweets." Take an adult education class a try, or join a book club, visit a museum or simply travel somewhere new and exciting.

TOPIC 2: Activities that Alleviate Depression

Depression is one of the most common mental health problems today, with affects between 17 and 21 adults in the United State are diagnosed with depression each year. While medications can be effective in helping you feel better, there are other things you can do to ease Depression.

- 1) *Do not sleep too much.* Staying in bed or taking naps throughout the day will only worsen depression and make it much harder to cope with. Try your hardest to wake up at the same time each morning and go to sleep at the same time every night. This may be difficult, but it will become easier once you get into a routine.
- 2) *Eat Well.* A healthy and balanced diet will not only help the way you feel, but will also improve your thought patterns. Eat regularly and aim to eat 3 balanced meals each day. Quality food is vital in order for your mind and body to work properly.
- 3) *Be kind to yourself.* Treat yourself to things that are calming and improve your mood. Scented candles, bubble baths, and tranquil environment can help you feel better. Find relaxing activities that help you unwind. Listening to music or reading are a few examples. Allowing yourself even just 15 minutes of downtime can make all the difference.
- 4) *Practice self-acceptance.* Do not let others define you. Accept yourself for who you are; not who others would like you to be. There is not a single person in this world that is perfect, everyone possesses good qualities as well as bad qualities. Many different qualities, including

personality, background, character and sexuality make us who we are. Everyone in this world has something to offer, and everyone is entitled to respect.

TOPIC 4: Does Job Stress Contribute to Mental Illnesses?

Yes! Scientific studies have repeatedly shown that stress does in fact contribute to mental illnesses. Job related stress can affect you emotionally and mentally. Luckily, there are steps that you can take to limit stress.

1) *Get enough sleep.* Not only can stress and worry cause a lack of sleep but, it can also leave you vulnerable to even more stress. When you are well-rested, it is much easier to keep an emotional balance, which is key to dealing with job and workplace related stress.

2) *Prioritize and organize.* Leave early in the morning. 5-10 minutes can make the difference between frantically hurrying to your desk and having time to slowly ease into your day. Running late will only increase your stress levels. Break projects and tasks into small steps. If a project seems to be overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one small task at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.

Topic 5: Does your Mental Health Status Affect your relationships?

All mental health professionals will tell you the answer is absolutely! Your mental state contributes immensely to your ability to form close bonds with others. Many people with mental health problems lack the skills needed to create or sustain vital relationships, whether it be with a spouse, family members, or friends.

Tips on Building Healthy Relationships:

1) *Try not to be concerned about the small things.* People with mental illness (particularly Depression) often focus on their faults. Seek to look at the big picture, including the things you are doing well!

2) *Express Yourself.* Express your feelings; I cannot stress this enough! Keeping your feelings inside (whether good or bad) is never a great idea. Talk it out, release your thoughts, worries and concerns. Holding your emotions in will eventually cause bad feelings to accumulate and further damage your mental state.

Topic 6: Does Your Mental Health Affect Your Parenting?

A person suffering from mental illness isn't a bad parent, but mental illness can complicate how they interact with their children. For example, parents who suffer from Bipolar Disorder are 10 times more likely to overreact, which leads to inappropriate punishments. Here are some ways to mitigate the effect of mental illness with regards to parenting:

1) *Monkey See, Monkey Do*

Stay calm and be a positive influence to your child; always remember children are watching and consequently reenact everything that we as adults do. If you must get upset or let out your feelings of frustration or pain, do it in a way that your child doesn't necessarily see.

2) *Learn to be patient*

Remember patience is a virtue. If your child is being difficult cool down, count to 10 and then attempt to attend the situation.

TOPIC 7: Mental Illness and Suicide

Mental health studies conclude that people with poor mental health are 10 times more likely to attempt suicide. Every year in the United States, more than 36,000 individuals die by suicide while hundreds of thousands more attempt it. More often than not, these occurrences are due to chemical imbalances in the brain. Here are some tips for dealing with suicidal thoughts:

- 1) *Know that there is always help.* Seek the help of a counselor or call a suicide help-line. Death is not the answer and will not solve your problems. There is hope for you.
- 2) *Always take your medication.* Individuals who are prescribed antipsychotic medications should under no circumstances stop their medication unless otherwise directed by a physician.

TOPIC 8: Are Antipsychotic Drugs Safe?

As with any medications, antipsychotic drugs have side effects. Here are some tips to help you navigate this aspect of medication:

1) *Know the Risks*

Conduct thorough research to understand the risks of your medication. Consult more than one source to gain the most complete information. If you have questions or concerns about possible side effects of your medication, your doctor immediately.

2) *Don't Be Afraid*

No two people are the same in their response to medications. If your friend has had a reaction to their medication that doesn't mean that you will also have the same reaction.

3) *Explore The Alternatives*

In some cases, counseling, can be more effective than medications. Speak with your doctor about natural alternatives.

TOPIC 9: Bullying and Mental Health

Children that experience bullying may experience serious emotional and mental disabilities. Bullying may interfere with social development, and self-esteem. Children who have been bullied are also at increased risk for problems with anxiety and depression.

1) *What Can I Do As A Parent?* Help your child to understand what bullying is and teach them how to safely stand up for themselves and others.

2) *Always Communicate.* Check in with your children often. Listen to them. Know who their friends are, ask questions about school, understand, and listen to their concerns.

10: Child Abuse and Mental Illness

Child abuse is becoming an epidemic, and studies show that it can change how the brain functions. These changes appear to be significant enough to cause psychological and emotional problems that extend into adulthood.

1) *Prevent Abuse.* If you suspect a child is being abused, immediately report your suspicions to the proper authorities. Do not remain silent; a child's well-being may be in your hands.

2) *Be An Advocate.* Let children know that it is okay to go to you or another adult if they are having problems or are worried about something. Ensure them that what is going on is not their fault. Encourage them to speak out if they themselves or anyone they know is being mistreated.

TOPIC 11: Autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that manifests itself in children. Traits of autism include delayed language development, hindered social skills, persistent fixation of physical objects, and overall problems with communication.

TOPIC 12: Postpartum Depression

Postpartum Depression affects women who have just given birth. It can range from moderate to severe. Giving birth brings about all sorts of new changes and emotions, and many women experience the blues, but diagnosed Postpartum depression is more intense and full-blown.

TOPIC 13: Recognizing Early Warning Signs of Mental Illnesses.

Severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder rarely emerge out of the blue. Instead, family, friends, teachers, co workers, or the individuals themselves start to notice that something is not quite right gradually.

Warning signs:

Problems with concentration, memory, or logical thought and speech that you haven't experienced in the past

Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, or smells as well as an overwhelming feeling of avoidance of over-stimulating situations

When Should Treatment Begin?:

Seek treatment as soon as possible. There are clinics that specialize in mental health disorders around the country, testing is normally scheduled relatively quickly.

TOPIC 14: Men and Mental Illness

In men, depression can be a serious yet treatable condition. Around six million men suffer from depression each year.

Symptoms of depression:

- Changes in appetite that result in weight losses or gains unrelated to dieting
- Restlessness or irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide or attempts at suicide

You Are Human. Many men feel ashamed of being labeled as depressed, but remember that you are a human being, and that depression is treatable.

TOPIC 15: Children's Mental Health – Conduct Disorder

For parents/ guardians, the key to successfully handling mental disorders in children is to recognize the problem and seek the appropriate and necessary treatment.

Conduct Disorder. Children with a conduct disorder have behavior that shows a strong disregard for the rules of society and life in general. Conduct disorders are often one of the most frequently seen mental disorders in children.

Get Help. Do not be afraid to ask for help getting help, as the appropriate treatment for conduct disorders is essential. Treatments are aimed at helping and guiding young children in order for them to realize and understand the effects their behavior has on others.

TOPIC 16: Are Mental Illnesses Inherited?

Yes, there is a genetic component to mental health. If you believe that your child may have a predisposition to a certain disorder speak with your child's doctor. Be sure to inform him/her of your family's mental history and express any questions or concerns you may have.

TOPIC 17: Social Media and Mental Health

Mental health professionals believe that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter can affect 3% of individuals in a negative way. Studies show that repeated exposure to negative postings can trigger or exacerbate symptoms of mental illness. Consult the sources below for more information: www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/275361

TOPIC 18: Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder (also known as Social Phobia) is an Anxiety Disorder described as an overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in normal social situations. People with social anxiety have an intense and chronic fear of being judged by others and of being humiliated by their own actions.

Can social anxiety be dangerous?

People with social anxiety disorder suffer from distorted thinking, including false beliefs about the negative opinions of others. In addition, it has been found that these individuals often suffer from the consequences of social withdrawal and also are prone to Depression.

TOPIC 19: PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an Anxiety Disorder that usually develops after an individual has been involved in one or more terrifying events in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. It is a severe and ongoing emotional reaction to an extreme psychological trauma.

What Can Cause This?

The trauma may involve someone's death or a threat to someone else's life, serious injury, or a threat to physical and/or psychological integrity, such as instances of sexual abuse. In some cases it can also be from profound psychological and emotional trauma, apart from any actual physical harm. A person suffering from PTSD is affected to such a degree that normal coping strategies and defense mechanisms fail to provide adequate relief.

TOPIC 20: Adult Separation Anxiety

Separation Anxiety is recognized as a juvenile disorder, but can also be present in adults. Individuals with separation anxiety may appear clingy and excessively needy. This may present when individuals are in the midst of a breakup of a love relationship. Childhood attachment and adult attachment are related. A person with an anxious attachment style in childhood may continue to feel anxious in adult love relationships.

TOPIC 21: Mental Health Stigmas

There are many stigmas surrounding individuals with mental health disorders. Many people admit that they are afraid of what they do not understand.

Awareness: People who suffer from mental health disorders, whether it be depression, schizophrenia, or any other number of disorders, are not 'weird' or 'crazy'. The brain of these individuals simply functions differently than those who have a stable mental health status.

TOPIC 22: Mental Health Recovery

Many times, depression and bipolar disorder make it appear very difficult to set goals for yourself. At times it may feel almost impossible to think about the things that you wish and hope for or care about. However, setting life goals is an important part of wellness.

Things to ask yourself: What motivates me? What do my goals mean to me? What would I do more of if I were able? What do I want in life? Where do I want my life to go? What brings me joy?

TOPIC 23 Relapse

It is vital to be prepared for another episode of mental illness. A relapse may occur when the symptoms of your illness worsen or when previous symptoms return.

Warning Signs:

- 1) Irritability
- 2) Less energy
- 3) Tiredness
- 4) Fears

TOPIC 24 Mental Health Coping Strategies

There is a range of strategies that you may find helpful in dealing with mental health disorders.

Tips:

- 1) Use self-talk.
- 2) Think positively.
- 3) Get more sleep.
- 4) Initiate positive social contact

TOPIC 25 Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Substance abuse affects over 3 million people in the United States, many of whom end up suffering from mental disorders as a result.

What to do: Group therapy is the most common and effective treatment for people with substance abuse problems.

TOPIC 26 What Is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder is a serious mood disorder that causes individuals to swing between extreme feelings of high and low (mania and depression). Bipolar Disorder deeply affects one's energy levels, attitudes, behavior and general ability to function.

Can It Be Treated? Yes, medication as well as therapy is a good start to functioning normally.

TOPIC 27 What Is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a brain disease that interferes with normal brain activity. It causes affected people to exhibit odd behaviors, including hallucinations.

Are People With Schizophrenia Dangerous?

It's difficult to say; however, if an individual is strictly following doctors' orders and is faithful taking his/her medication, he/she is less likely to cause self-harm or hurt others.

TOPIC 28 Mental Health Statistics

1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year. Mixed anxiety and depression are the most common mental disorders in the U.S. Women are more likely to have been treated for a mental health problem than men.

TOPIC 29 Helpful Links

If you need help, and don't know where to turn; here are some helpful links.

- 1) www.mentalhealth.gov/index.html
- 2) www.mentalhelp.net
- 3) www.mentalhealth.com
- 4) www.nami.org
- 5) www.psychcentral.com

TOPIC 30: Children's Mental Health

In some cases a child's behavior can be unusual and greatly vary from other children of the same age.

When To Worry: There is cause for concern when a child exhibits problems with *behavior*, problems with *feelings*, and problems with *thinking*.

If you or someone you know needs assistance with their child, these links may help:

- 1) www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childmentalhealth.html
- 2) www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com/p-needhelp-resources.php

TOPIC 31: Behavior Problems

Behavior problems affect the lives of millions around the world. Behavior disorders are less studied than anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, and mood disorders.

What Is a Behavior Problem? 90% of patients want nothing more than to be able to control the behavior that is destroying their ability to live; too interact with others, maintain employment, leave the house or get anywhere on time, or keep up with their finances.

TOPIC 32: Related to other health problems, how common is mental illness?

Compared to other health problems (such as cancer, stroke, and cardiovascular disease), the development of mental illness is quite common. A new study shows the numbers of individuals that have mental health problems is increasing.

TOPIC 33: Mental Health and Aging

The United States Surgeon General reported that while most older adults enjoy good mental health, nearly 30% of those 55 and older experience mental disorders that are not part of normal aging. The following are some of the most common disorders:

- 1) Depression
- 2) Dementia
- 3) Suicide

TOPIC 34: Getting help in a non-crisis situation

If you have concluded that there is not a life or death crisis but that warning signs indicate you or another individual could benefit from treatment for a mental health problem, the following are some tips for getting help:

- If you are homebound or would have a difficult time traveling somewhere to get help, contact in-home services to come to your home.
- It is always very important to know what medical insurance you have and its limitations.
- Find mental health professionals.
- The yellow pages phone book has numerous telephone numbers for mental health professionals.

TOPIC 35: Local Social Services Resources

Social Services are services provided by healthcare staff to support people in the community. These services provide help for those who need mental health treatment.
(Provide links to community services in your area)

TOPIC 36: Mental Health Problems

Mental health problems may affect the way you think, feel, and behave. Some mental health problems are described using words that we use everyday; for example 'depression' or 'anxiety.' It is important to note that clinical depression and anxiety are distinct from the sad feeling that everyone experiences at some point or another.

Can You Recover?

Despite these challenges, it is very possible to recover from a mental health problem and live a productive and fulfilling life. Take comfort in the fact that medication, therapy, and proper support can help you lead a happy life.

TOPIC 37: Athletes and Mental Health

Athletes experience mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety, as frequently as the general population.

Why Athletes Struggle To Seek Help

Athletes may feel that seeking help for mental and or emotional problems will make them appear weak. Studies show 1 in 5 athletes feel this way.

TOPIC 38: Family Caregivers' Mental Health

Day in and day out, over 63 million family member caregivers in this country provide care for both family and friends in need. This is a large burden to bear, and we must not overlook needs of these men and women:

Support For Caregivers: www.thefamilycaregiver.org www.caregiving.org www.eldercare.com

TOPIC 39: Finding Help for Mental Health Problems

Do not feel hopeless or discouraged be reminded there is always help.

Visit www.helpfullinks.org

This site offers a number of useful links, for a variety of needs.

TOPIC 40: Recognizing Suicidal Thoughts

Suicide is the most drastic choice a mentally ill individual can make. It is critical to know how to recognize and identify signs that a person may be considering suicide. Signs of trouble include comments such as: "I'm finished." "It's all over." "My family would be better off without me."

"There's no hope for me."

Always take these signs seriously and never brush them off. Seek appropriate medical care and call 9/11 to help keep the person safe.

TOPIC 41: Stages of Grief

Kübler-Ross developed 5 stages of grief. Briefly describe each one.

- 1) Denial
- 2) Anger
- 3) Bargaining
- 4) Depression
- 5) Acceptance

TOPIC 42: Mental Illness Linked To The Military

83 percent of individuals that have served our country suffer from the following: anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and substance abuse. If you or someone you love needs help, consider the following resources:

http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Veterans_Resources&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=53242&Istid=877

TOPIC 43: Coping with Disasters

Tragedies such as natural disasters can have severe psychological impacts on those directly and indirectly affected. Individuals may have various stress reactions that present psychological problems.

Coping Strategies

- Take control of what you can.
- Talk to family, friends, and professionals about how you're processing the tragedy.
- Don't be afraid to reach out for help.

TOPIC 44: Healthy Minds TV

Healthy Minds is an informative series on mental health targeted at helping to reduce stigma and increase awareness. Anyone with questions should tune in.

Healthy Minds cover such topics as Depression, anxiety, phobias, OCD, and other relevant subjects. <http://www.wliw.org/programs/healthy-minds/>

TOPIC 45: Can the environment impact your mental health?

Many studies show that in fact the environment can influence your mental health. An example of the environment affecting your mental health could be seasons changing. Certain weather, such as rain, has been known to make people depressed, whereas sunshine makes people appear to be in a positive mood.

Topic 46: Are people born with mental illnesses?

While some medical professionals argue that people are born with mental illnesses, others dispute it. However, as your child grows there are signs to look out for to rule or rule out mental illnesses.

Signs to look for:

Temper that differs from children of the same age

Excessive tearfulness

Uncontrollable behavior

TOPIC 47: Who is at risk for mental disorders?

While anyone at any time may develop a mental illness, it is more common in a person who has a family history of mental illness. Environmental factors impact the development of mental disorders.

TOPIC 48: Is ADD a mental disorder?

Yes, there is professional consensus that ADD is a mental disorder.

What is ADD?

ADD stands for attention deficit disorder. ADD is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain.

People with ADD have a difficult time focusing. While there is not presently a cure for a ADD, it can be treated with medication and counseling.

TOPIC 49: Can mental illnesses be cured?

Unfortunately, most believe that mental illnesses cannot be cured. Mental illnesses can, however, be treated effectively by a mental health care provider. Medication and counseling usually help to ease the symptoms that mental illnesses can present.

TOPIC 50: What are the signs of depression?

The signs of depression varies from person to person, below you will find the most common symptoms of depression.

- Irritability
- Loss of interest

- Excessive crying
- Fatigue
- Change in appetite
- Change in sleep patterns

TOPIC 51: Sexual Abuse

With numerous heartbreaking stories about children being sexually abused, many wonder about the long lasting effects that come with this type of abuse:

- Changes in Brain Activity occur
- Lack of trust
- Lack of affection
- At risk of sexually abusing someone else.

TOPIC 52: Do people with mental health problems function normally?

Yes, a high percent of people who suffer from mental health issues do function normally. The good news is that with proper therapy, counseling, medication, and support, these individuals can maintain healthy relationships, contribute to society, and engage in meaningful work.

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