

With our country (and world) in so much chaos right now, mental health can be easily overlooked. Whether your friend, sibling, parent, or even yourself struggles with a mental illness, when life gets crazy, we can overlook how much pain we or they are in until it becomes so unbearable. This may not be the case for everyone, but I know this is how I feel.

I am a teenager and I suffer from clinical major depressive disorder, clinical generalized anxiety disorder, and clinical obsessive compulsive disorder. At the beginning of the pandemic I felt alone, sad, anxious, and even angry, as I bet many of us felt. I let my feelings spiral out of control until I was so terrible inside I couldn't take it anymore and I snapped. I know you didn't need my whole story, but I figured I would let you know so you understand why I'm writing this.

Mental health has impacted me most of my life, but it has impacted me a lot heavier these past few months. There is such a stigma around having some sort of mental health "disorder", but why? I didn't choose to have depression, anxiety, or OCD. One in four people will encounter a mental disorder or disorders. So why is it that we can't talk about this without feeling embarrassed, or less than someone who may not struggle with it? Twenty five percent of people are going through something right alongside you, but when you're at your lowest, or even a high point you still feel alone.

Mental health matters. As a society, we don't support one and other to begin with, but we need to. Treatments are available to everyone, but two thirds of people with a known mental health disorder don't seek treatment. This is because of discrimination, stigma, and even neglect. Can you imagine how many people who don't know they have a mental disorder are struggling out there with no help?

No one wants to tell people that they are hurting. If you struggle with a mental illness, you shouldn't be ashamed. You are strong, brave, and you matter. Next time you need help, tell someone. Next time you see someone who needs help, ask them if everything is okay. We are in this together. Mental health matters. You matter.

I have recently started to do horse therapy with my Aunt Sara. Every time I go to the barn, I instantly feel a sense of calm. Horses are unlike any other animals I have encountered. They feel your energy and they know exactly what to do with it. Horses have a very interesting way of telling you what to think about or what is going on in your mind and body in terms of healing. I know, horses can be SO intimidating, but in the end they are gentle giants. Horses have helped me a lot, and I believe that they can help anyone who lets them.