

# DEPRESSION & STRESS

## OLDER ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

**Depression is a common problem among older adults, but it is not a normal part of aging.**

As a person ages, the more likelihood of dealing with health issues increases, and this added stress can lead to depression. An older adult is more likely to experience loneliness as they may suddenly find themselves living alone, due to a death in the family, or may become isolated because of decreased mobility from illness or loss of driving privileges.

Some older adults experience a reduced sense of purpose or loss of identity after retirement. Other factors that may contribute to an older adult becoming depressed include fear of death or dying and anxiety over financial problems. Medications can also cause symptoms of depression.

Symptoms include anger, irritability, sadness, loss of interest in activities, hopelessness, withdrawal from family and friends, trouble concentrating and making decisions, sleep problems, or changes in weight.

Depression is a real, medical illness that can be successfully treated with therapy, medication, or a combination of both. Support from family and friends plays an important role as well.



**Stress is the body's natural reaction to tension, pressure, and change. As our body's age, coping with stress isn't as easy anymore.**

It may be harder to bounce back physically from the toll the stress response takes. Additionally, many older adults do not sleep as well as they previously did, and the lack of sleep also contributes to the brain's ability to recover.

Stressors that tend to affect seniors are the loss of a loved one; too much unstructured time on your hands; change in relationships with children; or loss of physical abilities, such as vision, hearing, balance, or mobility.

Symptoms of stress may include tension headaches, indigestion, heart palpitations, poor concentration, sleep difficulties, anxiety, irritability, crying, or overeating.

### Ways to Manage Stress & Depression

- Accept you can't control every situation
- Divide tasks into smaller, manageable ones
- Look for humor in life, laugh!
- Eat healthy, get enough sleep
- Take care of a pet
- Volunteer your time
- Learn a new skill
- Practice deep breathing: Take in a slow breath through your nose & count to 5. Hold it for 5 counts. Exhale through your mouth to the count of 5.



**Call your healthcare provider if your feelings overwhelm you for several days in a row.**

**Concerned for yourself or a loved one?**

Take a free, anonymous mental health screening:  
[www.mental-health-recovery.org](http://www.mental-health-recovery.org)

**Contact a Portage County mental health provider:**

Coleman Health Services at 330-673-1347  
Family & Community Services at 330-677-4124



Struggling, need to talk?

Call or text 988  
Portage Helpline:  
330-678-4357