

PRESS RELEASE

This May is Mental Health Month *Risky Business* Theme Highlights Importance of Knowing When Behaviors and Habits Can Be Unhealthy

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[CITY, STATE] (DATE)—When you or someone you love is dealing with a mental health concern, sometimes it's a lot to handle. It's important to remember that mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. Yet, people experience symptoms of mental illnesses differently—and some engage in potentially dangerous or risky behaviors to avoid or cover up symptoms of a potential mental health problem.

That is why this year's theme for *May is Mental Health Month—Risky Business*—is a call to educate ourselves and others about habits and behaviors that increase the risk of developing or exacerbating mental illnesses, *or could be signs of mental health problems themselves*. Activities like compulsive sex, recreational drug use, obsessive internet use, excessive spending, or disordered exercise patterns can all be behaviors that can disrupt someone's mental health and potentially lead them down a path towards crisis.

May is Mental Health Month was started 68 years ago by Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone. Last year, Mental Health Month materials were seen and used by 22.3 million people, with more than 8,500 entities downloading MHA's toolkit.

This *May is Mental Health Month*, we are encouraging people to educate themselves about behaviors and activities that could be harmful to recovery – and to speak up without shame using the hashtag *#riskybusiness* – so that others can learn if their behaviors are something to examine. Posting with our hashtag is a way to speak up, to educate without judgment, and to share your point of view or story with people who may be suffering—and help others figure out if they too are showing signs of a mental illness.

"It is important to understand early symptoms of mental illness and know when certain behaviors are potentially signs of something more," said [NAME] [TITLE] of [AFFILIATE]. "We need to speak up early and educate people about risky behavior and its connection to mental illness—and do so in a compassionate, judgement-free way."

MHA has developed a series of fact sheets (available at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may) on specific behaviors and habits that may be a warning sign of something more, risk factors and signs of mental illness, and how and where to get help when needed. MHA has also created an interactive quiz at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/whatstoofar to learn from Americans when they think specific behaviors or habits go from being acceptable to unhealthy.

"Prevention, early identification and intervention, and integrated services work," concluded [NAME]. "When we engage in prevention and early identification, we can help reduce the burden of mental illness by identifying symptoms and warning signs early—and provide effective treatment *Before Stage 4*."

For more information on *May is Mental Health Month*, visit Mental Health America's website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may.

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