English

Mental Health

Getting the Care You Need

Asian American Health Initiative
Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human Services

After losing her job, Abby started feeling chronically sad, getting frequent headaches, and sleeping a lot. She talked to a Health Promoter from the Asian American Health Initiative and realized that these symptoms may be more serious than she thought. She decided to go see a therapist…

I guess…but I don't even know what type of therapist I should see.

Maybe you could try seeing a counselor first, just to have someone to talk to and to find out what your goals and options are.

Okay, that sounds good. But how can I choose a therapist who is right for me?

The Health Promoter said we could call to ask for advice and referrals. Why don't you call the Asian American Health Initiative to see if they can help?

That's a good idea.

Types of Mental Health Providers

Psychiatrists may provide medical and psychiatric evaluations, treat psychiatric disorders, provide psychotherapy, and prescribe and monitor medications.

Psychologists may provide psychological testing and evaluations, treat emotional/ behavioral problems and mental disorders, and provide a variety of psychotherapeutic techniques.

Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioners may provide assessment and diagnosis, prescribe medications, and provide therapy for individuals with psychiatric disorders or substance abuse problems.

Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurses may provide assessments and treatment of psychiatric illnesses, case management, and psychotherapy.

Social Workers may provide case management, inpatient discharge planning services, placement services, and a variety of other daily living needs services for individuals.

Licensed Professional Counselors may provide assessment and diagnosis of mental health conditions as well as individual, family, or group therapy.

Peer Specialists are individuals who can offer a unique perspective in the recovery process, from someone "who has been there."

Licensed marital and family therapists are counselors with special education and training in martial and family therapy. They are trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness; Mental Health America

ACCESS to Behavioral Health

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services offers a variety of mental health/substance abuse and crisis services. One of the available services is Access to Behavioral Health which can be reached by phone or in person:

(1) Phone

Call: 240-777-1770

Monday-Friday
8:30AM-5:00PM

a. Consultation

Provided by therapist over the phone to determine mental health and substance abuse needs

b. Referral

Invite individual in for further assessment
OR
Provide individual with referral to community providers

(2) In Person

Walk-in behavioral health screenings and assessments
Monday-Friday 9:00AM or 1:00PM
Individuals are encouraged to come at 8:30AM or 12:30PM. First come, first served for adults

a. Consultation

Meet with Community Service Aide to address human service needs
(i.e. income, insurance, health concerns, child care, etc.)

b. Screening & Assessment

Meet with Aide therapist to determine most appropriate type of service and level of care needed

c. Referral

Therapist will remain available to assist the individual, if needed, during transition to ongoing services

There are also linguistically and culturally sensitive mental health providers available to the Asian American community. For more information, please contact the Asian American Health Initiative at 240-777-4517.

Abby called the Asian American Health Initiative, a program within her local health department, who referred her to a therapist. She made an appointment and is now going to her first therapy session with the clinical counselor.

Hello Abby and welcome, I'm Sara. What brought you in here today?

I haven't been feeling well lately. I lost my job a while ago and I want to find a new one but I feel tired.

Sometimes my head and stomach hurt too. I want my life to go back to normal, but I feel like I am disappointing everyone around me.

That must have been very hard. It sounds like you are starting to lose hope as well.

Yeah, I am. I wonder if I should bother trying. I don't know what to do. I have never seen a counselor before. I don't know how this works.

I am here to support you. If there is anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you have any questions, I encourage you to share.
Well, I'm really worried that someone will find out that I'm seeing a counselor.
I understand. I can assure you that everything we talk about here is kept private, even from your family. That's also in the paperwork I have clients sign.
Really? Okay, that is a relief.

Did you know?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act contains a privacy rule that prevents a mental health care provider from sharing any of the client's information. **Exceptions to this rule do exist, such as when the patient's life is in danger.** For further information, please visit http://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals or discuss with your health care provider.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; American Psychological Association

Abby, I know that we come from different backgrounds, but I understand you are the expert of your own experiences, so please feel free to share any cultural issues you have with me.
There may be times when I need to ask a few questions to understand better, but I am here to help you. Is that all right with you?
Yes, thank you.

I'm so glad to hear that. After you moved, did anything specific help you adjust to life here?
We met some people from our country and we got to know more people. They really helped us a lot. We were so grateful.

Did you know?

If you would like language assistance, the mental health/ substance abuse and crisis services within the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services will provide interpretation services for you free of charge.

Abby tells Sara about her two kids. They fit in very easily in America and do not seem to want to learn about their culture. She thinks her husband, Jonathan, is frustrated about this too, but she tells the therapist that she does not like to talk about this with him too much or about how sad she has been feeling since losing her job because she does not want to burden him.

Have you been feeling guilty since losing your job?
Yes, I think so. Everyone has to support me and no matter how hard I try, I can't make myself go back to how I was before.
I guess now since the kids are at school and Jonathan is at work, I feel even more alone, but I also feel too tired to do anything.

Do you think your job helped you feel busy and useful? A part of the life here?
Yes, maybe. I never thought of it like that before. It was hard to come here today. Jonathan has been so supportive, but it also makes me feel bad.

Abby tells Sara how two and a half months ago, she was laid off from being the manager of a restaurant. She had always worked in restaurants since first coming to the US. She tells the therapist that about a week after receiving this news, her headaches and stomach aches started, and they occur frequently.

Well, Abby, it sounds like you have had some depressive episodes. Sometimes, when people are depressed they have stomach aches and headaches in addition to feeling sad and having low energy.
I would like for you to go see your doctor just in case you have a different type of health issue. Is that all right with you?
I can go to the doctor but – depression? Will I need medicine?
Not necessarily. Even if you do, it's like taking medicine when you get sick. Some people do not use medication. Others use some only short-term to help with the process and others use them long-term. Once you go to the doctor, I can also speak to them and we can discuss some options for you.

Sara asks Abby to come in to see her once a week and stresses how important it is for them to work together as they move forward with Abby's treatment. She also explains to Abby that therapy is a gradual process and that it is important for Abby to share what she wants to when she feels ready.

Did you know?

Your therapist may ask you to go see your primary care doctor to rule out other medical conditions that can display similar symptoms to mental health conditions. This way, your therapist makes sure you are getting the best and most appropriate care that you need.

Sources: American Psychological Association; Mayo Clinic

One week later, Abby goes to her second appointment, her first official treatment session.

Intake session	The first session is called the intake session. During this time, the therapist gathers a history on the patient to understand his/her background and try to come up with a diagnosis. Sometimes the intake portion will carry into the next session. Together, the therapist and patient will also generate goals for therapy.
Treatment Session	The therapist helps the client learn new ways to think through and approach daily situations so that he/she has healthier beliefs and behaviors.

Source: American Psychological Association; Mental Health America; National Alliance on Mental Illness

Do you feel overwhelmed by all the information?
Yes. There are so many jobs, but why would anyone hire me?
Why do you think that?
They'll think my English is not good enough, or that I am a risky employee because I lost my job as a manager. I feel like a failure.
It can be tough to motivate yourself after a difficult event. And it sounds like you have a lot of negative thoughts when you try to get back to the old you.
Yes. I don't feel like myself...

It seems like you are stuck in a pattern. You feel overwhelmed, so you stop your job search because you think you are not qualified for these jobs. I know it's very hard—this is part of depression.

It can be helpful to get to the root of these issues, discuss patterns, and make a list of positive thoughts to counter the negative thoughts.

For example, you have a lot of experience to offer an employer. We can also work through some relaxation strategies to help you.

I could try that.

Over the next several months, Abby sees Sara once a week for her treatment sessions. They discuss how Abby is feeling and her daily life. Sara teaches her helpful ways to approach daily situations and to stay mentally healthy. These strategies help Abby learn to cope with her depression.

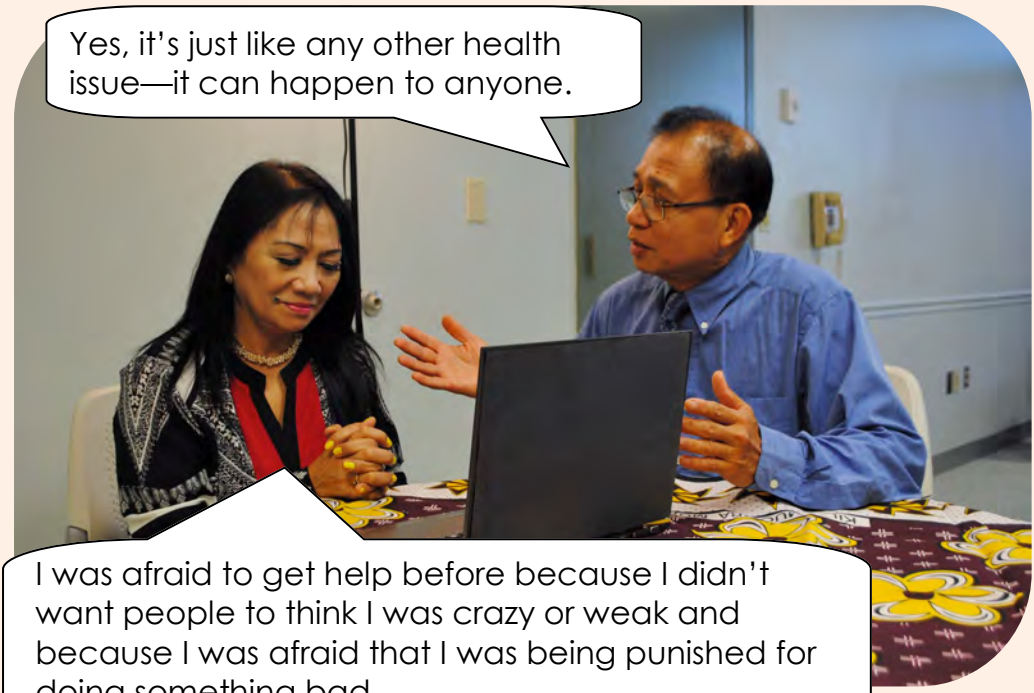
Several months later...

Later that day, Jonathan comes home from work and finds Abby sitting at the table, looking at the computer.

That's great, Abby! It's so nice to see you looking happier and more confident.

Going to therapy has really helped. At first I thought it would be a waste of time. Now I see how helpful it is to talk to a counselor and to learn ways to stay mentally healthy.

Yes, it's just like any other health issue—it can happen to anyone.



I was afraid to get help before because I didn't want people to think I was crazy or weak and because I was afraid that I was being punished for doing something bad.

I'm so sorry you felt that way before, Abby. Mental health problems are definitely not a punishment.
What's important is that you are getting healthy. You always have my support through everything.
Thank you, Jonathan. That means a lot to me.
Oh, look! I just got an email from one of the jobs I applied to about coming in for an interview!
Congratulations, Abby! You are going to be great.
I hope so! I'm glad things are starting to look up.

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Disclaimer: The characters, places, and incidents depicted in this photonovel are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is entirely coincidental.

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Asian American Health Initiative

Together To Build A Healthy Community

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