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May is Mental Health Month: Family Service Encourages You to Speak Up and Share What Mental Illness Feels Like

When mental illnesses are discussed, the language typically used to describe them tends to be clinical and impersonal. These words, while useful for doctors or clinicians, often don't do justice to what life with a mental illness feels like. That is why this year's theme for Mental Health Month—Life With a Mental Illness—is a call to action to share what life with a mental illness feels like to someone going through it.

Mental Health Month was started 67 years ago by Mental Health America to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone.

This year, Family Service and Mental Health America are encouraging individuals to give voice to what it really means to live with a mental illness. Life with a Mental Illness is meant to help remove the shame and stigma of speaking out, so that more people can be comfortable coming out of the shadows and seeking the help they need.

"Mental illnesses are common and treatable, and help is available. We need to speak up in real, relatable terms so that people do not feel isolated and alone," said Lisa Clayton, Director of Clinical Services at Family Service. "Sharing is the key to breaking down the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and to showing others that they are not alone in their feelings and their symptoms."

During Mental Health Month, Family Service and Mental Health America are encouraging people to speak up about how it feels to live with a mental illness by tagging social media posts with #mentalillnessfeelslike. Posting with this hashtag is a way to speak up, to share your point of view with people who may be struggling to explain what they are going through, and to help others figure out if they too are showing signs of a mental illness.

Research shows that by ignoring symptoms, an average of ten years are lost in which people's lives could be changed for the better through treatment. Speaking out about what mental illness feels like can encourage others to recognize symptoms early on in the disease process and empower individuals to be agents in their own recovery.

"Prevention, early identification and intervention, and integrated services work for the individual," concluded Audrey J. Tucker, Chief Executive Officer of Family Service. "Telling people about life with a mental illness helps build support from friends and family, reduces stigma and discrimination, and is crucial to recovery."

If you or someone you know is showing signs of or struggling with a mental illness, call Family Service at (215) 757-6916, ext. 159 to schedule a first-time appointment. Family Service has offices conveniently located in Langhorne, Doylestown and Quakertown. Learn more at www.fsabc.org.

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Family Service Association of Bucks County is a nonprofit social service organization with locations throughout Bucks County, Pennsylvania. For more than 60 years, Family Service has been improving the lives of children and their families, doing whatever it takes to help them overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Visit www.fsabc.org to donate, volunteer and learn more about how Family Service helped more than 24,000 children, teens and adults last year.