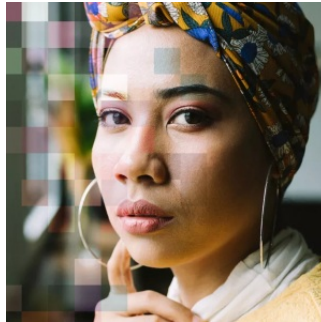

Women's Health Index Reflections: How Emotional Health Factors Into Overall Wellness



Worry. Stress. Sadness. Anger.

The latest annual Hologic Global Women's Health Index (HGWHI) – in partnership with Gallup, creator of the long-respected World Poll – showed that record numbers of women worldwide said they experienced these emotions in the past year. The levels of worry (43%), stress (41%), sadness (32%) and anger (26%) reached all-time highs since Gallup began measuring these emotions a decade ago.

The distressing figures deserve our full attention because emotional health* connects with mental and physical health. The HGWHI analyzes emotional health and four other fundamental dimensions of well-being – preventive care, individual health, basic needs and opinions of health and safety – to give world leaders a foundation of data about women's health and a unique framework for taking actions to achieve progress.

The HGWHI provides distinctive insights because it draws directly from the perspectives of women. Its data findings complement anecdotal observations about how societal turmoil harms emotional health. We know, for example, that COVID-19 likely had a tremendous impact on emotional health across the globe. We also know that current unrest around the world – in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and elsewhere – endangers emotional wellness. So does food insecurity related to climate change, as well as economic challenges like inflation and recession.

We also know about links between emotional health and physical and mental health. Cardiovascular disease, neurologic issues, joint and muscle issues, and some cancers have been linked to negative emotions. Prolonged negative emotional health may lead to identifiable and diagnosable mental health disorders.

Distressing emotions can engulf us during a medical crisis, the loss of a friend or family member and other challenging situations. Conversely, joyous circumstances such as the planned birth of a child or a promotion at work may bring positive emotions. All of us naturally experience ups and downs in life. When negative emotions begin to take control, that is when we should do our best to recognize this and seek support.

What does support look like? At times the first steps are simply to become aware of a person's emotional health challenge and talk with that individual about it: "I noticed you seem sad. Is there anything I can do to help?" Vocalizing what has often been unspoken represents a huge step forward. Destigmatizing and understanding can positively shift the entire situation for some people.

Healthcare professionals offer in-person and online support services, yet the wait to access those services may be very long – too long – because of shortages of professionals, insurance requirements, scheduling conflicts and other hurdles.

In some cases, a healthcare professional doesn't detect your emotional distress. My own brother desperately needed professional care for his mental health but was dismissed from a hospital's emergency room.

Whatever the specifics of each situation, do not give up on seeking appropriate help! Keep pressing forward or have someone press forward for you. Together, we can be persistent advocates for ourselves and others.

Speak openly and without embarrassment about emotional health. Engage in activities that provide you peace, joy and happiness.

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Be well.

Source: [Hologic](#)

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