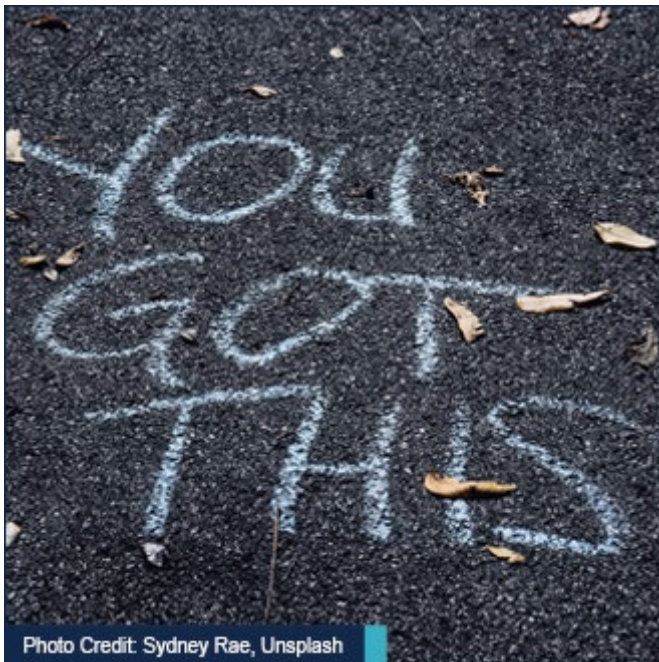


# WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

MAY 2021

## HEALTHY HARMONY - Mental Health is a Priority



*By Jackie Billhymer*

This time last year, we experienced the remote work environment in new and different ways. Kitchens, living rooms, basements, and bedrooms were turned into makeshift office spaces and we were just beginning to realize how much Zoom would become an everyday part of our work life. Whether adjusting to shared home office space with a partner or children studying remotely, or feeling alone and isolated without interaction with others, we all experienced – and continue to experience – an enormous amount of change due to the pandemic. Change can test our coping

abilities and affect our mental health and wellness.

May is Mental Health Awareness month and it gives us an opportunity to talk about mental health and the importance of connecting with resources that can support our mental well-being. **One of the most important things we can do for mental health awareness is to talk about it.** MentalHealth.gov has a [website](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/) with resources for starting conversations about mental health with family, friends, and communities. There is also information about services and support for mental health issues for people of all ages.

As a University of Illinois employee, there are a number of mental health resources available to you. The Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) has a terrific resource called [Be Well Illinois](#). The website has information and links to all Health Plan resources, as well as educational resources including webinars and podcasts. Several of these resources address mental health topics such as managing stress and burnout and improving your overall well-being. There are also state and university [employee assistance programs](#) available to employees who are eligible for the State of Illinois Employees Group Insurance Program (SEGIP). Employees may use sick leave for mental health reasons, as appropriate under the System's [sick leave policies](#). There are also leave provisions provided by the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act and American Rescue Plan Act](#).

Talking about mental health helps shine a light on the fact that getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Mental health is a priority. YOU are a priority.

