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Healthy Ideas For A Healthy Workplace

A Healthy State of Mind

You probably know Rosalynn Carter as the First Lady to the 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter. What you may not know about her is that for the past 30 years, she has been an active advocate for mental health issues.

Now working through the Carter Center's Mental Health Program, her efforts focus on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, establishing mental health insurance coverage equal to that available for medical care, promoting prevention and early intervention for children and families, and raising public awareness about mental health issues.

"The stigma is beginning to lift a little. When I began working in this field, people wouldn't say the words out loud if a family member was suffering from mental illness," she says. "Now it's in the news, it's being talked about, and more people are going for treatment than ever before."

Mrs. Carter points out that advances in science and medicine have greatly improved the outlook for patients. "With what we know now through research and better understanding of the brain, we have better diagnosis and treatments so that 90% of people with mental illnesses can recover and live normal lives. They might have to take medications to keep them healthy, but that's no different from people with other diseases."

Although Mrs. Carter is concerned about the future of funding for providing treatment and other services, she is encouraged that mental health is being recognized more and more as an integral part of overall physical health. She says, "There should be no shame or embarrassment associated with mental illness because it's part of our biological make-up. In fact, with so many effective treatments available, we need to empower people by educating them and giving them hope for recovery."

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For information on activities and programs at the Carter Center, please visit www.cartercenter.org. -Jeff Silver