HELPING HANDS

The Daunting World of Mental Health Apps

(Excerpts from Verywellmind.com (self-improvement), and Fiercehealthcare.com)

Where to Start? How to Choose an Effective Mental Health App for Your Client
With estimates of more than 10,000 mHealth apps available, a high turnover rate in app stores, and low barriers for developers to release apps in what the *Washington Post* called a "chaotic world" of mental health apps, we all could benefit from guidance on how to choose apps that are both evidence-based and protective of their privacy. Research suggests that self-help apps can be more beneficial when used as a part of therapy rather than without therapy, so the aim is finding how to combine these to work for self-use and together with a counselor.

User Reviews: Provider Feedback Is Crucial
When looking for mHealth apps sites such as PsyberGuide (from the nonprofit group One Mind) can be helpful. The American Psychiatric Association's App Advisor also offers a framework that guides you through the process of evaluating apps. In fact, a team of researchers recently created a database to collect reviews of apps based on those criteria. But because apps can be revised at any time and reviews can become outdated, the best way to choose what's best is to try out the app. "Reviews are great if they cover the version you're looking for. But they can get out-of-date quickly. If you're buying a 2021 model car, would you want to rely on reviews from the 2015 model?" asks Steven Chan, MD, MBA, clinical assistant professor (affiliated) at the Stanford University School of Medicine and medical director for Digital Health, Addiction Consultation & Treatment at the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System. "Review sites can only go so far in helping you choose," says Dr. Chan, who also works nationwide on policy and on grant-funded research on mHealth apps. "There are clues that can be helpful in determining whether the app is right for you, which is why you need to learn not just what makes a good app but also not be afraid to try it out. The cost should be low, and in some cases, free."

Mental health aps should rely on clinically validated measures, such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) screens to assess symptom improvement for anxiety, depression, and other common mental health issues. And mental health aps should base their products on evidence-based approaches and invest in research to support their therapies. With thousands of digital mental health tools on the market, many companies in the space are not doing enough to provide validation for their products. Are digital mental health companies measuring safety and clinical outcomes? Do they track them using gold standards? Do they publish their results in top medical journals so that world experts can verify and validate those processes? How well are they designing those studies? Ultimately, digital mental health companies will earn trust and respectability over time by publishing their proof and showing results of the value of the ap.

Looking for mental health services can be intimidating, especially in a technology-driven world that offers so many options. However, if you've wanted to address a mental health issue, but have been nervous about doing so in-person, the remote options available can rival more traditional mental health services. Many of these options are accessible via intuitive apps that are designed to streamline your mental health journey and take most of the guesswork out of finding the expert attention you've been seeking. Most of these apps allow you to access their features at any time, search for therapists and treatments while remaining anonymous, and offer a number of ways to stay engaged, like daily reminders, feelings trackers, and abundant learning material. While these mental health apps are meant to supplement a licensed therapist, they can be great tools to help you manage your mental health concerns and treatments.

The Best Mental Health Apps of 2022

(Excerpts from VeryWellMind.com)

- **Best Overall:** Moodfit
- **Best for Learning Coping Skills:** MoodMission
- **Best for Therapy:** Talkspace
- **Best for Stress Relief:** Sanvello
- **Best for Meditation:** Calm
- **Best Fun App:** Happify
- **Best for Depression:** Depression CBT Self-Help Guide
- **Best for BIPOC:** Shine
- **Best for Bipolar Disorder:** eMoods
- **Best for Symptom Tracking:** Bearable
- **Best for ADHD:** Todoist
- **Best for PTSD:** PTSD Coach

IAM
Peer Employee Assistance Program

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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2022

EAP Classes

EAP I

Feb. 27-March 4

EAP II

October 16-21

EAP III

November 6-11

No EAP IV Planned