

WHERE → TO ← START

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH
2024 OUTREACH TOOLKIT



Mental Health America

mhanational.org/may

THIS CAMPAIGN IS SUPPORTED BY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
JOHNSON & JOHNSON AND OTSUKA AMERICA PHARMACEUTICAL, INC.

INTRODUCTION

As we enter Mental Health Month this May, it is with great pride that we continue the tradition established in 1949 by Mental Health America. Every year, millions of Americans join us in promoting awareness, providing vital resources and education, and advocating for the mental health and well-being of all.

This year's theme for Mental Health Month is "Where to Start: Mental Health in a Changing World." In a world that is constantly evolving, it can be overwhelming to navigate the various challenges and changes happening around us. The pressures of work, relationships, and societal factors, like politics, climate change, and the economy, can significantly impact our mental well-being, sometimes even more than we realize.

While society is getting more comfortable discussing mental health, it can still be hard to know "Where to Start" when these pressures are impacting your daily life – what do you do when you think you might be experiencing signs and symptoms of a mental health condition?

In our 2024 Mental Health Month toolkit, you will learn how the modern world affects mental health and you will find new resources to help you navigate difficult times. We aim to empower you to take action. There are numerous ways to do that, from building up your coping toolbox to advocating for improved mental health in your community.

As we celebrate this Mental Health Month, let us embark on a journey together to prioritize our mental well-being in a changing world. Your actions, no matter how small, contribute to a collective effort in creating communities that value and support mental health.



Schroeder Stribling

Schroeder Stribling
President and CEO,
Mental Health America

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about Mental Health Month, please contact:
Danielle Fritze, Vice President of Public Education and Design at dfritze@mhanational.org.
Media inquiries should be directed to media@mhanational.org.

Mental Health America’s 2024 Mental Health Month toolkit provides free, practical resources, such as information about how the changing world impacts mental health, how to build coping skills, and where to start finding help for mental health challenges. This year’s toolkit includes:

GENERAL

- Outreach Ideas
- Be Seen in Green Challenge and Building Green Lighting
- Key Messages
- Email Announcement
- Drop-In Article
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Sample Post Language
- Shareable Images

OTHER

- Additional Resources
- Affiliate Directory
- Zoom Backgrounds

FACT SHEETS

- 4 Things Likely Affecting Your Mental Health, and 4 Things You Can Do About It
- Negative News Coverage and Mental Health
- Things You Can Say When You’re Not “Fine”
- What to Say When Someone Tells You They’re Fine, But They’re Not
- Building Your Coping Toolbox
- Helpful vs. Harmful: Ways to Manage Emotions

COPING TOOLS

- Word Bank: What’s Underneath?
- Letter: Time to Talk
- Worksheet: Dealing with Tough Situations
- Worksheet: Looking for Good
- Worksheet: Managing Frustration and Anger
- Worksheet: Processing Trauma and Stress
- Worksheet: Social Confidence and Connections
- Decision Map: Where to Go
- Coloring Pages

POSTERS

- Tips Calendar
- Screening Poster
- PATH to Calm Poster

We’ll be reaching out in mid-June to ask about your outreach and impact. Make sure to keep track of your efforts by doing things like:

- Counting how many handouts you distribute;
- Tracking media hits and impressions;
- Downloading analytics for social media posts during Mental Health Month;
- If you do a screening event or health fair, counting how many people visit your booth; and
- Conducting a pre/post survey to see how you’ve increased knowledge about mental health issues among those you reach. Set up a quick survey of up to 10 questions for free using SurveyMonkey.com.

LIKE OUR MATERIALS? WANT MORE?

MHA merchandise is available through the Mental Health America Store to supplement your outreach efforts. Visit the MHA Store* at store.mhanational.org.

*MHA Affiliates – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on materials at the MHA store. Email vsterns@mhanational.org if you need help getting your affiliate discount code.

OUTREACH IDEAS

WHAT INDIVIDUALS CAN DO

Share information locally:

- Ask wellness-oriented businesses like your local gym, yoga studio, or health food store to display one of the posters from the toolkit.
- Reach out to your personal and professional contacts to encourage them to download the toolkit and share its resources with their customers and employees through newsletters and social media.
- Think about other groups in your community that could benefit from downloading the “May is Mental Health Month Toolkit” – doctors’ offices, libraries, schools, churches, synagogues, and other religious gathering places are a good start. You can be a tremendous help in getting this information to people who need it!
- Include mhanational.org/may in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media posts so people can access the webpages that have been created for Mental Health Month and other mental health information.

Help spread the word about screening:

- Put MHA’s screening link in the bio of your Instagram profile. For example, say, “Check up on your mental health at the link below,” and link to mhascreening.org in the blank area where it says “link.”
- Take a screen at mhascreening.org and share that you “took a checkup from the neck up.” Encourage others to do the same!

Create a personal fundraiser:

During Mental Health Month, you can show your support for Mental Health America by creating a personal fundraiser in just a few simple steps. It’s a great way to share your story, create awareness, and raise money for Mental Health America’s important work. Visit mhanational.org/may for tips on getting started and create a fundraiser today to make a difference!

- Share why mental health matters to you or share your screening story.
- Incorporate mental health fast facts into your fundraiser. Get them at mhanational.org/mentalhealthfacts.
- If gaming is your thing, try starting a fundraiser on Twitch.

Call or email your elected officials and let them know why you think mental health should be a priority:

- Ask your governor or mayor to declare May as Mental Health Month. Use the sample proclamation in the toolkit.
- Get in touch with your U.S. senators. Find yours using the drop-down menu in the top left at senate.gov.
- Contact your U.S. representative. Find yours using the ZIP code search in the top right at house.gov.
- Check out MHA’s most recent “State of Mental Health in America” report, find out where your state ranks, and share it with your elected officials: mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america
- Share detailed data about suicidal thinking, depression, psychosis, and trauma across your state and county from mhanational.org/mhamapping/mha-state-county-data.

Get your employer involved:

- Not sure where to start? Visit mhanational.org/workplace for ideas and resources to share with your company.
- Ask company leadership to recognize and celebrate Mental Health Month in May.
- Share with leadership why mental health is important in the workplace [with this infographic](#).
- Contact your [local MHA affiliate](#) to host a speaker or training in your workplace.

Share your story:

- Post on social media about your own mental health journey.
- Write something for listservs you are a part of, alumni newsletters, blogs, student newspapers – your story really does matter! And people want to hear it!
- Contact your local TV station or student TV station and share your mental health story.

Reach out individually:

- Think about whom you interact with on a regular basis that would find this information useful for themselves or others.
- Think about friends or family with whom you have been wanting to discuss mental health – Mental Health Month is the perfect time to start the conversation.

Show your support:

- Shop MHA's online store to stock up on your mental health awareness swag: store.mhanational.org
- [Donate to MHA](#) or one of its affiliates during May. Find your local affiliate by visiting arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate.

WHAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO:

- Organize a community run or walk for mental health (these can also be done virtually). Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Email your partners, family members and friends, donors, and local officials inviting them to participate.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, church, mall, or library). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to mhascreening.org. Make sure to have a printer so people can print their results. If an in-person event isn't possible, host a webinar or Facebook Live event.
- Team up with other local wellness organizations to host a community meet and greet.
- Plan a pop-up art or music event to raise awareness with community members and the media.
- Work with local businesses or municipalities to light up locations green, the official awareness color for mental health.
- Collaborate with local and state legislators to plan an advocacy event and encourage advocates, consumers, concerned citizens, and community and business leaders to discuss your community's mental health needs with policymakers.

Contact your local MHA affiliate to discuss ideas or collaborate here: arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO:

Host a Q&A with a mental health professional:

- Invite students to write anonymous questions about mental health conditions and how to take care of their mental health. Have the school counselor answer the questions and have teachers read answers to the class.
- Choose a topic and host an "Ask Me Anything"-style chat online for parents with a clinician or representative from your local department of behavioral health. Promote the event and invite participants to ask the expert any questions they have regarding mental health.

Share stories and information:

- Ensure your students are aware of and know how to access available resources.
- Include mental health as part of the conversation in alumni newsletters, department-wide or student-life communications, and across social media.
- Direct people to MHA's Mental Health Month toolkit, mhanational.org/may in your messaging for the month.
- Host mental health monologues. Invite students to submit anonymous stories to be performed by student actors – or the individuals themselves – at an assembly or record them and share the video.
- Lime green is the official awareness color for mental health – coordinate a day, such as a spirit day or "paint the school green" day, to celebrate and honor mental health awareness.

WHAT BUSINESS LEADERS CAN DO:

- Announce your Mental Health Month plans to your staff with the email template in this toolkit to encourage workers to participate in the month's activities and learn about available supports.
- Share openly with your staff how you prioritize mental health in your personal and professional life.
- Encourage workers to take an anonymous and confidential online mental health screening at mhascreening.org. Posters and postcards are available to print [here](#) and post in common spaces.
- Educate workers about your organization's benefits and resources that support mental health using this [email template](#).
- Light up your work locations green, the official awareness color for mental health, and ask workers to wear green in May.
- Host a workplace wellness event for all staff. Here are [12 tips to start planning](#).
- Collaborate with your [local MHA affiliate](#) on awareness activities or a fundraising campaign.
- Shop MHA's Store, store.mhanational.org, for gifts to reward workers, spread mental health awareness, and support a good cause.
- Find new ways to uplift workers, ensure they are valued and heard, and improve your organization's culture by reviewing your organization's mental health practices. [Review best practices and policies here](#).
- Use the sample posts from this toolkit or share posts from MHA's social media accounts on your organization's social media networks (LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) each day to raise awareness of May is Mental Health Month activities. Make sure to tag MHA's account so we can see it!

MAY WEBINARS

Healing from within: somatic practices for your mind and body

To best care for your mental health, you need a variety of tools to help you cope. This session will explore one tool for healing – somatic practices. Somatic techniques are being used to help cultivate a body-mind connection, regulate emotions, and release stress, tension, and trauma. We will discuss how simple yet powerful exercises impact mental health and how you can explore this kind of healing.

Wired Differently: neurodivergence in the digital age

24/7 information and stimulation can be overwhelming and hard on mental health for anyone. For neurodivergent individuals, living in 2024 poses its challenges, benefits, and opportunities. During this webinar, you will hear from neurodivergent individuals about their experiences, how they have overcome challenges, found support for their mental health, and navigate a world of technology.

From algorithms to empathy: exploring AI's innovations and challenges

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the landscape for mental health providers and giving them insights to potentially enhance patient care. In this session, we will dive into how AI influences help-seeking behaviors, facilitates access to support and resources, and poses ethical considerations, risks, and complex challenges for mental health.

SIGN UP FOR MHA WEBINARS



MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA CONFERENCE

DISRUPT > REFORM > *Transform*

Attend the Mental Health America Conference and join peers, providers, government officials, media, and advocates to ignite a collective spark, share invaluable knowledge, and foster the next wave of advocacy for mental health.

At this year's conference, we will explore ways to DISRUPT systemic barriers, REFORM harmful practices that prevent progress, and TRANSFORM the current landscape, ensuring everyone has equitable opportunity for optimal mental health and well-being.

Nonprofit, young adult, and standard registration rates are available for in-person attendance, and virtual access is free with a suggested donation.

Sept. 19–21, 2024
Washington, D.C.

Register and learn more:
mhanational.org/conference

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH



HELP US LIGHT UP GREEN FOR MENTAL HEALTH MONTH!

MHA would like your help with a coordinated effort to reach out to buildings and landmarks across the country with a request to light up green for Mental Health Month. Our goal is to light up as many buildings as possible on the evening of May 1, 2024 (your local area building may want to light up on a different date or, if they already traditionally light up on a different date — that's fine too). If they are willing to light up green for longer than a day, the first week of May or even the entire month would be awesome!

Email Genevieve DeRose at gderose@mhanational.org to let her know your city/state, which building you've requested be green-lit, and if your request was approved.

BE SEEN IN GREEN CHALLENGE MAY 1–MAY 31ST, 2024



WEAR GREEN AND SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS!

Did you know that 1 in 5 Americans will experience a diagnosable mental health condition this year? By joining the “Be Seen in Green” challenge during Mental Health Month this May, you’re not just wearing a color, you’re shining a light of hope and support on mental health for millions.

Aiming to educate Americans about mental health and mental health conditions, Mental Health Month was started in 1949 by Mental Health America. Over the years, we’ve engaged millions in our mission through media, events, resources, and screenings. This tradition continues with a vibrant display of solidarity: wearing green to symbolize our collective commitment to mental well-being.

Why wear green?

As the official color for mental health awareness, green represents renewal, hope, and vitality. Wearing green, whether it’s a complete outfit, a simple green awareness bracelet, or lighting up your building, symbolizes unwavering support for mental health. Participating in this challenge sends a powerful message: Mental health is important, and by joining together, we are advocating for and supporting mental health.

Our objective

This year, we aim to have 300 individuals to take on this challenge and raise vital dollars for Mental Health America. Mental Health America relies on these funds to advance its mission through education, direct services, research, policy, and advocacy. By participating, you’ll help fuel our vision of a world in which all people and communities have equitable opportunities for mental well-being and are able to flourish and live with purpose and meaning. Every dollar raised helps to ensure that our work never stops and that our resources remain accessible to everyone, everywhere.

JOIN THE “BE SEEN IN GREEN” CHALLENGE

No matter where you do it, whether virtually or in person, with your friends, classmates, colleagues, or on your own, you will love the “Be Seen in Green” challenge and enjoy earning special MHA prizes. Here’s how to participate:

- 1. Sign up:** Register to participate in the “Be Seen in Green” challenge. You can join as an individual or create a team with friends, family, or colleagues.
- 2. Pick a date:** While we encourage participation on May 16, 2024 (Mental Health Action Day), feel free to host your event on any day in May that suits you.
- 3. Set your goal/plan your fundraising:** Every dollar counts. Whether it’s running a 5K, organizing a bake sale, or wearing green, set a personal or team fundraising goal. Our suggested fundraising goal is \$100 per individual.
- 4. Spread the word:** Use our fundraising and Mental Health Month toolkit resources to share your participation and reach out to friends, family, and coworkers via social media, email, and more.
- 5. Celebrate your achievement:** Complete the challenge, earn your prize, and join us for a virtual celebration, sharing the impact of your efforts!

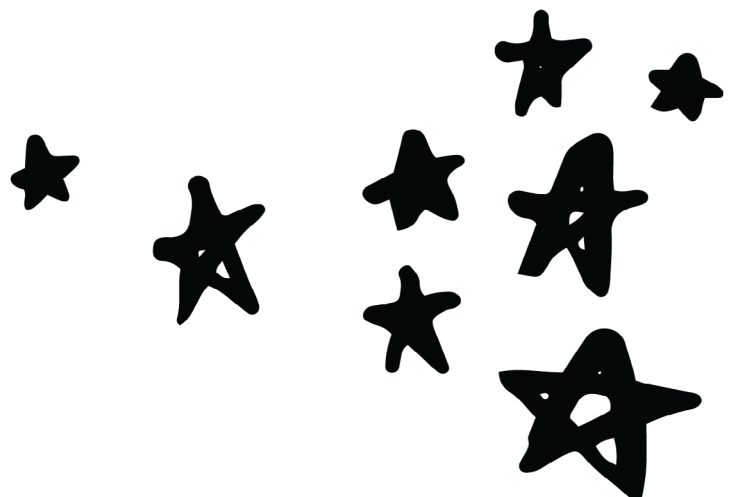
BOOST YOUR IMPACT AND UNLOCK REWARDS!

Celebrate your participation and achievements with our tiered rewards, along with contest awards for categories such as Best “Be Seen in Green” Workplace/School, Most Creative “Be Seen in Green” Outfit, and more.

Get started today by registering at mhanational.org/mental-health-month/fundraise and downloading your fundraising toolkit for more information.

FIVE FUNDRAISER IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

- **Run, walk, or bike in green:** Grab your running shoes and ask for donations to support your efforts. Ask your friends, family, and colleagues to support your efforts by donating to your fundraising page.
- **Green gratitude grams:** Offer to send personalized notes or digital messages of gratitude, encouragement, or humor in exchange for donations.
- **Dress up in green:** Create a green outfit or wear an awareness ribbon all month long! Whether it’s dyeing your hair green for reaching a fundraising milestone or hosting a “Best Dressed” competition, creativity is your ally. Ask your family and friends to donate to your “Be Seen In Green” campaign.
- **Bake/cook it green:** Host a green-themed bake sale and ask for contributions for your mental health awareness creations.
- **Plan to go live in green on Facebook or other platforms:** Do you have a special talent or expertise? Get creative and incorporate green into your stream. You can do things like paint your nails green and teach manicure tips, while encouraging donations to your fundraising page.



KEY MESSAGES

GENERAL:

- Mental Health America is proud to have founded in 1949 what is now known as Mental Health Month. Every May, we come together with millions of Americans to continue the tradition of promoting awareness, offering vital resources and education, and advocating for the mental health and well-being of everyone.
- Being able to maintain good mental health is essential to each and every individual's overall health and well-being. Mental health conditions are common, manageable, and treatable.
- One in 5 people will experience a mental health condition in any given year, and everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.
- About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their lives, with symptoms starting by age 14 for the majority of people.
- It is never too soon to seek treatment for your mental health. Getting help early saves lives.
- Mental Health America Screening provides a free, anonymous, quick, and easy way to determine whether a person is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Take a mental health test at mhascreening.org.
- This May, through new resources, we will help you:
 - Learn how modern life affects mental health with new tools to navigate our changing world.
 - Act by building your coping toolbox so you can manage stress, difficult emotions, and challenging situations.
 - Advocate to improve mental health for yourself, your friends and family, and your community.

2024:

- This year's theme for Mental Health Month is Where to Start: Mental Health in a Changing World.
- The world is constantly changing – for better or for worse – and it can be overwhelming to deal with everything going on around you.
- We know relationships and the pressures of work and school can impact your mental well-being, but it can be less obvious when the world around you is the root cause of issues. Politics, climate change, the economy, and other factors that can feel out of your control play a role in a person's mindset.
- While society is getting more comfortable discussing mental health, it can still be hard to know "Where to Start" when it comes to taking care of your own well-being.

LEARN:

- To fully understand how the world around us affects mental health, it is important to know what factors are at play – some of which an individual can change, such as screen time, and others that may be outside of their control, like access to basic resources or current events.
- Social drivers of health include economic status, education, your neighborhood, social inclusion, and access to resources like nutritious food, health care, green space, and transportation. All of these factors can have a far-reaching impact on not just your physical health, but also your mental health. Loneliness, current events, technology, and social drivers are having an impact on the mental well-being of Americans, but there are protective measures that can prevent mental health conditions from developing or keep symptoms from becoming worse or severe.
- Navigating uncertainty and fear about what is happening in the world and what the future holds can feel overwhelming, but no one has to suffer in silence. There is hope.

- In today’s tech-filled world, screens can dominate our daily lives and impact our mental well-being. What we choose to look at and how much time we spend on our devices really matters and can make a big difference in how we feel.
- It’s common to feel like no one understands what you’re going through, but reaching out can be the first step in improving your mental health. Loneliness can take a toll on your mental and physical health, and it’s important to find meaningful ways to connect with others.

ACT:

- There are many ways to take action – big and small – to improve mental health and increase resiliency, regardless of the situations you are dealing with.
- Knowing when to turn to friends, family, and coworkers when you are struggling with life’s challenges can help improve your mental health. MHA’s 2024 Mental Health Month toolkit has tools for starting these important conversations.
- Change is hard, but it’s unavoidable in life. It’s important to find coping skills that can help you process these changes, prioritize your mental well-being, and accept the situations in life that we can’t control.
- Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn’t feel hard or out of your control. If it does, there is help. One free, anonymous, quick, and easy way to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health test at mhascreening.org.
 - After you take a mental health screen, you will be given resources and tips to try on your own, ways you can connect with others or find a provider, and learn about treatments.
 - Your screening results can be used to start a conversation with your primary care provider or a trusted friend or family member.
 - A mental health test is a great way to begin planning a course of action for addressing your mental health.
- Seeking professional help for your mental health when self-help efforts aren’t working is a sign of strength, not weakness. You don’t have to go through these struggles alone.

ADVOCATE:

- “Advocacy” doesn’t always mean talking to a government official or local leader. There are things everyone can do to improve the way mental health conditions are perceived and treated.
- Storytelling is a powerful way to break down stigma and promote open conversations about mental health.
- It can be intimidating, but everyone has the power to drive policy change. Contact your elected officials and urge them to support legislation that increases funding for mental health services, expands access to treatment, and protects the rights of people with mental health conditions.
- Integrating mental health care into primary care, and providing mental health programs in schools, workplaces, and communities can improve the well-being of everyone.
- In an election year, it’s especially important to understand where candidates stand on mental health issues. Mental Health America has resources that can help, and we urge everyone to vote with mental health in mind.

EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT

Subject Line: May is Mental Health Month at [ORGANIZATION]!

Dear Team,

May is Mental Health Month, dedicated to prioritizing our well-being and promoting open conversations about mental health. At [ORGANIZATION], we recognize the importance of mental health and its impact on our personal and professional lives.

This year's theme, [Where to Start: Mental Health in a Changing World](#), reminds us that dealing with life's pressures can be overwhelming, and everyone deserves to feel supported and empowered to seek help when needed.

Throughout May, we will host various events and initiatives to raise awareness, encourage self-care, and connect you with resources. These initiatives include: [EDIT TO FIT YOUR ORGANIZATION, EXAMPLES LISTED BELOW]

- Guest speaker sessions to hear from experts about mental health conditions, coping mechanisms, and maintaining mental well-being;
- Wellness workshops to learn techniques for managing stress and improving focus;
- Lunch & Learn sessions to explore topics like healthy well-being habits, emotional intelligence, and navigating difficult conversations; and
- A Workplace Wellness Fair to discover local mental health services and support organizations.

Now is the perfect time to learn more about the benefits and resources we offer to support workers' mental health and well-being. At [ORGANIZATION], we're proud to offer: [EDIT TO FIT YOUR ORGANIZATION, EXAMPLES LISTED BELOW]

- An open and honest workplace culture that encourages conversations about mental health;
- An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with confidential counseling services available 24/7 for all workers and their families;
- An active mental health employee/business resource group that builds community and improves available support; and
- In-person/virtual mental health support groups that connect colleagues in a safe and confidential space to share experiences.

We encourage you to participate in these activities and use the available benefits and resources to support you and your families. Stay tuned for more information about specific events and registration details.

In the meantime, you can visit [CUSTOMIZE, FOR EXAMPLE] our [Mental Health Resources page on the intranet](#) or mhanational.org for more information. Please get in touch with your manager or [CONTACT NAME] at [CONTACT EMAIL] with any questions.

Let's make May a month of mental health awareness, support, and action at [ORGANIZATION]!

Sincerely,

[Your Name/Company Leadership]

DROP-IN ARTICLE

We live in a rapidly changing world that can be complex to navigate. About half of Americans can remember a time when we were not constantly connected and it was easier to tune out the noise of the world, while the younger half of the population can't imagine life without the internet.

Modern life can have a significant impact on mental health — for better or for worse. The disturbing imagery in the media we are exposed to today can be deeply unsettling. At the same time, our current technology also allows us to mobilize and provide collective support more efficiently in times of natural disasters or injustice.

And ironically, while our devices make us more connected than ever, loneliness is an increasingly serious public health concern. We are now able to have conversations with friends and family on the other side of the world in real time. However, constant connection also means that we will know if we weren't invited to a friend's party down the street. Recent survey data show that [more than half of U.S. adults \(58%\) are lonely](#).

Finding a sense of calm and focusing on well-being when you are having mental health concerns can be daunting in our fast-paced society. It can be especially challenging to know where to start.

May is Mental Health Month and [ORG NAME] is raising awareness of the important role mental health plays in our lives. We are encouraging members of the community to take action toward protecting their mental health and overall well-being.

This May, [ORG NAME] will focus their efforts on helping members of the community to:

- LEARN how modern life affects mental health with new resources to navigate our changing world.
- ACT by building a coping toolbox to manage stress, difficult emotions, and challenging situations.
- ADVOCATE to improve mental health for themselves, the ones they love, and their community.

Mental Health America has created a toolkit to help individuals figure out where to start. The toolkit provides free, practical resources for addressing mental health. Go to mhanational.org/may to learn more.

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition and are unsure of where to start, take a free, private mental health test at mhascreening.org to determine next steps.

[Insert information about how to contact ORG or a specific program you may want to highlight].

It's important to remember that working on your mental health takes time. Change won't happen overnight. Instead, by focusing on small changes, you can move through the stressors of modern life and develop long-term strategies to support yourself — and others — on an ongoing basis.

PROCLAMATION

Proclamation: May is Mental Health Month in [City/County/State]

WHEREAS, mental health is an essential part of overall well-being, impacting individuals, families, and communities across [City/County/State];

WHEREAS, one in five American adults experiences a mental health condition each year and everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health;

WHEREAS, despite its prevalence, mental health remains shrouded in stigma, preventing many from seeking help;

WHEREAS, early intervention and access to quality care are crucial for managing mental health conditions and improving quality of life;

WHEREAS, May is recognized nationally as Mental Health Awareness Month, providing an opportunity to raise awareness, combat stigma, and promote mental health resources;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [Name of Official], [Title of Official], do hereby proclaim May 2024 as Mental Health Month in [City/County/State].

I encourage all residents of [City/County/State] to:

- **Educate themselves and others** about mental health conditions, treatment options, and available resources.
- **Challenge stigma** by speaking respectfully and inclusively about mental health.
- **Seek help** if they are struggling with their mental health and encourage others to do the same.
- **Support organizations** that provide mental health services and advocacy.
- **Create safe and supportive environments** for open conversations about mental health.
- Together, we can create a community where everyone feels empowered to prioritize their mental well-being and seek help when needed.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of [City/County/State] to be affixed this [Date] day of May, 2024.

[Signature]
[Name of Official]
[Title of Official]

Additional Notes:

You can customize this proclamation by adding specific statistics about mental health in your area, highlighting local mental health resources, and outlining any events or initiatives planned for the month. Be sure to replace the bracketed information with the appropriate details.

You can also consider including a call to action, such as encouraging residents to participate in a mental health walk or screening event.

SOCIAL POST TEXT

TOOLKIT:

This #MentalHealthMonth, we invite you to learn #WhereToStart when it comes to taking care of your mental health. Download the toolkit: mhanational.org/may

Download Mental Health America's #MentalHealthMonth toolkit to learn about how modern life and our changing world affect mental health: mhanational.org/may #WhereToStart

GENERAL:

While society is getting more comfortable discussing mental health, it can still be hard to know #WhereToStart when it comes to taking care of ourselves. ❤️ Learn more with Mental Health America's #MentalHealthMonth resources: mhanational.org/may

It's ALWAYS a good time to start working on your mental health. 📅 Learn more about #WhereToStart here: mhanational.org/may #MentalHealthMonth

Knowing when to turn to friends, family, and coworkers when you're struggling with life's challenges can help improve your mental health. MHA's #MentalHealthMonth resources are here for when you need help figuring out #WhereToStart: mhanational.org/may

Want to know #WhereToStart with mental health advocacy? There are things *everyone* can do to improve the way mental health conditions are perceived and treated. Learn more: mhanational.org/may #MentalHealthMonth

FACTORS:

To understand how our world affects our #mentalhealth, it's important to learn which factors are at play. These range from things we CAN change (screen time 📱 relationships) and things we CAN'T change (access to resources 🏠 current events 📰). Learn more at mhanational.org/may #MentalHealthMonth #WhereToStart

Current events, loneliness, technology, and social drivers are the top four things affecting everyone's mental health today. This #MentalHealthMonth, we encourage you to check out MHA's free mental health resources to help you improve your mental health. Learn more at mhanational.org/may ❤️ #WhereToStart

A 2022 study found that 73% of American adults reported being overwhelmed by the number of crises going on in the world. The good news? Taking action and advocating for causes you care about can be therapeutic in its own way. Learn more with Mental Health America's #MentalHealthMonth resources: mhanational.org/may #WhereToStart

Having the internet at your fingertips can be a gift - you're probably reading this on your phone or computer right now! But it's not without its downfalls. Social media can cause FOMO, depression, & reduced self-esteem. This #MentalHealthMonth, try taking screen breaks when it starts to feel like too much. ❤️ mhanational.org/may

Did you know where you live, work, learn, and play (AKA social drivers of health) can affect your mental health? These include access to resources, your neighborhood, economic status, and community. Learn more about their effects on MHA's #MentalHealthMonth resource page: mhanational.org/may #WhereToStart

TIPS:

Here are 5 things you can do for your #mentalhealth this week:

1. Make a list of 5 things you're grateful for today.
2. Practice positive affirmations.
3. Start a conversation about mental health.
4. Stay hydrated!
5. Take a break from screens.

#MentalHealthMonth #WhereToStart

What can we do when it feels like the world is weighing on us? For starters, we can find a support system, set boundaries with technology, get involved in advocacy, and learn healthy coping skills! Find more tools ✂️ to get you started here: mhanational.org/may #WhereToStart

Everyone goes through rough periods, so it's important to take care of yourself and have healthy coping tools on standby to use when times get tough. This #MentalHealthMonth, start building your coping toolbox ✂️ using MHA's #WhereToStart resources: mhanational.org/may

What do you say when you're not feeling "fine"? Here are a few alternatives:

"I'm actually going through some stuff."

"Today is not my day."

"I'm feeling some kind of way."

Get more help navigating tough conversations on MHA's #MentalHealthMonth page: mhanational.org/may

SCREENING:

Life can be challenging, and sometimes it's hard to know #WhereToStart when you're experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. You don't have to start alone: take a free mental health test at mhascreening.org 📄 #MentalHealthMonth

Taking a mental health test is one of the easiest ways to start working on your mental health. Get screened at mhascreening.org 📄 #MentalHealthMonth #WhereToStart

Seeking professional help for your mental health is a sign of strength. If you're struggling to figure out #WhereToStart, Mental Health America's free, anonymous mental health screen is here to help. After you take the test, you'll receive resources to help you take the next step. Take a free mental health test at mhascreening.org 📄 #MentalHealthMonth

CRISIS:

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach the Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

Hashtags:

#WhereToStart

#MentalHealthMonth


Links:


mhanational.org/may

mhascreening.org

DON'T FORGET TO TAG US!

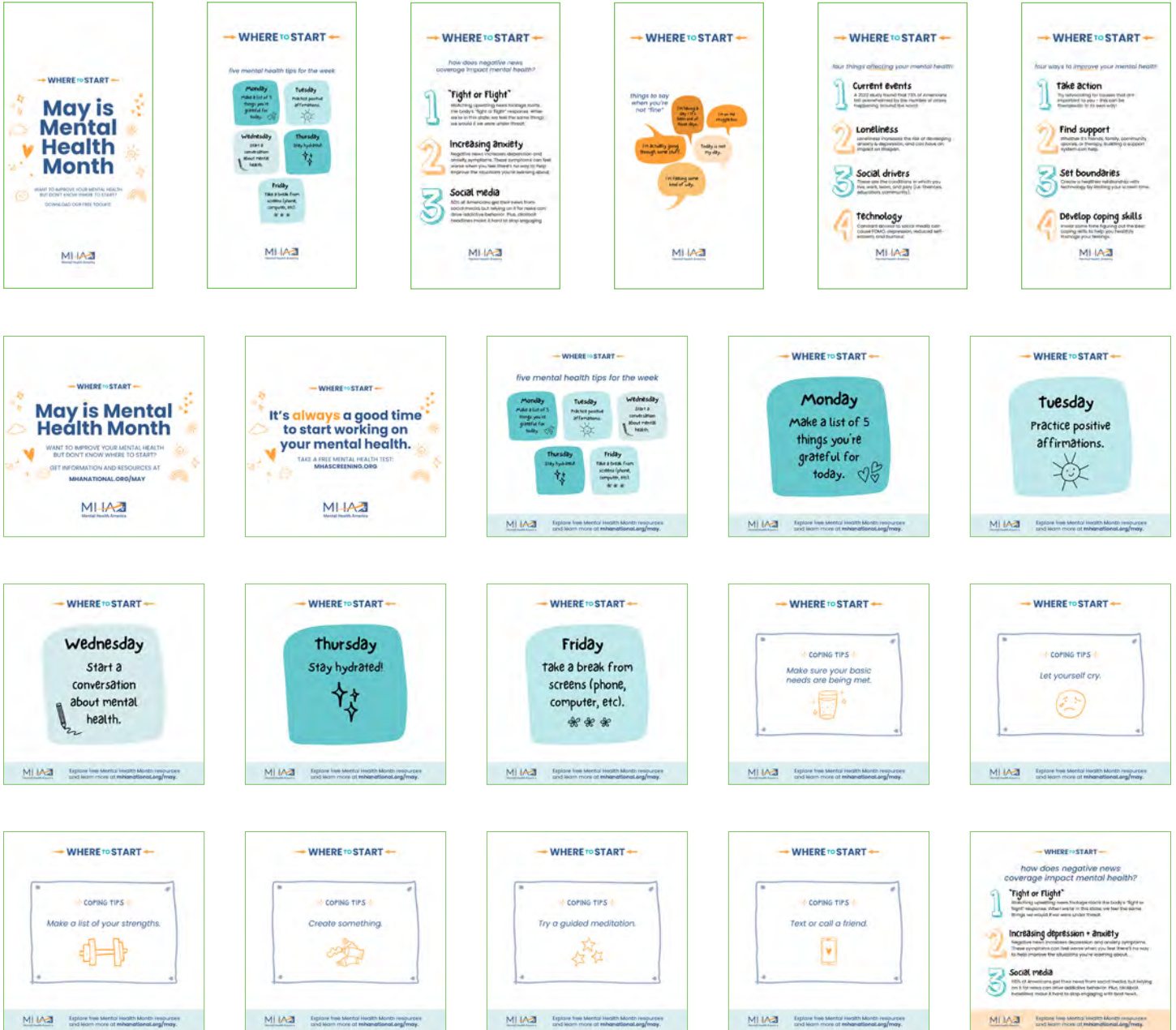
     @mentalhealthamerica

 @mental-health-america

 @mentalhealtham

SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES

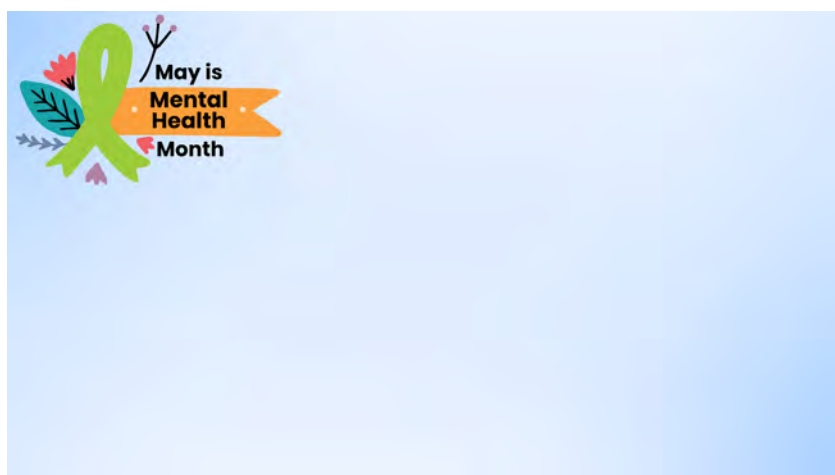
Download and save the images below for use on your social media platforms or websites by visiting mhanational.org/mental-health-month/2024-toolkit-download and downloading the images zip file, or going to mhanational.org/mental-health-month/graphics-shareables.



Additional images are available on our website!

ZOOM BACKGROUNDS

Download and save the images below for use on your social media platforms or websites by visiting mhanational.org/mental-health-month/2024-toolkit-download and downloading the images zip file, or going to mhanational.org/mental-health-month/graphics-shareables.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

24/7 TOOLS:

MHA Screening: Online screening at mhascreening.org is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine if you're experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Our screens are free, confidential, and scientifically validated.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free, and confidential support to people in distress – you don't need to be suicidal to reach out. Call 988 to be connected with a crisis counselor. Crisis counselors who speak Spanish are available by calling 988 and pressing 2.

Texting the 988 Lifeline: When you text 988, you will complete a short survey letting the crisis counselor know a little about your situation. You will be connected with a trained crisis counselor in a crisis center who will answer the text, provide support, and share resources if needed.

Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741 to be connected with a crisis counselor who will help you get through your big emotions.

Warmlines: Warmlines are staffed by trained peers who have been through their own mental health struggles and know what it's like to need someone to talk to. For more information on warmlines, visit screening.mhanational.org/content/need-talk-someone-warmlines

BlackLine: BlackLine provides a space for peer support and counseling, while witnessing and affirming the lived experiences of folx who are most impacted by systematic oppression with an LGBTQ+ Black femme lens. Call 1-800-604- 5841. Note: This resource is divested from the police.

Caregiver Help Desk: Contact Caregiver Action Network's Care Support Team by dialing 855-227-3640. Staffed by caregiving experts, the Help Desk helps you find the right information you need to help you navigate your complex caregiving challenges. Caregiving experts are available 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. EST.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: If you or a child you know is being hurt or doesn't feel safe at home, you can call or text 1-800-4-ACHILD (1-800-422-4453) or start an online chat at childhelp.org to reach a crisis counselor. They can help you figure out next steps to work through what is happening and stay safe.

Disaster Distress Helpline: A crisis line that individuals can contact when natural or man-made traumatic events occur, such as floods, earthquakes, and terrorist acts. The Helpline will provide information, support, and counseling. Call 1-800-985-5990.

Domestic Violence Hotline: If you're experiencing domestic violence, looking for resources or information, or are questioning unhealthy aspects of your relationship, call 1-800-799-7233 or go to thehotline.org to virtually chat with an advocate.

NAMI Helpline: A free, nationwide peer support service providing information, resource referrals, and support to people living with a mental health condition, their family members and caregivers, mental health providers, and the public. Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264), weekdays from 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. EST.

StrongHearts Native Helpline: Call 1-844-762-8483. The StrongHearts Native Helpline is a confidential and anonymous culturally appropriate domestic violence and dating violence helpline for Native Americans, available every day from 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. CST.

The Trevor Project: The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ youth. Trained counselors are available 24/7 to youth in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe, judgment-free person to talk to. Call 1-866-488-7386, text START to 678-678, or start an online chat at thetrevorproject.org/get-help.

Trans Lifeline: Dial 877-565-8860 for U.S. support and 877-330-6366 in Canada. Trans Lifeline's hotline is a peer support service run by trans people, for trans and questioning callers.

Veterans Crisis Line: Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Open 24/7, call 1-800-273-8255.

MHA RESOURCES:

LEARN *how modern life affects your mental health with resources to navigate our changing world.*

Where to start:

- [MHA's "Where to Start" book](#)
- [Finding help](#)
- [How do I know if I have a mental illness?](#)
- [I'm looking for mental health help for myself](#)
- [I'm looking for mental health help for someone else](#)
- [Finding therapy](#)
- [I need more emotional support](#)
- [Conquering recovery](#)
- [Mental health conditions](#)
- [How do I ask my friends and family for help?](#)
- [Should I go to therapy?](#)

Loneliness:

- [Connecting with your community](#)
- [Connect with others](#)
- [Feeling lonely in a crowd](#)
- [Find support groups](#)
- [How can connecting with others help my mental health?](#)
- [I feel isolated](#)
- [Is loneliness making my mental health struggles harder?](#)
- [Is your child lonely?](#)
- [I'm feeling lonely](#)
- [Loneliness is hard \(for kids\)](#)
- [Social belonging and confidence](#)
- [Social support: getting and staying connected](#)

Technology:

- [8 best meditation apps](#)
- [Can an app help my mental health problems?](#)
- [How does online therapy work?](#)
- [How to find healthy online communities](#)
- [Online behavior and mental health](#)
- [Protecting your child's mental health online](#)
- [Social media, youth, and comparison](#)
- [The do's of social media](#)
- [Tips to help youth avoid social comparison](#)
- [What are the best apps for anxiety?](#)
- [What are the best apps for depression?](#)
- [What should I look for in a mental health app?](#)
- [Why do I compare myself to others online?](#)

News:

- [Coping with disaster](#)
- [How can I be okay when the world is terrible?](#)
- [I'm angry about the injustices I see around me](#)
- [Mental health during a global conflict](#)

Webinars from MHA:

- [Being more intentional about our mental health](#)
- [Community support: finding connection in new spaces](#)
- [Engaging youth in safe online spaces to address mental health concerns](#)
- [I don't know how to navigate my child's use of technology](#)
- [Is telehealth right for me?](#)
- [Managing mental health medications](#)
- [Navigating depression: early diagnosis and overcoming barriers](#)
- [Recovery is lonely](#)
- [Safe spaces: how digital environments can serve youth](#)
- [The distorted mirror: technology's impact on youth body image](#)
- [Where do I fit in?](#)

[Sign up to receive information about our monthly webinars.](#)

ACT by building your coping toolbox so you can manage stress, difficult emotions, and challenging situations.

- [Take a mental health screen](#)
- [Access DIY tools](#)
- [Dealing with change](#)
- [Dealing with the worst-case scenario](#)
- [Dealing with tough situations](#)
- [Guided weekly journal](#)
- [Helpful vs. harmful ways to manage your emotions](#)
- [Identifying feelings](#)
- [Keeping your mind grounded](#)
- [Looking for good: finding positives in a bad situation](#)
- [Managing frustration and anger](#)
- [Opening your mind to the outdoors](#)
- [Planning your routine](#)
- [Practicing radical acceptance](#)
- [Preparing to share: talking about hard topics](#)
- [Prioritizing self-care](#)
- [Processing trauma and stress](#)
- [Questions to help QTBIPOC find affirming mental health providers](#)
- [Self-care check up](#)
- [Shaping your home environment](#)
- [Social confidence and connections](#)
- [Starting a conversation with someone about their mental health](#)
- [Talking to your doctor about mental health](#)
- [Think ahead: mental health crisis plan](#)
- [Where to go when you've decided to seek help](#)

ADVOCATE to improve mental health for yourself, your friends and family, and your community.

- [Become a mental health advocate in 7 steps](#)
- [Join the MHA Advocacy Network to receive up-to-date information and action alerts](#)
- [Take action on MHA's latest alerts](#)
- [Ways to give to further mental health research, public education, and advocacy](#)

MHA reports and tools to help you make the case for mental health:

- [A framework for public health's role in mental health promotion and suicide prevention](#): This framework is a plain-language tool to help state health officials understand and actualize concrete, evidence-based public health strategies to prevent suicide and promote mental health, focusing on what works in disproportionately affected populations.
- The [State of Mental Health in America report](#) has up-to-date data and information about disparities faced by individuals with mental health challenges and ranks all of the states across a number of indicators. The report is a powerful tool for change.
- [Mapping the mental health of our communities](#): MHA is geographically analyzing the results from millions of screens taken at mhascreening.org and showing you the data in near real-time. This is the largest dataset of its kind, and now you can explore it at the state and county level.
- [MHA's workplace mental health toolkit: creating a culture of support and well-being](#) provides information on how employers and people leaders can develop or improve workplace policies that uplift workers, ensure they are valued and heard, and improve an organization's overall culture of well-being.
- [MHA's social drivers of mental health policy statement](#) discusses the ways in which social drivers have an effect on mental health and proposals for actions to address these factors.

EXTERNAL TRUSTED PARTNER RESOURCES:

AAKOMA Project: AAKOMA works to build the consciousness of youth of color and their caregivers regarding the recognition and importance of mental health. They also empower youth and their families to seek help and manage mental health, and influence systems and services to receive and address the needs of youth of color and their families.

Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA): ADAA is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, and co-occurring disorders through the alignment of science, treatment, and education.

Caregiver Action Network (CAN): CAN is the nation's leading family caregiver organization working to improve quality of life for the more than 90 million Americans who care for loved ones with chronic conditions, disabilities, disease, or the frailties of old age. Individuals can reach out for guidance and support to their dedicated Caregiver Help Desk.

Faces and Voices of Recovery: Faces and Voices of Recovery works to change the way addiction and recovery are understood and embraced through advocacy, education, and leadership.

Health Equity Collaborative: The Health Equity Collaborative seeks to eliminate health disparities through the utilization of a holistic and intersectional approach to health care.

Mental Health Coalition (MHC): Formed to catalyze like-minded communities to work together to destigmatize mental health and empower access to vital resources and necessary support for all, the MHC connects individuals to a range of different resources from Coalition members.

The Mental Health Collaborative: The Mental Health Collaborative works to build resilient communities through mental health education and awareness, decreasing stigma, and opening the door to conversations about mental health. They train schools, organizations, and communities in mental health literacy – the foundational education that all of us need to promote our best mental health.

Rural Minds: Rural Minds serves as the informed voice for mental health in rural America and provides mental health information and resources.

AFFILIATE DIRECTORY

Alabama

MHA in Montgomery
Montgomery, AL
(334) 262-5500
mha-montgomery.org

MHA of Etowah Co.
Gadsden, AL
(256) 613-7279
mhaofetowah.com

Arizona

MHA of Arizona
Phoenix, AZ
(602) 576-4828
mhaarizona.org

California

MHA of California
Sacramento, CA
(916) 557-1167
mhac.org

CalVoices
Sacramento, CA
(916) 366-4600
www.calvoices.org

MHA of Alameda Co.
Oakland, CA
(510) 835-5010
mhaac.org

Mental Wellness Center
Santa Barbara, CA
(805) 884-8440
mentalwellnesscenter.org

MHA of Los Angeles
Long Beach, CA
(888) 242-2522
mhala.org

MHA of San Diego Co.
San Diego, CA
(619) 543-0412
mhasd.org

MHA of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA
(415) 421-2926
mentalhealthsf.org

MHA of Yuba-Sutter
Yuba City, CA
(530) 701-5922

Colorado

Mental Health Colorado
Denver, CO
(720) 208-2220
mentalhealthcolorado.org

MHA of Pueblo
Pueblo, CO
(719) 966-7642
pueblomentalhealth.org

Connecticut

Mental Health Connecticut
Farmington, CT
(860) 529-1970 x117
mhconn.org

Delaware

MHA in Delaware
Wilmington, DE
(302) 654-6833
mhainde.org

Florida

MHA in Indian River Co.
Vero Beach, FL
(772) 569-9788
mhairc.org

MHA of Bay Co.
Panama City, FL
(850) 769-5441

MHA of East Central Florida
South Daytona, FL
(386) 252-5785
mhavolusia.org

MHA of Okaloosa & Walton Co.
Fort Walton Beach, FL
(850) 244-1040
mhaow.org

MHA of Southeast Florida
Lauderhill, FL
(954) 746-2055
mhasefl.org

MHA of Southwest Florida,
Naples, FL
(239) 261-5405
mhaswfl.org

MHA of the Palm Beaches
West Palm Beach, FL
(561) 832-3755
mhapalmbeaches.org

Tampa Bay Thrives
Tampa, FL
813-803-5630
tampabaythrives.org

Georgia

MHA of Georgia
Atlanta, GA
(404) 527-7175
mhageorgia.org

MHA of Greater Augusta
Augusta, GA
(706) 736-6857
mentalhealthaugusta.org

Hawaii

MHA of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI
(808) 521-1846
mentalhealth-hi.org

Iowa

MHA of Dubuque Co.
Dubuque, IA
(563)-580-7718
mhadbq.org

Illinois

MHA of Illinois
Oak Park, IL
(312) 368-9070
mhai.org

Hult Center for Healthy Living
Peoria, IL
(309) 692-1766
hulthealthy.org

MHA of the Northern Suburbs
Skokie, IL
(312) 767-6724
mhans.org

Indiana

MHA of Indiana
Indianapolis, IN
(317) 638-3501
mhai.net

Mental Health Awareness of
Michiana
South Bend, IN
mhamichiana.org

MHA in Boone Co.
Lebanon, IN
(765) 482-3020
mhabooneCo..org

MHA of Hendricks Co.
Avon, IN
(317) 272-0027
mhahc.org

MHA of Knox Co.
Vincennes, IN
(812) 895-1007

MHA of Montore Co.
Bloomington, IN
mha-monroe.com

MHA of Northeast Indiana
Fort Wayne, IN
(260) 422-6441
mhanortheastindiana.org

MHA of Northwest Indiana
Hammond, IN
(219) 736-4955
mhanwi.org

MHA of Putnam Co.
Greencastle, IN
(765) 653-3310
mhaopc.org

MHA of West Central Indiana
Terre Haute, IN
(812) 232-5681
mhawci.org

MHA – Wabash Valley Region
Lafayette, IN
(765) 742-1800
mhawv.org

Kansas

MHA of South Central Kansas
Wichita, KS
(316) 685-1821
mhasck.org

MHA of the Heartland
Kansas City, KS
(913) 281-2221
mhah.org

Kentucky

MHA of Kentucky
Lexington, KY
(859) 684-7778
mhaky.org

MHA of Northern Kentucky and
Southwest Ohio
Newport, KY
(859) 431-1077
mhankyswoh.org

Louisiana

Louisiana MHA
Baton Rouge, LA
(225) 929-7674
louisianamha.org

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Association for
Mental Health
Boston, MA
(617) 742-7452
mamh.org

Maryland

MHA of Maryland
Lutherville, MD
(443) 901-1550
mhamd.org

MHA of Frederick Co.
Frederick, MD
(301) 663-0011
fcmha.org

Washington Co. Mental Health
Authority, Inc.
Hagerstown, MD
(301) 739-2490
wcmha.org

Michigan

MHA in Michigan
Lansing, MI
(517) 898-3907
mha-mi.com

Rahma Worldwide
Beverly Hills, MI
(248) 566-3111
rahmaww.org

Minnesota

Mental Health Minnesota
Saint Paul, MN
(651) 493-6634
mentalhealthmn.org

Missouri

MHA of Eastern Missouri
St. Louis, MO
(314) 773-1399
mha-em.org

Mississippi

MHA of South Mississippi
Gulfport, MS
(228) 864-6274
msmentalhealth.org

Montana

MHA of Montana
Bozeman, MT
(406) 587-7774
mhaofmt.org

North Carolina

MHA of Wayne Co.
Goldsboro, NC
(919) 734-3530
mha-wc.org

MHA of Central Carolinas
Charlotte, NC
(704) 365-3454
mhaofcc.org

MHA of Forsyth Co., Inc.
Winston Salem, NC
(336) 768-3880
triadmentalhealth.org

North Dakota

MHA of North Dakota
Bismarck, ND
(701) 255-3692
mhand.org

Nebraska

MHA of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE
(402) 441-4371
mha-ne.org

New Jersey

MHA in New Jersey
Springfield, NJ
(973) 571-4100
mhanj.org

MHA in New Jersey in Hudson Co.
Jersey City, NJ
(201) 653-4700
mhanj.org/the-mental-health-association-of-nj-hudson-county

MHA in New Jersey in Union Co.
Springfield, NJ
(201) 275-0207
mhanj.org/the-mental-health-association-of-nj-union-county

MHA of Atlantic Co.
Galloway, NJ
(609) 652-3800
mhaac.info

MHA of Monmouth Co.
Shrewsbury, NJ
(732) 542-6422
mentalhealthmonmouth.org

MHA of Ocean Co.
Toms River, NJ
(732) 244-0940
mhanjocean.org

MHA of Passaic Co.
Clifton, NJ
(973) 478-4444
mhapassaic.org

New York

MHA in New York State, Inc.
Albany, NY
(518) 434-0439
mhanys.org

Allegany Co. MHA
Wellsville, NY
(585) 593-1991

Association for Mental Health and
Wellness
Ronkonkoma, NY
(631) 471-7242
mentalhealthandwellness.org

Community Connections of
Franklin Co.
Malone, NY
(518) 521-3507
communityconnectionsfc.com

Mental Health Advocates of
Western New York
Buffalo, NY
(716) 886-1242
mhawny.org

MHA for Cortland Co.
Cortland NY
(607) 753-3109

MHA in Essex Co., Inc.
Westport, NY
(518) 962-2077
mhainessexny.org

MHA in Jefferson Co., Inc.
Watertown, NY
(315) 788-0970
mentalhealthjc.org

MHA in Niagara Co., Inc.
Lockport, NY
(716) 433-3780
mhanc.com

MHA in Orange Co., Inc.
Middletown, NY
(845) 342-2400
mhaorangeny.com

MHA in Tompkins Co.
Ithaca, NY
(607) 273-9250
mhaedu.org

MHA in Ulster Co., Inc.
Lake Katrine, NY
(845) 336-4747
mhainulster.com

MHA of Rochester/Monroe Co., Inc.
Rochester, NY
(585) 325-3145
mharochester.org

MHA of Rockland Co., Inc.
Valley Cottage, NY
(845) 267-2172
mharockland.org

MHA of the Southern Tier, Inc.
Binghamton, NY
(607) 771-8888
mhast.org

MHA of Westchester, Inc.
Tarrytown, NY
(914) 266-2922
mhawestchester.org

MHA in Chautauqua Co.
Jamestown, NY
(716) 661-9044
mhachautauqua.org

MHA in Folton & Montgomery
Counties
Johnstown NY
(518) 762-5332
mentalhealthassociation.org

MHA in Putnam Co.
Carmel, NY
(845) 278-7600
mhaputnam.org

MHA of Columbia-Green Counties,
Inc.
Hudson, NY
(518) 828-4619
mhacg.org

MHA of Dutchess Co.
Poughkeepsie, NY
(845) 473-2500
mhadutchess.org

MHA of Genesee & Orleans
Counties
Batavia, NY
(585) 344-2611
gcmha.org

MHA of Nassau Co.
Hempstead, NY
(516) 489-2322
mhanc.org

Vibrant Emotional Health
New York, NY
(212) 254-0333
vibrant.org

Warren-Washington Association
for Mental Health, Inc.
Hudson Falls, NY
(518) 747-2284
wwamh.org

Ohio

MHA of Ohio
Columbus, OH
(614) 221-1441
mhaohio.org

MHA of Licking Co.
Newark, OH
(740) 522-1341
mhalc.org

MHA of Northern Kentucky and
Southwest Ohio
Cincinnati, OH
(513) 721-2910
mhankyswoh.org

Oklahoma

MHA Oklahoma
Tulsa, OK
(918) 585-1213
mhaok.org

Pennsylvania

MHA in Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA
(717) 346-0549
mhapa.org

Greater Reading Mental Health
Alliance
Wyomissing, PA
(610) 775-3000
grmha.org

Mental Health Partnerships
Philadelphia, PA
(215) 751-1800
mentalhealthpartnerships.org

MHA of Lancaster Co.
Lancaster, PA
(717) 397-7461
mhalancaster.org

MHA of Southwestern
Pennsylvania
Greensburg, PA
(724) 834-6351
mhaswpa.org

MHA of York and Adam Counties
York, PA
(717) 843-6973
mhay.org

Rhode Island

MHA of Rhode Island
Providence, RI
(401) 726-2285
www.mhari.org

South Carolina

MHA of South Carolina
Columbia, SC
(803) 779-5363
mha-sc.org

MHA of Abbeville Co.
Abbeville, SC
(864) 366-0648

MHA of Aiken Co.
Aiken, SC
(803) 641-4164
mha-aiken.org

MHA of Anderson Co.,
Anderson, SC
(864) 984-0635

MHA of Bamberg Co.
Denmark, SC
(803) 779-5363

MHA of Beaufort/Jasper
Bluffton, SC
(843) 757-8650 / (843) 757-3900
mhaishlandhouse.com

MHA of Calhoun Co.
St Matthews, SC
(803) 655-5852

MHA of Clarendon Co.
Manning, SC
(843) 773-6941

MHA of Darling Co.
Hartsville, SC
(843) 332-1481

MHA of Florence Co.
Florence, SC
(843) 661-5407

MHA of Georgetown Co.
Georgetown, SC
(843) 264-1090

MHA of Greenville Co.
Greenville, SC
(864) 467-3344
mhagc.org

MHA of Greenwood Co.
Greenwood, SC
(864) 229-2833

MHA of Kershaw Co.
Camden, SC
(803) 432-7955

MHA of Laurens Co.
Laurens, SC
(864) 984-0635

MHA of McCormick Co.
McCormick, SC
(864) 852-9275

MHA of Spartanburg Co.
Spartanburg, SC
(864) 345-0014
mhaspartanburg.org

MHA of Sumter Co.
Sumter, SC
(843) 773-6941

Tennessee

MHA of East Tennessee
Knoxville, TN
(865) 584-9125
mhaet.com

MHA of the MidSouth
Nashville, TN
(615) 269-5355
mhamt.org

Texas

MHA of Abilene
Abilene, TX
(325) 673-2300
abilenemha.org

MHA of Greater Dallas
Dallas, TX
(214) 871-2420
mhadallas.org

MHA of Greater Houston, Inc.
Houston, TX
(713) 523-8963
mhahouston.org

MHA of Greater Tarrant Co.
Fort Worth, TX
(817) 335-5405
mhatc.org

MHA of Southeast Texas
Beaumont, TX
(409) 550-0134
mhasetx.org

Utah

MHA of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT
(801) 8106522
peputah.org

Vermont

Vermont Association for Mental
Health & Addiction Recovery
Montpelier, VT
(802) 279-9069
vamhar.org

Virginia

MHA of Virginia
Richmond, VA
(804) 257-5591
mhav.org

Lighthouse Community Health
Services
Lynchburg, VA
(434) 847-5050
lighthousecommunityhealth.
services

MHA of Augusta
Staunton, VA
(540) 886-7181
mha-augusta.org

MHA of Fauquier Co.
Warrenton, VA
(540) 341-8732
fauquier-mha.org

MHA of Fredericksburg
Fredericksburg, VA
(540) 371-2704
mhafred.org

Partner for Mental Health
Charlottesville, VA
(434) 977-4673
partnerformentalhealth.org

Wisconsin

MHA of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, WI
(414) 276-3122
mhawisconsin.org

MHA Lakeshore
Plymouth, WI
(920) 458-3951
mhalakeshore.org

→ WHERE TO START ←

Fact Sheets

4 THINGS LIKELY AFFECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, AND 4 THINGS YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Relationships or the pressures of performing at work or school are things we all know can have an impact on mental health, but sometimes it's less obvious when the world around you is what's causing problems. Whether you realize it or not, one or maybe all of these four things are probably affecting your mental health in some way right now.

CURRENT EVENTS

Violent events impact people across the world. Maybe you have family in a conflict zone, are worried about increases in identity-based hate, or have no personal ties to a particular news event but are constantly seeing graphic images online. A 2022 study found that 73% of American adults reported being overwhelmed by the number of crises going on in the world.

LONELINESS

Recent survey data show that more than half of U.S. adults (58%) are lonely, with those who are low income, young adults, parents, part of an underrepresented racial group, or living with a mental health condition experiencing even higher rates of loneliness. Loneliness increases the risk of developing anxiety and depression, and has been associated with psychosis and dementia. A low level of social interaction was found to have an impact on lifespan equivalent to smoking nearly a pack of cigarettes a day or alcoholism, and was twice as harmful as being obese.

TECHNOLOGY

Having the internet at your fingertips can be a fantastic thing – you can learn, connect with healthcare providers, keep in touch with friends and family – but it isn't without its downfalls. Exposure to constant [bad] news coverage and contentious political campaigns can make anyone's mood sour and cause anxiety about what lies ahead. In fact, almost 60% of young people (ages 18-25) expressed considerable worry about the future of the planet. Social media can cause FOMO (fear of missing out), depression, and reduced self-esteem as a result of comparison. Furthermore, the lines between work and personal time are blurred by working from home and after-hours email notifications on your phone, increasing the likelihood of burnout.

SOCIAL DRIVERS

Social drivers (also called social determinants) of health are the conditions in which you live, work, learn, and play. These include economic status, education, your neighborhood, access to resources (nutritious food, health care, green space, transportation, etc.), and social inclusion, and can have a far-reaching impact on not just your physical health, but also your mental health. One social driver that seems to be on everyone's mind is the economy.

Research shows a strong connection between worrying about money and mental distress, and for many people, salaries can't seem to keep up with rising inflation and cost-of-living expenses. A 2023 Gallup poll found that 42% of Americans are worried that they don't have enough money to pay their normal monthly bills.



WHAT CAN YOU DO IF THE WORLD IS WEIGHING ON YOU?

FIND YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having people around you to support your mental and emotional health can make all the difference. Finding those who lift you up, provide a listening ear, and help you through stressful times can make all the difference for your mental health. There are many places to seek support, including friends and family, online support groups, or community spaces. Therapy and counseling can also provide you with an extra layer of support. Seeking out groups where you have similar interests, such as a book club, running group, crafting class, or spiritual community, can offer comfort and connection. Ultimately, you want a support system that suits your needs and provides a safe space for healing.

SET TECH LIMITS/BOUNDARIES

You can create space for a healthier relationship with technology by setting boundaries. Do some research to figure out what works best for you to limit screen time. Some things to try are blocking social media use between certain hours, putting time limits on apps, checking your phone settings, or downloading a website/app blocker. Decide your reason for logging on before you do, and sign off when you've finished doing what you need to do.

CHANGE WHAT YOU CAN

With the state of the world, life can feel overwhelming, and as if nothing you do will make a difference. The good news is there are some things you can do. Taking action and advocating for causes important to you can be therapeutic in its own way. Advocacy and action as a form of healing can be powerful. Knowing you are doing what you can to make a difference can give you hope for the future. Try getting involved in causes near you, join advocacy groups, get out and vote, do your part in helping the planet, or stay informed and speak up on topics that need support.

FIND HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

It can be tempting to ignore your feelings or numb them with substances, but this doesn't help anyone in the long run. Invest some time into figuring out what works best to help you manage your feelings. You may have to try a bunch of things until you find something that works, but it will be worth it. Check out MHA's list of coping skills in our [Building Your Coping Toolbox article](#).

Sometimes trying to manage your mental health by yourself is too much. Seeking professional help shows strength and can provide you with the support you need to manage life's stressors. Talking to a counselor or therapist can help you identify what might be affecting your mental health and how to best cope.

If you're taking steps to help yourself but still feel like you're struggling, take a mental health test at mhascreening.org, and check out MHA's book "Where to Start" for tips on how to take action.

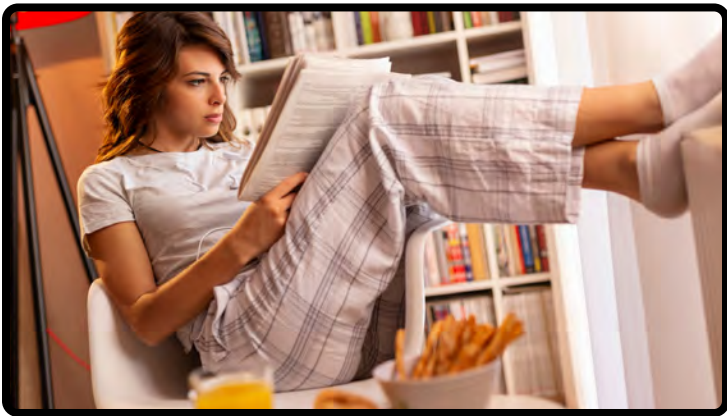
In crisis? Help is available! Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

→ WHERE TO START ←

NEGATIVE NEWS COVERAGE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In today's fast-paced media climate, the 24-hour news cycle can seem impossible to avoid. We are bombarded with dramatic news coverage and endless clickbait, which has more of an impact on mental health than we may realize.

According to [a survey of 266 therapists by GrowTherapy](#), 99.6% said watching or reading the news can have a negative impact on mental health. People who belong to the [BIPOC](#) or [LGBTQ+](#) communities are more vulnerable.



HOW DOES NEGATIVE NEWS COVERAGE IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH?

- **Watching upsetting news footage starts the body's "fight or flight" response.** [Adrenaline](#) is then released, and so is the stress hormone, cortisol. When our bodies are in this state, we experience the same symptoms we may experience if we were under threat. These symptoms include rapid heart rate, shallow breathing, upset stomach, etc.
- **The news increases depression and anxiety symptoms.** [One study](#) found that people showed an increase in symptoms after only 14 minutes of news consumption. These symptoms are made worse when people feel they have no ability to improve the situations they are learning about on the news.
- **Relying on social media for your news can drive addictive behavior.** This is important to note since [more than 50% of Americans receive their news via social media](#). Clickbait headlines and social media algorithms are designed to keep you coming back for more, making it difficult to stop returning to apps for your news.

IDENTITY MATTERS

People are more likely to be negatively affected by the news when it is [personally relevant to them](#). This is also true when they share an identity with the people involved in the news story. **Because the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities are more often targets of violence and hate crimes, the mental health of people from these communities is impacted more severely by the news.**

According to [a study by Washington University in St. Louis](#), Black Americans experience an increase in poor mental health days during weeks when two or more incidents of anti-Black violence occur. However, this same study showed that white respondents' mental health was not significantly correlated with the timing of racial violence.

In terms of the LGBTQ+ community, there has been a [rise in the negative impacts of anti-LGBTQ+ policies on LGBTQ+ youth](#).

Kasey Suffredini, VP of Advocacy and Government Affairs at the Trevor Project, stated: "Right now, we are witnessing the highest number on record of anti-LGBTQ bills introduced this early in any legislative session...LGBTQ young people are watching, and internalizing the anti-LGBTQ messages they see in the media and from their elected officials. And so are those that would do our community harm."

HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

So, what can we do to support ourselves and each other in the face of negative news coverage?

- **Identify your triggers.** Take some time to think about what subjects stir symptoms of anxiety and depression. Some people may be more reactive to global conflict while others may feel more affected by racial injustice. Once you've figured out what has the strongest impact on you, you can limit your consumption of media with triggering content.
- **Try reading the news** instead of watching video, as [studies](#) show this can be less triggering, in part due to less disturbing imagery with written articles.
- **Limit your time with the news.** Doomscrolling might help you feel more informed about how to protect yourself from the troubles of the world, but it ultimately does more harm than good. Aim for no more than 30 minutes per day if possible.
- **Plan an enjoyable activity after taking in the news,** like engaging in a hobby, to decompress.
- **Take action by [getting involved with a group](#)** that is working on the issues that you are most passionate about. This can help you feel empowered to make change instead of feeling helpless about the world around you.
- **Join an affinity group.** Affinity groups are supportive communities of people who share a common identity, often including their allies. These groups can help foster resilience and create solidarity during times of prejudice or injustice, especially for people from BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or other minoritized groups.
- **Be mindful of your sources.** Sometimes what feels like news can be more based on opinion than facts, so where you get your news can make a big difference. Make sure the information you're getting is accurate and provides a variety of perspectives.
- **Enhance optimism** in your life by doing more of what brings you [joy and satisfaction](#). Some examples include: [social activities](#), [spiritual practices](#), [physical movement](#), mindfulness, creative hobbies, journaling, and gratitude practices. Or, it could be something simple like spending time with a pet.

It can feel hard to escape from the chaos of constant news coverage. While some groups are impacted more significantly, the long-term effects on all of us can include desensitization to such events, as well as [a reduced ability to cope with the stressors of everyday life](#).

If you still feel sad, worried, or scared after trying to help yourself, you might be showing the early warning signs of a mental health condition.

Visit mhascreening.org to take an anonymous, free, and private mental health test. It only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

→ WHERE TO START ←

THINGS YOU CAN SAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT "FINE"

A simple "hello" is usually followed by "how are you" or "how have you been" – and most of the time the answer is "good" or "fine." But what if you're struggling? Here are some things you can say when you're not okay.

I'M NOT FINE	I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT	I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT
I'm actually going through some stuff.	Do you want to get coffee/lunch/dinner and chat later?	Thanks for asking, but I don't feel like going into detail.
Thanks for asking. _____ has been stressing me out lately.	Did you hear about _____ (something from the news that's bothering you)?	I appreciate that, I'm just not ready/don't have the time to talk right now.
I'm in my feels/I've got all the feels.	I'd love to get your advice about something.	I'm still trying to find the right words.
I'm having a day/It's been one of those days, well, weeks really.	Can I text you?	I'm not in a talking mood right now. Thanks, though.
I'm feeling some kind of way.	Want to take a walk with me?	I don't feel like talking, but I'll take a hug.
Ugh. I can't stop thinking about _____.	I need to vent.	I don't want to talk, but I don't want to be alone. Do you have time to just hang out for a bit?
Not so great, to be honest.	Do you have time to listen?	Can I come to you when I'm ready to talk?
On the struggle bus.	I'm having some issues with _____. Do you have time to talk?	I'm still thinking things through.
Feeling rough.	Can I bounce some thoughts off you?	Let's talk about _____ instead for now.
Today is not my day.	Have you ever felt like _____ (how you're feeling)?	I'll reach out when I'm ready.

Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn't feel hard or out of your control. If it does, there is hope and help. One free, private, and easy way to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health test at mhascreening.org.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

→ WHERE TO START ←

WHAT TO SAY WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THEY'RE FINE, BUT THEY'RE NOT

Fine. Okay. Alright. We've all had someone tell us they were one of those things and known that it couldn't be further from the truth. Maybe it was the look on their face, the tone of their voice, or their body language that gave them away – or maybe you've noticed that they have been acting differently lately. Distress can show up in many ways.

Whether someone thinks they are doing a good job of masking their emotions, or they are obviously being sarcastic when they say that they're alright, it's normal to want to help in some way. While what you say will likely be different depending on how well you know the person, here are some ideas for things to say to create an environment that encourages someone to open up about what they're going through.

- "Are you sure? If you want to talk, let me know."
- "It seems like something is bothering you. I'm here to listen if you want to share."
- "I've been 'fine' before – I'm here if you want to talk about it."
- "Do you want to (get coffee/go to lunch/grab a bite/take a walk) later? I feel like we have a lot to catch up on."
- "That wasn't very convincing – I'm here if you want to chat."



SOMEONE IS OPENING UP TO YOU. NOW WHAT?

DO...

- Listen. Really listening means actively paying attention to the person who is speaking and resisting the urge to talk about personal experiences unless asked. This is hard for everyone, but practice helps!
- Ask if they've thought about what they might need to feel better. If they haven't, offer to support, listen, and talk it out with them. If they have, support them in following through with their needs.
- Make sure to keep things confidential, unless it is life threatening.
- Normalize. Assure the person you're talking to that having a mental health concern is common, and there are lots of resources to help them feel better.
- Prepare to follow up. It takes courage for someone to speak up about what is bothering them. Exchange contact information (if you don't have it already) and touch base in a few days to see how the person is feeling and if there is anything you can do to help. You may want to research some resources like websites, hotlines, text lines, and community organizations so you can be prepared to offer them if it seems appropriate.

DON'T...

- Tell them, "You shouldn't think that way." It can be difficult to have conversations about mental health concerns, and they may have worried about it for some time before talking to you.
- Use the word "crazy."
- Tell someone what they SHOULD do; instead, ask what they want you to help them with.
- Assume that they want your advice. Many times, people just want someone else to listen to them and help them feel less alone.
- Make comparisons. Telling someone "it could be worse" minimizes their experience and invalidates their feelings.
- Take on trying to fix all the person's problems. Offer help where appropriate, but don't get into a trap of trying to solve the problem, especially if it seems like a professional should be involved.

Visit mhanational.org for additional information and resources about how to support someone who is struggling with their mental health.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

BUILDING YOUR COPING TOOLBOX

Everyone goes through periods of hardship and stress, and it's important to take care of yourself and have tools on standby to use when times get tough.

A coping toolbox is a collection of skills, techniques, items, and other suggestions that you can turn to as soon as you start to feel anxious or distressed. No one thing works for everyone, and it may take some trial and error, but building a coping toolbox is a great way to be prepared for those times when your mental well-being starts to slip – think of it as a safety net.

Creating your toolbox can be as simple as writing a list (on your phone or on paper) of what helps, like breathing exercises or going for a run – this way, when you start struggling with your mental health, you don't have to remember what to do or search for tips. You can also have a physical toolbox and fill it with things like a stress ball, written notes to yourself, and photos that make you happy. If you make a physical toolbox, it's a good idea to still include a list of (non-physical) coping skills that help.

IF YOU'RE STARTING FROM SCRATCH, HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

Mood Boosters

- Read the story of someone you admire.
- Watch a funny YouTube video.
- Play with an animal.
- Watch a movie you loved when you were younger.
- Reorganize your room.
- Make a list of places you want to travel or things you want to see in your own town.
- Repeat affirmations. Saying an affirmation or statement with positive and personal meaning can bring calm. Pick something that speaks to you: I believe in myself. Fear doesn't control me. I let go of my sadness. I am safe.

Address Your Basic Needs

- Eat a healthy snack.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Take a shower or bath.
- Take a nap.
- Brush your teeth.

Process Feelings

- Draw how you're feeling.
- Make a [gratitude](#) list. Reflecting on things you are thankful for can help you change your mindset.
- Punch a pillow.
- Scream.
- Let yourself cry.
- Rip paper into small pieces.
- Vent. Venting is not the same as asking for help—it's taking an opportunity to share your feelings out loud. We do this naturally when we talk with someone we can trust about whatever is upsetting us. You can also vent by writing a letter to the person who upset you. Keep the letter a couple of days and then tear it up. Stick to pen and paper—using social media when you are highly emotional can be tempting, but you might say something you regret.

Volunteering/Acts of Kindness

- Do something nice for someone you know.
- Help a stranger.
- Volunteer your time.

Problem Solving

- Make a list of potential solutions to problems – it can help to brainstorm with a friend or family member.
- Make a list of your strengths. There are plenty of things about you that are awesome, no matter how down you are feeling at the moment.
- If a person has upset you, talk with them directly. Fill in the blanks to this sentence – “I feel _____ when (this happens) because _____. Next time, could you please _____.”
Example: “I feel left out when you make plans and don’t tell me until the last minute, because then I can’t join. Next time can you please invite me earlier?”

Hobbies/Stress Relievers

- Learn something new – there are tutorials for all kinds of hobbies online.
- Create – try a craft project, color, paint, or draw. Invite a friend to join you for added fun.
- Write – you could write a story, a poem, or an entry in a journal.
- Get active – dancing, running, or playing a sport are some good ways to get moving.
- Play a game or do a puzzle.
- Get a plant and start a garden.

Relaxation Exercises

- Practice belly breathing –put one hand on your stomach and start to inhale slowly. As you breathe in, imagine a balloon in your stomach filling up and continue to inhale until the balloon is very full. Put your other hand on your heart, feel your heartbeat, and hold your breath for 5 seconds. Now let your breath out slowly for 10 seconds – feel your belly flatten like a deflating balloon. Repeat this process 4 or 5 times and you should notice your heart beat slow down and your muscles relax.
- Try progressive muscle relaxation –clench your toes for a count of 5, then relax them for a count of 5, then move to your calves, then your thighs, then your abs, then your arms, then your neck.
- Play with a fidget toy.
- Go for a walk – feel the ground under your feet and the air on your skin. Focus on your senses.
- Find a [guided meditation](#) on YouTube.
- Do yoga – you can find videos on demand using your TV or online.
- Read a book.
- Listen to music, a podcast, or an audiobook.
- Unplug – turn off your phone, tablet, and/or computer for an hour or so.
- Use your five senses. Tuning into your sensory experiences can be comforting during intense moments.
 - Touch: stress ball, silly putty, a pet or stuffed animal, blanket
 - Hear: click a pen, pop bubble wrap, listen to a calming playlist
 - See: photos with loved ones, snow globe, affirmation/quote cards
 - Taste: sour candy, mints, tea
 - Smell: candle, scented lotion, essential oils

Ask for Help

- Text a friend.
- Ask someone to just sit with you.
- Call a family member.
- Call a friend you haven’t talked to recently.
- Call a warmline if you can’t think of anyone to reach out to.
- If you are in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK or text HELLO to 741741.

If you still feel sad, worried, or scared after trying to help yourself, you might be showing signs of anxiety or depression. Taking a mental health test at mhascreening.org can help you find out if you are at risk for a mental health condition.

If you are struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

→ WHERE TO START ←

HELPFUL VS. HARMFUL: WAYS TO MANAGE EMOTIONS

Content warning: This article mentions topics such as suicide, self-harm, and substance use.

Negative emotions like fear, sadness, and anger are a basic part of life and sometimes we struggle with how to deal with them effectively. We often learn how to manage or cope with emotions from the environments we are in and the people we are around. Some of the coping styles we learn may be more helpful, while others may be more harmful.



SOME OF THE HARMFUL WAYS THAT PEOPLE DEAL WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE:

Denial

Denial is when a person ignores their feelings or does not accept that they are dealing with a challenging situation. They may do this if the situation does not seem like a big deal or if they feel they need to prioritize other things, like work or school. When people deny their feelings, those feelings don't just go away and can build up over time. This can lead to a person "exploding" or acting out in a harmful way.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is when a person doesn't want to be around, or participate in, activities with, other people. This is different from wanting to be alone from time to time, and can be a warning sign of depression. Some people may withdraw because being around others takes too much energy, or they feel overwhelmed. This can be especially true for many neurodivergent people who need alone time in order to recharge their social and sensory batteries. In this case, taking "me time" is a helpful coping tool for keeping you healthy.

This is different from someone withdrawing because they don't think other people like them. People also may withdraw if they have behaviors that they are ashamed of so other people don't find out about what they are doing.

But withdrawal brings its own problems: extreme loneliness, misunderstanding, anger, and distorted thinking. We need to interact with other people to keep us balanced.

Aggression

Aggression is when a person uses force, threats, or ridicule to show power over others. People typically take part in aggressive behavior because they don't feel good about themselves or are taking their emotions out on someone else. Making someone else feel bad makes them feel better about themselves or feel less alone. This can also show up as bullying or cyberbullying on online forums where the person can remain anonymous. This behavior is harmful to both the bully and the person being bullied, and does not address underlying issues.

Self-harm

Self-harm can take many forms including: cutting, starving oneself, bingeing and purging, or participating in dangerous behavior. Even though this causes the person physical pain, many people self-harm because they feel like it gives them control over emotional pain. While self-harming may bring temporary relief, these behaviors can become addictive and can eventually lead people to feel more out of control and in greater pain than ever.

Substance use

Substance use is when people turn to alcohol and other drugs to make themselves feel better or numb about painful emotions or situations. Alcohol and drug use can damage the brain, making it need higher amounts of substances to get the same effect. Over time, this can lead people to feel they need to use substances in order to feel "normal," especially if there are emotions that have never been properly dealt with that underlie their substance use. They may eventually feel desperate that this habit has gotten out of control, which can lead to suicidal thoughts.

Substance use and [overdose-related deaths have been on the rise since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Stress about health, finances, and social isolation led people to use substances to cope.

With practice, everyone can learn how to manage their emotions in healthy ways and many people find it helpful to [work with a therapist](#). You can also work on trying to cope in healthier ways on your own. Learn more from MHA's [Building Your Coping Toolbox article](#).

If you're working on improving your coping skills, but still find yourself struggling to deal with emotions, you might be showing the early warning signs of a mental health or substance use condition.

Visit mhascreening.org to take an anonymous, free, and private mental health test. It only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.

→ WHERE TO START ←

Coping Tools



WORD BANK: WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

When asked about their feelings, most people will usually say they feel: bad, sad, mad, good, or fine. But underneath “good, bad, sad, mad, or fine” are many words that better describe how we feel. Taking the time to slow down and identify what we are really experiencing can help us feel better and can improve our communication and relationships with others.

Once you identify what you're really feeling, it might give you insight into how to ask for what you really need. For example: “I feel mad. But what I'm feeling deep down is offended, humiliated, and powerless. What I need because I feel offended is for you to listen to me explain why and say that you're sorry.”

FEELINGS LIST (POSITIVE EMOTIONS)

Admiration

Adoration, Affection, Appreciation, Delight, Fondness, Pleasure, Wonder, Regard, Amazed, Amused

Affectionate

Caring, Friendly, Loving, Sympathetic, Warm, Doting, Soft, Tender, Attached, Compassionate

Confident

Bold, Courageous, Positive, Sure, Fearless, Optimistic, Encouraged, Safe, Powerful, Proud, Satisfied, Trusting, Secure, Brave, Empowered

Excited

Enthusiastic, Delighted, Amazed, Passionate, Amused, Aroused, Alert, Piqued, Astonished, Dazzled, Energetic, Awakened, Eager, Charged

Exhilarated

Blissful, Ecstatic, Elated, Enthralled, Exuberant, Radiant, Rapturous, Thrilled

Gratitude

Thankful, Grateful, Moved, Touched, Appreciative, Graceful, Responsive, Recognized, Indebtedness

Included

Engaged, Understood, Appreciated, Accepted, Acknowledged, Affirmed, Recognized, Welcomed, Connected, Supported, Belonging, Heard, Respected, Involved

Intrigued

Absorbed, Fascinated, Interested, Charmed, Entertained, Captivated, Engaged, Engrossed, Curious, Surprised

Joyful

Cheerful, Festive, Heartening, Lighthearted, Upbeat, Glad, Merry, Elated, Enjoyable, Euphoria, Delighted, Jubilant, Hopeful, Tickled, Pleased

Peaceful

Calm, Quiet, Trusting, Fulfilled, Harmonious, Steady, Collected, Composed, Comfortable, Centered, Content, Relieved, Constant, Mellow, Level, Restful, Still, At ease, Satisfied, Relaxed, Clear, Reassured

Refreshed

Stimulated, Replenished, Exhilarated, Reinvigorated, Revived, Enlivened, Restored, Liberated, Lively, Passionate, Vibrant, Rested

FEELINGS LIST (NEGATIVE EMOTIONS)

Afraid

Nervous, Dread, Frightened, Cowardly, Terrified, Alarmed, Panicked, Suspicious, Worried, Apprehensive

Agitated

Bothered, Disoriented, Uncomfortable, Uneasy, Frenzied, Irritable, Rash, Offended, Disturbed, Troubled, Grumpy, Unsettled, Unnerved, Restless, Upset

Angry

Furious, Livid, Irate, Resentful, Hate, Hostile, Aggressive, Worked up, Provoked, Miffed, Outrage, Defensive

Annoyed

Irritated, Frustrated, Bothered, Impatient, Aggravated, Displeased, Exasperated, Disgruntled, Disturbed, Irked

Anxious

Shaky, Distressed, Distraught, Edgy, Fidgety, Frazzled, Irritable, Jittery, Overwhelmed, Restless, Stressed, Preoccupied, Flustered

Confused

Lost, Disoriented, Puzzled, Chaotic, Uncertain, Stuck, Indecisive, Foggy, Mistrust, Dazed, Baffled, Flustered, Perturbed, Perplexed, Hesitant, Immobilized, Ambivalent, Torn

Disconnected

Lonely, Isolated, Bored, Distant, Removed, Detached, Separate, Broken, Cold, Aloof, Numb, Withdrawn, Rejected, Out-of-place, Apathetic, Indifferent, Misunderstood, Abandoned, Alienated

Disgust

Appalled, Horrified, Dislike, Loathing, Disturbed, Repugnant, Contempt, Spiteful, Animosity, Hostile, Bitter

Disorganized

Distracted, Disheveled, Bedraggled, Run-down, Confused, Discombobulated, Disjointed, Displaced, Jumbled, Out of sorts

Embarrassed

Awkward, Self-conscious, Silly, Mortified, Humiliated, Flustered, Chagrined, Ashamed, Put down, Guilty, Disgraced

Envy

Jealous, Rivalry, Competitive, Covetous, Resentful, Longing, Self-conscious, Insecure, Inadequate, Yearning, Nostalgic, Wistful

Helpless

Paralyzed, Weak, Defenseless, Powerless, Invalid, Abandoned, Alone, Incapable, Useless, Inferior, Vulnerable, Empty, Distressed

Pain

Hurt, Remorseful, Regretful, Disappointed, Guilty, Grief, Bereaved, Miserable, Agony, Anguish, Bruised, Crushed, Wounded

Sadness

Heartbroken, Disappointed, Hopeless, Regretful, Depressed, Pessimistic, Melancholy, Sorrowful, Morbid, Heavy-hearted, Low, Blue, Gloomy, Miserable, Despair

Stress

Tension, Pressure, Overwhelmed, Frazzled, Strain, Imbalanced, Worried, Uneasy, Cranky, Distraught, Dissatisfied, Weighed down, Overworked, Pounded, Anxious, Shocked, Frustrated

Tired

Bored, Fatigued, Exhausted, Uninterested, Overworked, Worn out, Fed up, Drained, Weary, Burned out, Lethargic, Beat, Sleepy, Depleted

Vulnerable

Insecure, Shaky, Open, Unsure, Exposed, Unguarded, Sensitive, Unsafe, Inferior, Raw, Weak, Judged, Inadequate

LETTER: TIME TO TALK

Starting conversations about mental health can be scary and you might be unsure about how to start. Use the letter below and fill in the blanks to figure out what you want to say. You can pick from the options we've listed or use your own words. Once you're finished, you can send (or email) the letter, turn the letter into a series of texts, or have it with you to guide a face-to-face talk.

Dear _____,

For the past (*day/week/month/year/_____*), **I have been feeling** (*unlike myself/sad/angry/anxious/moody/agitated/lonely/hopeless/fearful/overwhelmed/distracted/confused/stressed/empty/restless/unable to function or get out of bed/_____*).

I have struggled with (*changes in appetite/changes in weight/loss of interest in things I used to enjoy/hearing things that were not there/seeing things that were not there/feeling unsure if things are real or not real/my brain playing tricks on me/lack of energy/increased energy/inability to concentrate/alcohol or drug use or abuse/self-harm/skipping meals/overeating/overwhelming focus on weight or appearance/feeling worthless/uncontrollable thoughts/guilt/paranoia/nightmares/bullying/not sleeping enough/sleeping too much/risky sexual behavior/overwhelming sadness/losing friends/unhealthy friendships/unexplained anger or rage/isolation/feeling detached from my body/feeling out of control/thoughts of self-harm/cutting/thoughts of suicide/plans of suicide/abuse/sexual assault/death of a loved one/_____*).

Telling you this makes me feel (*nervous/anxious/hopeful/embarrassed/empowered/pro-active/mature/self-conscious/guilty/_____*), **but I'm telling you this because** (*I'm worried about myself/it is impacting my ability to function at school or work/it is impacting my friendships/I am afraid/I don't want to feel like this/I don't know what to do/I don't have anyone else to talk to about this/I trust you/_____*).

I would like to (*tell my family/talk to a doctor or therapist/talk to a guidance counselor/talk to my teachers/tell my boss/talk about this later/create a plan to get better/talk about this more/find a support group/_____*) and I need your help.

Sincerely,

(Your name _____)

→ WHERE TO START ←

WORKSHEET: DEALING WITH TOUGH SITUATIONS

We will all be in tough situations at some point in our lives. It can be helpful to think through these situations to figure out what we can change and how to go about it. This worksheet can help you through this process. Be sure to start a new sheet for each different situation that you want to tackle.

What is the situation that is troubling you or stressing you out?

What about this situation can you change?

Whom can you ask for help to change it, and what do you want them to do?

While you can't always control your feelings or emotions, you can challenge your own thoughts and change your own actions. You also can't change what has already happened or other people's thoughts or behaviors. As hard as it is, sometimes we have to accept what we can't control or change and make a plan to deal with those situations.

What about this situation are you NOT able to change?

What do you need to hear to feel better?

WORKSHEET: LOOKING FOR GOOD

Changing the way we see negative situations, reframing common negative thoughts, and practicing gratitude have been shown to reduce sadness and anxiety. This worksheet walks you through different ways to rethink situations or thoughts.

What is the situation you are facing that makes you feel bad? Or what is a common negative thought you struggle with?

REFRAME

Even though the situation is hard, is there something you have learned from it or some other silver lining? If you could go back and change the original thought, what's a healthier thing you can say to yourself? *For instance, if you've just lost a loved one after they have been extremely sick, does it feel healthier to think about their death as an end to their pain?*

GRATITUDE

Are there other things going on in your life that you are thankful for? *This doesn't have to be related to the situation above. For instance, you can be thankful for your good health, having a stable home to live in, or a recent promotion at work.*

REMINDE YOURSELF

How can you reinforce your reframed thoughts and remind yourself of what you are thankful for? Make a list of ways. *Example: Copy what you've written above onto post-it notes and stick them in places around your house as visual reminders.*

→ WHERE TO START ←

WORKSHEET: MANAGING FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Anger and frustration are both common emotional responses that everyone faces. However, if these feelings become too intense, they can lead to both mental and physical distress, and cause problems in relationships. This worksheet can help you identify the emotions and thoughts behind your anger and frustration, and help you determine what you need to feel better.

Describe the event and identify specific things someone said or did that brought on your anger or frustration.

List out any emotions that were underlying your feelings of frustration or anger. *For a list of emotions, see the Word Bank: What's Underneath tool.*

What parts of the description above are focused on facts, actions, or behaviors (and not a judgment or opinion)? Write it down.

Take some time to think about what needs to happen for you to feel better (less angry). Focus on what you can do and what you need someone else to do.

What about this situation are you NOT able to change?

What do you need to hear to feel better?

The next time you feel angry or frustrated, walk yourself through these same steps to help you process your feelings. Ask yourself these questions:

What happened? → What do I feel? → What do I need?

→ WHERE TO START ←

WORKSHEET: PROCESSING TRAUMA AND STRESS

After a traumatic experience, it can be helpful to get your thoughts outside of your head. Writing down your experiences can help you gain perspective about your situation and help to reduce how distressing they are.

Use the lines below to jot down anything that comes to mind related to your traumatic experiences.

When you've experienced multiple traumatic experiences, or carried trauma for a long time, it can shape the way you see yourself, the world, and others. These changes in beliefs are there to protect you from future harm, even when threats are gone. They can change the way you relate to others, whether or how you take risks, or how you feel positively about yourself.

How have your traumatic experiences shaped the way you see:

Yourself?

Others?

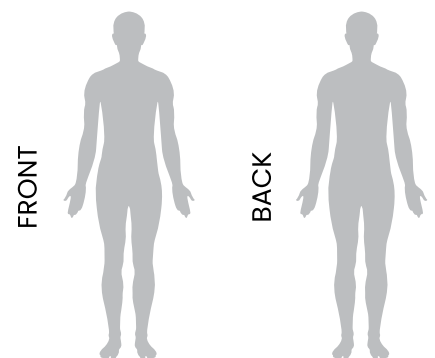
The World?

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
---	---	---

Reflecting on your writing experience above, do you notice how your body has changed in response to your feelings?

Feelings

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------



→ WHERE TO START ←

WORKSHEET: SOCIAL CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTIONS

At some point, pretty much everyone struggles with feeling alone, insecure, or like they just don't fit in. Use this worksheet to think through what kind of connections are important to you and how you can make sure you have them in your life.

EXPLORING CURRENT CONNECTIONS

What are times you have felt connected? Were you with certain people, doing a certain activity, or in a certain location?

What are some things you are proud of yourself for doing in the past to create a stronger sense of belonging?

Are there friends, loved ones, or pets in your life who make you feel understood? What makes those relationships feel good?

Connection looks different for everybody. What are some experiences or groups that made you feel like you belonged?

EXPLORING NEW CONNECTIONS

Comparing your social life to others' can make you feel more alone or insecure. Let's try looking at this with a different lens.

Regardless of what you see in others' lives, what kind of social life do you want?

What makes a quality friendship?

How would you like to spend your time?

When you look at your thoughts around feeling connected, do you notice any patterns? What are they?

Are there opportunities to get connected, like a program in your community that you can get involved with?

SETTING GOALS

Think about how you described connection in the section above. Based on that, what is one goal you can set to make your social life feel better?

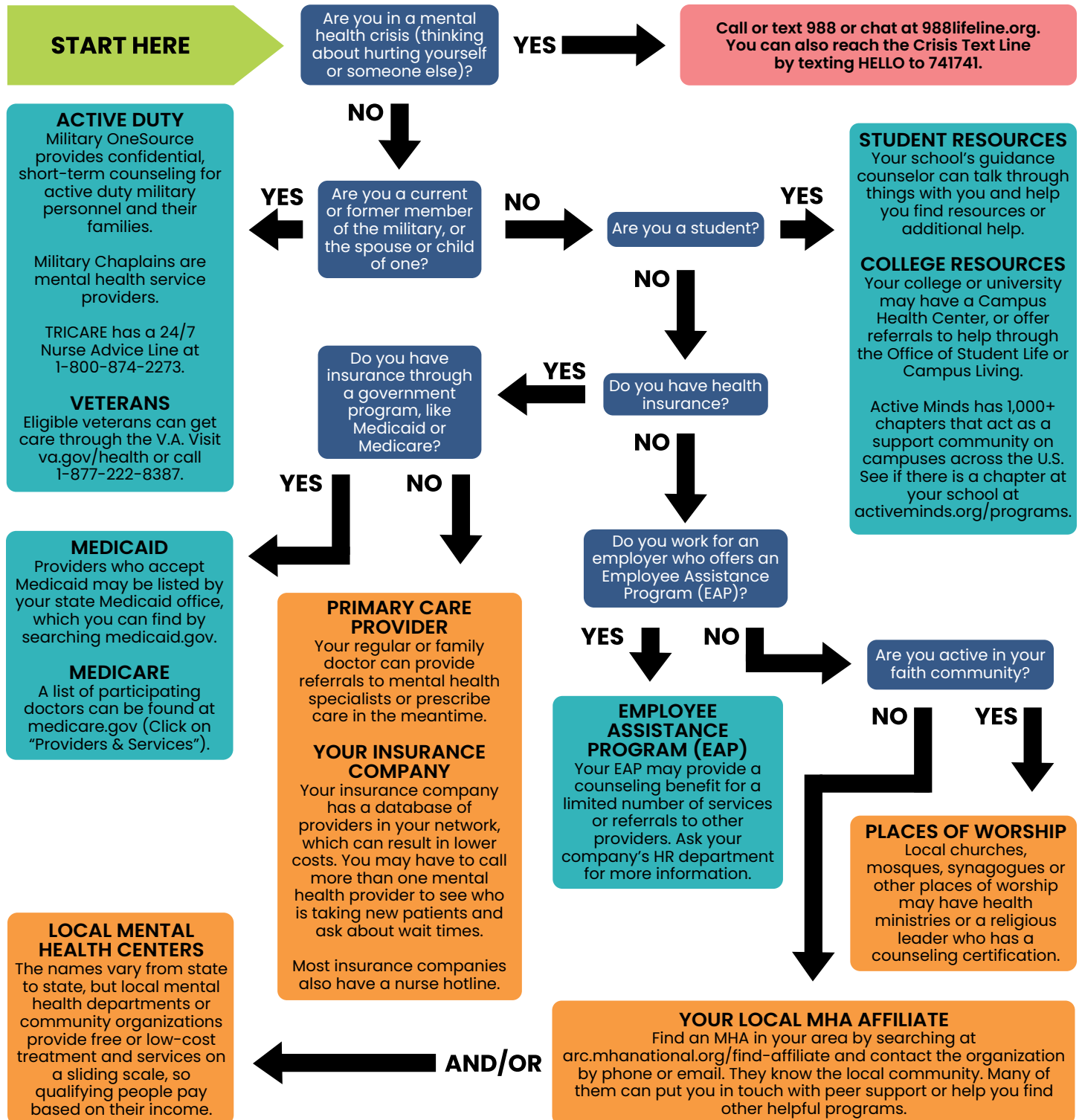
What are three steps you can take to meet that goal?

Picture yourself in a year. What would future you look back and be proud of you for doing to create a stronger sense of belonging?

→ WHERE TO START ←

DECISION MAP: WHERE TO GO

When you've decided to seek help, knowing what resources are available and where to start can be tricky. Use this decision map to help you figure out your options. If you don't find help where a path ends, try any of the resources in the gold boxes.



→ WHERE TO START ←

Mental Health America has partnered with Happy Color this Mental Health Month to advance mental health awareness through art. [Download the app](#) to find a special collection of color-by-number pictures and spark mindfulness as you care for yourself and others.



**Happy
Color**



→ WHERE TO START ←

Mental Health America has partnered with Happy Color this Mental Health Month to advance mental health awareness through art. [Download the app](#) to find a special collection of color-by-number pictures and spark mindfulness as you care for yourself and others.



**Happy
Color**

