

# MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2020



## TOOLS 2 THRIVE OUTREACH TOOLKIT



[f /mentalhealthamerica](#)  
[@mentalhealtham](#)  
[@mentalhealthamerica](#)  
[/mentalhealtham](#)  
[/mentalhealthamerica](#)  
[www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org)

[MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY](http://MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY)

This campaign is supported by contributions from Janssen: Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson and Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc.

# FOREWORD

May is Mental Health Month, and it has never been more important than this year.

Until now, there were still some people who believed that mental health wasn't everyone's concern. They thought that our annual mental health resources – even though they were shared with millions – were aimed at just a small group of people – the one in five who have a mental health concern in any given year.

That isn't the case today.

Just weeks ago, we had no idea that all our worlds were going to be turned upside down by the coronavirus. Or that the associated worry, isolation, loneliness, and anxiety would be something that literally everyone – all five in five – would experience.

We always intended to focus MHA's Mental Health Month toolkit this year on resiliency, offering tools to thrive at any time. We now believe that these tools – even those that we all may have to adapt for the short term because of social distancing – will be more useful than ever.

But we're also offering something more. There is bonus material in the toolkit specifically focused on the coronavirus, and how we can all work together to support our mental health in the face of uncertainty.

In addition, we will be adding additional resources as the weeks go by, leading up to Mental Health Month. Meanwhile, let's keep two things front and center.

First, mental health screening is essential during times of stress. We have set an ambitious goal of a million mental health screens in May. Take a screen. And tell your friends to take a screen, too. It is more important than ever to take care of our mental health.

Second, it is important to look forward and to focus on what we need to do to thrive in uncertain times. And the tools in this year's toolkit will also help us do just that.

May you stay safe and well!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Gionfriddo'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Paul Gionfriddo  
President and CEO



# INTRODUCTION

While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. In 2020, our theme of Tools 2 Thrive will provide practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with.

This year's toolkit includes:

## Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Drop-In Article
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

## Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Post Language
- Facebook and Twitter Cover Images
- Shareable Images for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Call to Action Buttons for Screening
- Pop Under (Horizontal) Web Banner
- Wide Skyscraper (Vertical) Web Banner

## BONUS

- Covid-19 Infographic

## Printable Handouts

- Owning Your Feelings
- Finding the Positive
- Eliminating Toxic Influences
- Creating Healthy Routines
- Supporting Others
- Connecting with Others
- *Tools2Thrive* Poster
- Screening Poster

## Other

- Outreach Ideas
- Additional Resources

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, keep count of how many people visit your booth and/or take a screen; 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 online using SurveyMonkey.com.

## LIKE OUR MATERIALS? WANT MORE?

Brochures on assorted topics and B4Stage4 merchandise are available through the Mental Health America store to supplement the information provided in this toolkit.

Visit the Mental Health America store at <https://squareup.com/store/mental-health-america>.

**\*MHA Affiliates** – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on printed materials at the MHA store. Contact Whitney Ball at [wball@mhanational.org](mailto:wball@mhanational.org) if you need help getting your affiliate discount code. There will also be extra May is Mental Health Month tools for you ("Affiliate Exclusives") on the Education and Outreach section of the Affiliate Resource Center.

## QUESTIONS?

If you have further questions about Mental Health Month, please contact Danielle Fritze, Associate Vice President of Public Education and Design at [dfritze@mhanational.org](mailto:dfritze@mhanational.org).

# OUTREACH IDEAS

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL

### Help spread the word about screening

- Join our #millioninmay campaign. This May MHA is aiming for 1 million mental health screens at [MHAscreening.org](https://www.mhascreeing.org) to normalize preventative measures for mental health conditions and encourage people to seek help.
- Put MHA's screening 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](https://www.mhascreeing.org) in the website blank.
- Take a screen at [MHAscreening.org](https://www.mhascreeing.org) and share that you "took a check-up from the neck up" – encourage others to do the same
- Link to posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms to [mhanational.org/may](https://www.mhanational.org/may) so people can access the different Tools2Thrive webpages

### Start a Facebook, Twitch, or Instagram fundraiser

- Share why mental health matters to you or share your screening story.
- Share why MHA's peers' program that combats loneliness and isolation is important.
- Incorporate mental health fast facts into your fundraiser. Get them at [www.mhanational.org/mentalhealthfacts](https://www.mhanational.org/mentalhealthfacts).
- Start a fundraiser in honor of a loved one

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

- Get in touch with your senators: [www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)
- Contact your representative: [https://ziplook.house.gov/htbin/findrep\\_house?ZIP=](https://ziplook.house.gov/htbin/findrep_house?ZIP=)
- Take a look at this advocacy packet for all the talking points you need to share with your elected officials: [www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/MH%20Mondays%20in%20May%20Advocacy%20Toolkit%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/MH%20Mondays%20in%20May%20Advocacy%20Toolkit%20FINAL.pdf)
- Check out MHA's most recent State of Mental Health in America report and find out where your state ranks and share with your elected officials: [www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america](https://www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america)

### Share information locally

- Ask wellness-oriented places like your local gym, yoga studio, or health food store to put up the screening poster from this toolkit
- Reach out to your personal and professional contacts to encourage them to download this 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 Tools2Thrive toolkit and help us reach our goal of a million screens in May (#millioninmay) – doctors' offices, schools, churches, synagogues and other religious gathering places are a good start. You can be a tremendous help!

### Get your employer involved

- Let them know that May is Mental Health Month
- Share why mental health should be a priority in the workplace for supervisors: <https://www.mhanational.org/new-mha-report-shines-spotlight-impact-mental-health-workplace-importance-supervisors>
- Suggest they share information in company wide communications, and put up the posters from this toolkit in breakrooms and other common spaces
- Help bring a wellness or mental health speaker to your workplace, contact your local MHA affiliate: <https://arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate>

### Share your story

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

### Reach out individually

- Think about who you interact with on a daily basis that would find this information useful for themselves or others.
- Think about your friends or family who you have been wanting to start a conversation with—Mental Health Month is the perfect time to share. Use our Supporting Others fact sheet for tips on how to get started.

## Show your support

- Shop MHA's online store to stock up on your mental health awareness swag: <https://squareup.com/store/mental-health-america>
- Donate to MHA or one of its affiliates during May. Find your local affiliate by visiting <https://arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate>

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO

- Organize a community run or walk for mental health (these can also be done virtually to practice social distancing). Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Email all of 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](https://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.
- Plan an advocacy event. This could be a day at your state Capitol or an email campaign. Invite advocates, consumers, concerned citizens and community and business leaders to reach out to each policymaker to discuss your community's mental health needs.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR STUDENTS

### Host a Q&A with a mental health professional

- Invite students to write in 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 "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 know where the resources available to them are located
- From alumni newsletters, to department wide communications, student life, and social media; include mental health as part of the conversation.
- Direct people to MHA's Mental Health Month Toolkit in your messaging for the month at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may)
- 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.

## WHAT BUSINESSES CAN DO

- Use the Drop in Article from this year's toolkit and send a Mental Health Month themed email to your constituents.
- Put a company blog in support of mental health in the workplace.
- Encourage employees to share wellness or self-care tips in newsletters or messaging channels.
- Link to mental health resources (like your company Employee Assistance Program) in your company newsletter.
- Host an online chat with community stakeholders, other organizations, local leaders, or industry support organizations.
- Connect with one of MHA's affiliates and bring a speaker to your workplace. Find your local affiliate by visiting <https://arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate>.
- Lime green is the official awareness color for mental health, consider releasing a limited-edition mental health month themed product.
- Host a wellness webinar.
- Promote MHA's #millioninmay campaign and share images from the toolkit on your social media.
- Invite a wellness professional like a clinician to do a "social media takeover" and allow them to share information about workplace wellness or mental health within your industry, and take questions on your social media for a whole day.
- Post MHA's screening poster in your office or business.
- Shop MHA's Store and take a picture with your merch to share online <https://squareup.com/store/mental-health-america>
- Donate a portion of your proceeds to MHA or one of its affiliates during May. Find your local affiliate by visiting <https://arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate>.
- Use the sample posts from this toolkit, or share posts from MHA's social media accounts on your organization's social media networks: Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, etc. each day to raise awareness of May as Mental Health Month activities. Make sure to tag Mental Health America's profile using the account information below so we can see it!

 /mentalhealthamerica

 @mentalhealtham

 @mentalhealthamerica

 /mentalhealtham

 /mentalhealthamerica

# KEY MESSAGES

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and wellbeing, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.
- There are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with.
- It's important to recognize your emotions and own your feelings, work to find the positive even when facing adversity or loss, reach out and try to connect with others, remove those people in your life who are bringing you down, and create healthy routines to take care of yourself.
- There are ways that everyone can be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life's challenges or their mental health.
- One way to check in on yourself is to take a mental health screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org). It's a quick, free, and private way for someone to assess their mental health and recognize signs of mental health problems.
- Mental Health America is encouraging everyone to take a mental health screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org). Help us reach our goal of a million screens during the month of May. #millioninmay
- Living a healthy lifestyle and incorporating mental health tools to thrive may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Recognizing your feelings, finding the routines that lift you up, removing toxic influences and connecting with others can all help you on your path to recovery as you develop your own mental health #tools2thrive.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with the assorted statistics and tips included in the printable handouts.

# DROP-IN ARTICLE

## *Do You Know Your Tools2Thrive?*

While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. The good news is there are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency - and there are ways that everyone can be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life's challenges or their mental health.

This May is Mental Health Month [ORGANIZATION NAME] is highlighting #Tools2Thrive - what individuals can do daily to prioritize their mental health, build resiliency in the face of trauma and obstacles, support those who are struggling, and work towards a path of recovery.

One of the easiest tools anyone can use is taking a mental health screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) when they need answers. It's a quick, free, and private way for people to assess their mental health and recognize signs of mental health problems.

This May, we are also exploring topics that can help you build your own set of #Tools2Thrive - recognizing and owning your feelings; finding the positive after loss; connecting with others; eliminating toxic influences; creating healthy routines; and supporting others - all as ways to boost the mental health and general wellness of you and your loved ones.

When it comes to your feelings, it can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't think about what emotions they are dealing with but taking the time to really identify what you're feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations. It's ok to give yourself permission to feel. We also know that life can throw us curveballs - and at some point in our lives we will all experience loss. It may be the end of a relationship, being let go from a job, losing a home, or the death of a loved one. It is natural to go through a grieving process. By looking for opportunity in adversity or finding ways to remember the good things about who or what we've lost, we can help ourselves to recover mentally and emotionally.

It also is true that connections and the people around us can help our overall mental health - or hurt it. It's important to make connections with other people that help enrich our lives and get us through tough times, but it's equally important to recognize when certain people and situations in life can trigger us to feel bad or engage in destructive behaviors. Identifying the toxic influences in our lives and taking steps to create a new life without them can improve mental and physical health over time. And we know that work, paying bills, cleaning, getting enough sleep, and taking care of children are just some of the things we do each day - and it is easy to be overwhelmed. By creating routines, we can organize our days in such a way that taking care of tasks and ourselves becomes a pattern that makes it easier to get things done without having to think hard about them.

For each of us, the tools we use to keep us mentally healthy will be unique. But [ORGANIZATION] wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is possible. Finding what work for you may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. By developing your own #Tools2Thrive, it is possible to find balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, and physical health and mental health - and set yourself on the path to recovery.

For more information, visit [www.mhanational.org/may](https://www.mhanational.org/may).

# PROCLAMATION

Encourage your local public officials to go on the record in support of mental health. Below, please find a sample proclamation that designates May as Mental Health Month. An official signing of a proclamation is a perfect occasion for a news event, photo opportunity or other activity.

## *Mental Health Month 2020 "Tools 2 Thrive"*

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, all Americans face challenges in life that can impact their mental health; and

WHEREAS, prevention is an effective way to reduce the burden of mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, there are practical tools that all people can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency; and

WHEREAS, mental health conditions are real and prevalent in our nation; and

WHEREAS, with effective treatment, those individuals with mental health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, each business, school, government agency, healthcare provider, organization and citizen shares the burden of mental health problems and has a responsibility to promote mental wellness and support prevention efforts.

THEREFORE, I [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], do hereby proclaim May 2020 as Mental Health Month in [STATE OR COMMUNITY]. As the [TITLE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL], I also call upon the citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools in [STATE OR COMMUNITY] to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental health conditions.



# SOCIAL POSTS

## DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- May is #MentalHealthMonth! This year's theme, #Tools2Thrive, explores practical tools that everyone can use to improve their #mentalhealth and increase resiliency. Learn more and download the free #mentalhealthmonth toolkit at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- It's #MentalHealthMonth and we're sharing #Tools2Thrive – different tools that can help everyone make small changes that have a big impact on your #mentalhealth. Want to learn more and download the free #Tools2Thrive toolkit? Visit [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- This year's #MentalHealthMonth explores practical tools that everyone can use to improve their #mentalhealth and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with. Download the free #Tools2Thrive toolkit at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- You can be supportive of those who are struggling with life's challenges and their mental health. The #Tools2Thrive toolkit created for #MentalHealthMonth includes practical tools that everyone can use. Download the toolkit at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20

## FACTS/LEARN MORE:

- What do these things have in common?
  - Owning your feelings
  - Finding the positive
  - Connecting with others
  - Eliminating toxic influences
  - Creating healthy routines

They're all #Tools2Thrive that support strong #mentalhealth. Learn more at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20

- Living a healthy lifestyle isn't easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. This year's #MentalHealthMonth theme, #Tools2Thrive, explores different small changes that have a big impact. Learn more at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- Getting screened for #mentalhealth issues is one of many #Tools2Thrive. Screening helps catch problems early - before a crisis. Join our #MillionInMay campaign by taking a #mentalhealth screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) to normalize this important preventative measure. #mhm20
- There are simple things that every person can say or do to help those who are struggling through tough times. The #Tools2Thrive toolkit explores small changes we can make that have a big impact. To learn more and download the free toolkit, visit [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- Most people don't think about taking the time to identify their feelings, but it can help to better cope with challenging situations. Learn more about #tools2thrive with mental health challenges for #MentalHealthMonth at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- Finding the positives in life doesn't mean ignoring the negative. Practicing gratitude can train your brain to look for good things that are happening, which helps to recover mentally and emotionally. Learn more #tools2thrive at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20 #MentalHealthMonth
- Being lonely causes the same amount of damage to your lifespan as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is more dangerous to health than obesity. It's hard to know how to make connections, but you can learn how using #tools2thrive: [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may). #mentalhealthmonth #mhm20

- Identifying toxic influences in our lives and taking steps to create a new life without them can improve mental and physical health over time. Learn more at [mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may). #mentalhealthmonth #mhm20 #tools2thrive
- Routines help organize our days into patterns and make it easier to get things done without having to think hard about them. Explore how you can create a healthy routine this #mentalhealthmonth using #tools2thrive: [mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may). #mhm20
- 1 in 5 people will experience a #mentalhealth condition, yet everyone experiences challenging times that affect their mental health. There are #tools2thrive that every person can use to help those who are struggling. Learn more: [mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may). #mentalhealthmonth #mhm20

## OUR CAMPAIGN TO GET A MILLION SCREENS IN MAY:

- Screening is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a #mentalhealth condition. Join our #MillionInMay campaign by taking a screen at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) to help promote prevention, early identification and intervention this #MentalHealthMonth. #mhm20
- Screening helps catch #mentalhealth problems early – before a crisis. For #mentalhealthmonth, we're encouraging you to get screened at [MHAscreening.org](http://MHAscreening.org) for our #MillionInMay campaign. Make screening for mental health as normal as screening for cancer. #mhm20 #b4stage4
- It should be as normal to take a #mentalhealth screen as it is to screen for other chronic health conditions like heart disease or diabetes. Help us normalize mental health screening by taking a screen at [MHAscreening.org](http://MHAscreening.org) for #mentalhealthmonth. #mhm20 #MillionInMay
- We're aiming for 1 million #mentalhealth screens at [MHAscreening.org](http://MHAscreening.org) for #mentalhealthmonth! Take a screen and help us normalize this preventative measure for mental health conditions. #mentalhealthmatters #mhm20 #MillionInMay
- Taking a #mentalhealth screen at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) is a quick, free, and private way to assess your mental health and recognize signs of any problems. Join our #MillionInMay campaign for #mentalhealthmonth by taking a screen. #mhm20

## HASHTAGS:

- #tools2thrive
- #MillionInMay
- #mentalhealthmonth
- #mhm20

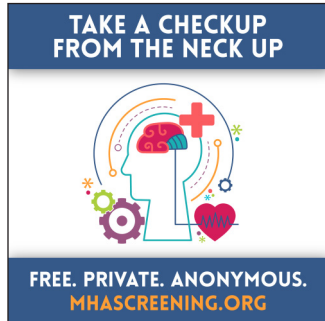
## LINKS:

- [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)
- [www.mhanational.org/may](http://www.mhanational.org/may)

# IMAGES

Download and save the images provided for use on your social media platforms or websites. All images can be accessed by visiting <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-month-2020-toolkit-download> and downloading the images zip file.

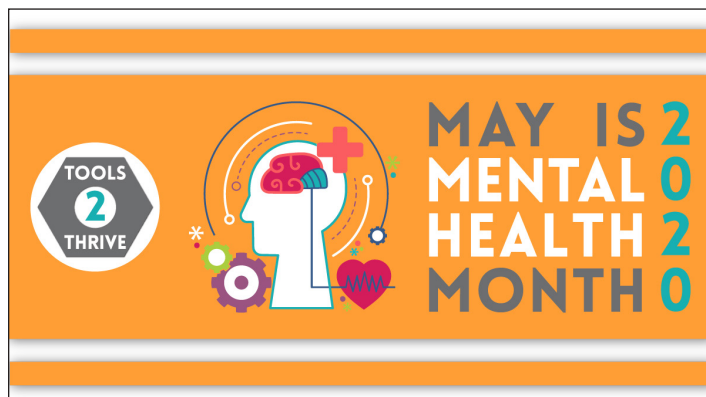
## Calls to Action



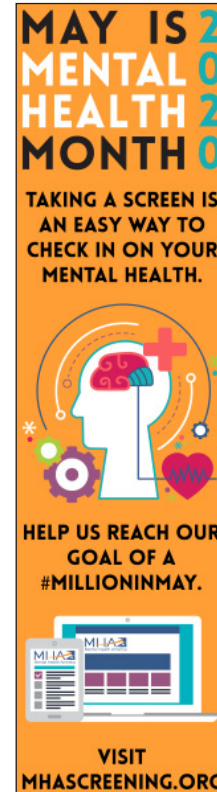
## Horizontal Banners



## Facebook Cover and Twitter Headers



## Vertical Banners



Shareables (for all social media platforms)

**DOWNLOAD THE 2020 MENTAL HEALTH MONTH TOOLKIT AT [MhNational.org/May](http://MhNational.org/May)**



**THE 2020 MENTAL HEALTH MONTH TOOLKIT IS NOW AVAILABLE!**



**8 TIPS FOR FORMING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS**



TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**7 TIPS FOR FINDING THE POSITIVE**




TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**9 WAYS TO SUCCESSFULLY CREATE A HEALTHY ROUTINE**



TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**7 TIPS FOR OWNING YOUR FEELINGS**



TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**7 WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT OTHERS WHO ARE STRUGGLING**



TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**8 TRAITS OF TOXIC INFLUENCES**



TOOLS 2 THRIVE

**1 IN 5** people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime.

However, **EVERYONE** faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.



MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

**66** Number of days it takes for a behavior to become automatic (a habit).

For some people, it can take as long as 8.5 months. Don't give up!

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

**80%** of Americans have experienced emotional abuse.

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

**60%** of people have experienced a major loss in the last 3 years.

You're not alone.

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

**2 OUT OF 3** people who went through a life-changing event had physical symptoms while they were grieving.



MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

School-aged kids who are taught about emotions for **20-30 MINUTES** per week see improvements in their social behavior and school performance.

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

A strong social support system improves overall mental health outcomes and the ability to bounce back from stressful situations.

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

**2.5 HOURS** The average number of hours Americans spend watching TV per day.

**30 MINUTES** The amount of time Americans spend socializing per day.

MH-A  
Mental Health America  
TO LEARN MORE  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The resources below complement the materials in this toolkit and come from MHA's trusted partners, supporters, educational institutions or other national non-profit organizations.

## FINDING THE POSITIVE

[IChooseBeauty.org](http://IChooseBeauty.org) - A website on a mission to lift your spirits - giving you strength, comfort, and light when you need it most.

Positive Psychology Center - UPenn's online hub for positive psychology research and learning at [ppc.sas.upenn.edu](http://ppc.sas.upenn.edu).

## HEALTHY ROUTINES

[ColorTherapy.app](http://ColorTherapy.app) - The Color Therapy app promotes relaxation and mindfulness through social coloring and painting. Available for Apple devices.

## OWNING YOUR FEELINGS

[ThisIsMyBrave.org](http://ThisIsMyBrave.org) - A speaker's bureau or show whose mission is to bring stories of mental illness and addiction out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence - Yale's online hub for emotional intelligence research and resources at [ei.yale.edu](http://ei.yale.edu).

## ELIMINATING TOXIC INFLUENCES

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](http://NationalDomesticViolenceHotline.org) - Available 24/7, 365 days a year, the National Domestic Violence Hotline provides support and resources for people who are being abused or people that suspect someone they care about is being abused. Services are available in multiple languages. Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text "LOVEIS" to 22522. Visit [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org) for additional information.

## CONNECTING WITH AND SUPPORTING OTHERS

[Clubhouse-Intl.org](http://Clubhouse-Intl.org) - A website for individuals living with mental illnesses to find Clubhouses—safe environments with opportunities for friendship, employment, housing, education and access to medical and psychiatric services in a single setting.

[HappyTheMovement.com](http://HappyTheMovement.com) - Happy the App allows you to receive support and encouragement from compassionate people. Available for Apple and Android devices.

[Inspire.com](http://Inspire.com) - A social network for patients and caregivers to connect, share, and learn from each other about medical conditions, treatment, and support.

[MakeSureYourFriendsAreOkay.com](http://MakeSureYourFriendsAreOkay.com) - Through merchandise and social media, Make Sure Your Friends Are Okay is building a community of like-minded people who want to help get the world talking.

[TheMighty.com](http://TheMighty.com) - A safe, supportive online community for people facing health challenges and the people who care for them.

[YMHProject.org](http://YMHProject.org) - The Youth Mental Health Project offers The Parent Support Network, a parent-driven, family-focused program that provides parents who are concerned about their children's mental health with a dependable and caring network, valuable peer support, and access to peer-recommended resources in their local communities.

## MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

[ChoicesInRecovery.com](http://ChoicesInRecovery.com) - Support and information for people with Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective, and Bipolar Disorder and their caregivers, including resources for having conversations with treatment professionals.

[MoreThanMyDiagnosis.com](http://MoreThanMyDiagnosis.com) - Stories and advice from people who either live with mental health issues or care for someone who does.

# OWNING YOUR FEELINGS



It can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't think about what emotions they are dealing with, but taking the time to really identify what you're feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



**Allow yourself to feel.** Sometimes there are societal pressures that encourage people to shut down their emotions, often expressed through statements like, "Big girls don't cry," or "Man up." These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful. Everyone has emotions—they are part of the human experience—and you have every right to feel them, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, race, political affiliation or religion.



**Don't ignore how you're feeling.** Most of us have heard the term "bottling up your feelings" before. When we try to push feelings aside without addressing them, they build strength and make us more likely to "explode" at some point in the future. It may not always be appropriate to process your emotions at the very moment you are feeling them, but try to do so as soon as you can.



**Talk it out.** Find someone you trust that you can talk to about how you're feeling. You may find that people are eager to share about similar experiences they've had or times that they have felt the way that you are feeling. This can be helpful, but if you're really only interested in having someone listen, it's okay to tell them that.



**Build your emotional vocabulary.** When asked about our feelings, most people will usually use words like bad, sad, mad, good, or fine. But at the root of "good, bad, sad, mad, or fine" are many words that better describe how we feel. Try building your emotional vocabulary by writing down as many "feeling" words as you can think of and think of a time that you felt that way.



**Try journaling.** Each night write down at least 3 feelings you had over the course of the day and what caused them. It doesn't need to be a "Dear Diary" kind of thing. Just a few sentences or bullet points to help you practice being comfortable with identifying and expressing your emotions.



**Consider the strength of your feelings.** By thinking about how intense your emotions are, you may realize that what you thought you were feeling at first could better be described by another word. For instance, sometimes a person might say they are stressed when what they are really experiencing is something less severe like annoyance, alternatively anger might really be a stronger, deeper feeling like betrayal.



**See a mental health professional.** If you are taking steps to be more in touch with your feelings, but are having trouble dealing with them, mental health providers like counselors and therapists have been trained to help. Some free or low cost options are also available. Your employer might have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that offers a limited number of free counseling sessions, and your Human Resources department can help you access this resource. If you don't have an EAP through work, the leaders of religious organizations like churches, synagogues and mosques often have experience with counseling.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup><https://learnersdictionary.com/3000-words/topic/emotions-vocabulary-english>

<sup>2</sup>Kashdan, T. B., Barrett, L. F., McKnight, P. E. (2015). Unpacking Emotion Differentiation: Transforming Unpleasant Experience by Perceiving Distinctions in Negativity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(1), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414550708>

<sup>3</sup>Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Reyes, M. R., & Salovey, P. (2012). Enhancing academic performance and social and emotional competence with the RULER feeling words curriculum. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22, 218–224.

## FAST FACTS



The English language has over 3,000 words for emotions.<sup>1</sup>



People who are good at being specific about identifying and labeling their emotions are less likely to binge drink, be physically aggressive, or self-injure when distressed.<sup>2</sup>



When school-aged kids are taught about emotions for 20-30 minutes per week their social behavior and school performance improves.<sup>3</sup>

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

# WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

Taking the time to slow down and identify what we are really experiencing can help us feel better and can improve our communications and relationships with others.

Using the prompts below, think of a specific action (this could be something you did, or something someone else did) or event and fill in the blank to identify what's underneath. The feelings list on this page can help you build your mental collection of feelings. This type of activity takes practice, but once you start doing it you'll find it easier over time.

I FELT BAD WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS REALLY FEELING WAS \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

I FELT SAD WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS REALLY FEELING WAS \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

I FELT MAD WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS REALLY FEELING WAS \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

I FELT GOOD WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS REALLY FEELING WAS \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

I FELT HAPPY WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS REALLY FEELING WAS \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_.

## POSITIVE FEELINGS

### Admiration

Adoration  
 Affection  
 Appreciation  
 Delight  
 Fondness  
 Pleasure  
 Regard  
 Amazement

### Affectionate

Caring  
 Friendly  
 Loving  
 Sympathetic  
 Warm  
 Doting  
 Tender  
 Attached  
 Compassionate

### Confident

Bold  
 Courageous  
 Positive  
 Fearless  
 Optimistic  
 Encouraged  
 Powerful  
 Proud  
 Trusting  
 Secure  
 Brave  
 Empowered

### Excited

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

### Exhilarated

Blissful  
 Ecstatic  
 Elated  
 Enthralled  
 Exuberant  
 Radiant  
 Rapturous  
 Thrilled

### Gratitude

Thankful  
 Grateful  
 Moved  
 Touched  
 Appreciative  
 Recognized  
 Indebtedness

### Included

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

### Intrigued

Absorbed  
 Fascinated  
 Interested  
 Charmed  
 Entertained  
 Captivated  
 Engaged  
 Engrossed  
 Curious  
 Surprised

### Joyful

Cheerful  
 Festive  
 Lighthearted  
 Upbeat  
 Glad  
 Merry  
 Elated  
 Delighted  
 Jubilant  
 Hopeful  
 Ticked  
 Pleased

### Peaceful

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

### Refreshed

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

## NEGATIVE FEELINGS

### Afraid

Nervous  
 Dread  
 Frightened  
 Cowardly  
 Terrified  
 Alarmed  
 Panicked  
 Suspicious  
 Worried  
 Apprehensive

### Agitated

Bothered  
 Uncomfortable  
 Uneasy  
 Frenzied  
 Irritable  
 Offended  
 Disturbed  
 Troubled  
 Unsettled  
 Unnerved  
 Restless  
 Upset

### Angry

Furious  
 Livid  
 Irate  
 Resentful  
 Hateful  
 Hostile  
 Aggressive  
 Worked up  
 Provoked  
 Outraged  
 Defensive

### Anxious

Shaky  
 Distraught  
 Edgy  
 Fidgety  
 Frazzled  
 Irritable  
 Jittery  
 Overwhelmed  
 Restless  
 Preoccupied  
 Flustered

### Confusion

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

### Disconnected

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

### Disgust

Appalled  
 Horrified  
 Disturbed  
 Repugnant  
 Contempt  
 Spiteful  
 Animosity  
 Hostile  
 Bitter

### Embarrassment

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

### Envy

Jealous  
 Competitive  
 Covetous  
 Resentful  
 Longing  
 Insecure  
 Inadequate  
 Yearning

### Helpless

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

### Pain

Remorseful  
 Regretful  
 Disappointed  
 Guilty  
 Grief  
 Miserable  
 Agony  
 Anguish  
 Bruised  
 Crushed

### Sadness

Heartbroken  
 Disappointed  
 Hopeless  
 Regretful  
 Depressed  
 Pessimistic  
 Melancholy  
 Sorrowful  
 Heavy-hearted  
 Low  
 Gloomy  
 Miserable

### Stress

Overwhelmed  
 Frazzled  
 Uneasy  
 Cranky  
 Distraught  
 Dissatisfied  
 Weighed down  
 Overworked  
 Anxious  
 Shocked  
 Frustrated

### Tired

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

### Vulnerable

Insecure  
 Exposed  
 Unguarded  
 Sensitive  
 Unsafe  
 Inferior  
 Weak  
 Judged  
 Inadequate

# FINDING THE POSITIVE AFTER LOSS



At some point in our lives we will all experience loss. It may be the end of a relationship, being let go from a job, losing a home, or the death of a loved one. It is natural to go through a grieving process. By looking for opportunity in adversity or finding ways to remember the good things about who or what we've lost, we can help ourselves to recover mentally and emotionally.

## TIPS FOR GETTING BY



**Try to see your experience as strength.** When bad things happen they can be painful to go through, but as you continue to live your life without the person, thing, or situation you once had, you become a stronger person. Going through a loss and learning to carry on helps give you the skills to deal with tough situations in the future.



**Learn from others.** You are not alone! There may be support groups in your community to help you get through whatever loss or tragedy you've gone through. If you're not ready to talk about things face-to-face or can't find the right kind of support group, the internet is full of places where people gather online to talk about their shared experiences. Share your story. Ask questions about how other people got through tough times to remind yourself that if they can do it, you can do it too.



**Look for opportunity amid adversity.** Sometimes loss opens us up to new possibilities. You may feel guilty or selfish at first for exploring these thoughts, but there is nothing wrong with looking for ways to improve or change your life after something tragic has happened. The end of a romantic relationship or death of someone that you had been caring for may free you up to spend more time with friends or pursue interests that you've been putting on the back burner. If you've lost your home to disaster, you might consider relocating to that place you've always dreamed of living.



**Remember the good times.** When you've lost something you love, it is almost automatic to focus on the pain that you are feeling about your loss. By remembering the good times you had in a certain place, with a pet, or with a person, you're practicing gratitude for having had those experiences. It can be even more helpful to have someone else who is sharing your loss join you in reminiscing. Maybe you'll even be able to share a laugh together.



**Do what makes you happy.** Pampering yourself can help you remember how to feel good after dealing with a negative or tragic situation, and bring you back to a place where you can appreciate all the positive things that life has to offer. You might choose to do something exciting or something relaxing—it's all about doing whatever you love.



**Find ways to honor your loss.** By memorializing the loss of a loved one, you help keep their memory alive. You may choose to create a fundraiser for a special cause in their name, plant a tree in one of their favorite places, hang their pictures in your home, create a memorial web page or Facebook page, do some of the activities they enjoyed, or even get a tattoo that reminds you of them.



**Don't be afraid to get help.** It's perfectly normal to have trouble adjusting to life after something bad has happened to you, but if you find it's been weeks or months and you can't seem to function or just don't know what to do to feel better, it's time to get help. Your employer may have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you can get a referral for a mental health professional from your primary care provider, or if you don't have insurance you can look for services with payment assistance at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

## FAST FACTS



**You are not alone!** Nearly 60% of people have experienced a major loss in the last 3 years.<sup>1</sup>



**Healing takes time.** Following a loss, nearly half of people said it took up to 6 months for their strong feelings of grief to lessen.<sup>2</sup>



**You might literally hurt.** Over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of people who went through a life-changing event had physical symptoms while they were grieving.<sup>3</sup>

**IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.**



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>WebMD. (2019). *Grief: Beyond the 5 Stages* conducted by AmeriSpeak. Retrieved from <https://www.webmd.com/special-reports/grief-stages/20190711/the-grief-experience-survey-shows-its-complicated>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



# 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 rethinking 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 in the boxes above onto post-it notes and stick them in places around your house as visual reminders.

---

---

---

---

---

# ELIMINATING TOXIC INFLUENCES



Certain people and situations in life can trigger us to feel badly about ourselves or engage in destructive behaviors. Identifying the toxic influences in our lives and taking steps to create boundaries or a new life without them can improve mental and physical health over time.

## TRAITS OF TOXIC PEOPLE



**Manipulation.** Toxic people are often very good at manipulation. They may seem to be genuinely interested in your company and getting to know you at first, but will eventually use the knowledge they gain about you to try and get you to do what they want. They will often twist your words or make you feel guilty to get their way.



**They make you feel bad about yourself.** Insults are the most direct way that toxic people can make you feel bad, but most of the time the ways they affect your self-esteem are more subtle. When you are feeling happy or proud of yourself, they will find ways to “rain on your parade” or downplay your achievements. They might also act like they are smarter than you to make you feel dumb or insignificant.



**Being judgemental.** Everyone can be judgemental from time to time, but a toxic person is judgemental almost all of the time. They see things in black and white and criticize anything that they don't agree with or approve of, instead of considering the circumstances or the feelings of other people.



**Negativity.** Some people just can't seem to see the good in life. They will find something bad about everything and aren't able to find joy in anything. Being around someone like this can make it hard for you enjoy yourself and be positive. Sometimes it can be easy to confuse the symptoms of depression for negativity, so it is worth having a conversation with someone to determine if they need help getting through depression or if they are truly being toxic.



**Passive aggression.** These behaviors are a way that people express their discontent without having a conversation about their problems. This type of hostility is less obvious than anger and can be shown in a number of different ways. Some forms of passive aggression include snide comments, sabotaging the efforts of other people, and purposefully doing something or *not* doing something to make things inconvenient for someone or get them upset.



**Self-centered.** Toxic people care mostly about themselves. They don't think about how their actions affect others and believe they are better than everyone else. Someone who is self-centered is focused on getting what they want and is unlikely to compromise or consider another person's point of view.



**Difficulty with anger management.** Someone who has trouble managing their anger will make you feel like you are walking on egg shells every time you are around them. The slightest thing can trigger them into a fit of rage, and often nasty, hurtful things are said while they are in this mental state. There may be apologies the day after, but often they are insincere and the toxic person will repeat their angry, hurtful behaviors soon after.



**Controlling.** One of the most dangerous traits of a toxic person is controlling behavior. They may try to restrict you from contacting your friends or family, or limit resources like transportation or access to money to restrict your ability to interact with the world around you. If you are in a situation where someone is trying to restrict your movements or communication, this is domestic abuse and requires immediate action. Call 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-799-7233 for TTY, or if you're unable to speak on the phone, you can log onto [theline.org](http://theline.org) or text “LOVEIS” to 22522.

## FAST FACTS



An average of 80% of Americans have experienced emotional abuse.<sup>1</sup>



Approximately 3/4 of U.S. employees have, or have had a toxic boss according to a 2018 survey from Monster.com.<sup>2</sup>



Toxic friends are common. 84% of women and 75% of men report having a toxic friend at some point.<sup>3</sup>

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](http://MHASCREENING.ORG) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Carney, M.M., Barner, J.R. (2012). Prevalence of partner abuse: Rates of emotional abuse and control. *Partner Abuse*, 3(3), 286–335.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/signs-not-cut-out-for-management>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.today.com/health/toxic-friends-8-10-people-endure-poisonous-pals-1C9413205>.

# DETOXING YOUR LIFE

This worksheet will help you think through ways to create healthy boundaries so you can get rid of toxic influences in your life.

## WHAT IS THE THING THAT YOU NEED TO STOP OR GET OUT OF YOUR LIFE?

This can be a person, behavior or situation. Example: I want healthier relationships.

---

---

---

### DESIRABLE OR HEALTHY

Examples: I want someone who encourages me, someone who is patient.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### UNCLEAR

Examples: Having fights where we yell, talking over each other.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### TOXIC OR UNACCEPTABLE

Examples: Hitting each other, cussing at each other, name calling.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

**WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO GIVE YOURSELF A PEP TALK?** Examples: I deserve to have healthy relationships. I choose me.

---

---

---

**WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO THE TOXIC INFLUENCE TO SET BOUNDARIES?** Examples: It is not ok for us to do this. I want us to get better and these are what is ok for you to do and what is absolutely not ok for you to do.

---

---

---

**WHAT CAN YOU DO AND SAY TO REINFORCE YOUR BOUNDARIES OR CREATE HEALTHY DISTANCE?**

Examples: if you do (this), I'm going to leave. If you do (this) I'm going to walk out and take a break.

---

---

---

# CREATING HEALTHY ROUTINES



Work, paying bills, cleaning, cooking, shopping, exercising, getting enough sleep, and taking care of children are just some of the things millions of Americans do each day and it is easy to be overwhelmed. It can feel impossible to get everything done, let alone take care of yourself – especially if you're already struggling with a mental health concern like depression or anxiety. By creating routines, we organize our days in such a way that taking care of tasks and ourselves becomes a pattern that makes it easier to get things done without having to think hard about them.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



**Create the routine that is right for you.** We don't all have the same schedules or responsibilities and some of us struggle with certain parts of daily life more than others. All healthy routines should include eating a nutrition-rich diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep, but no two routines will be exactly the same. In fact, your routine may not even be exactly the same every day.



**Start small.** Changing up your day-to-day routine all at once probably won't end up with lasting results. Pick one small thing each week to work on. It could be adding something new and positive, or cutting out a bad habit. Small changes add up.



**Add to your existing habits.** You probably already have some habits worked into your routine, like drinking a cup of coffee in the morning. Try adding new habits to existing ones. For instance, if you want to read more, you could set aside ten minutes to read while you have your coffee (instead of drinking it on your drive to work).



**Make swaps.** Think about the things you do during the day that aren't so healthy and swap them with better behaviors. For example, if you feel sluggish in the afternoons and eat sugary snacks for a quick pick-me-up, try taking a brisk walk instead to get your blood pumping and endorphins flowing. Or if you find yourself having a few alcoholic drinks after a long stressful day, try sipping hot tea instead.



**Plan ahead.** When life gets hectic, you may be tempted to skip out on the new parts of your daily routine. By doing things like prepping meals ahead of time, picking out an outfit the night before work, or having an alternate home workout option for the days you can't make it to the gym, you help set yourself up for success even when you're hurried.



**Make time for things you enjoy.** Even if it's just 15 minutes a day, set aside time to do something you find fun or relaxing—it will release chemical messengers in your body that are good for your physical and mental health.



**Reward yourself for small victories.** Set goals and celebrate when you reach them. Have you added exercise to your weekly routine and worked out every day as planned for the last couple weeks? Treat yourself! Watch a movie you've been wanting to see or try out that new video game.



**Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day.** Making life changes can be hard and you might forget to do something that is new to your routine every once in a while. You don't have to be perfect, just try to do better the next day.

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup>Haines, J., McDonald, J., O'Brien, A., Sherry, B., Bottino, C., Scmidt, M.E., Taveras, E.M. (2013) Healthy habits- happy homes: randomized trial to improve household routines among pre-school-aged children. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 167,1072-1090.
- <sup>2</sup>Williams, J. (2000) Effects of activity limitation and routinization on mental health. *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, 20,1005-1055.
- <sup>3</sup>Lally, P., Van Jaarsveld, C.H.M., Potts, H.W.W., Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.*, 40, 998-1009.

## FAST FACTS



When it comes to diet, sleep and exercise, having good, strong routines is linked to improved mental and physical health.<sup>1</sup>



People with more daily routines have lower levels of distress when facing problems with their health or negative life events.<sup>2</sup>



It takes an average of 66 days for a behavior to become automatic (a habit), but for some people it can take as long as 8 ½ months.<sup>3</sup> Don't give up!

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

# PLANNING YOUR ROUTINE

## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU WANT TO BE PART OF YOUR ROUTINE?

Examples: exercise, reading, quality time with my kids

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF YOU ACCOMPLISHING YOUR GOALS OR TASKS ABOVE?

Examples: working overtime, needing new glasses, too tired

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO ADDRESS THE BARRIERS YOU WROTE DOWN IN THE BOX TO THE LEFT?

Examples: start with a 30 min walk, go to bed earlier

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Use this calendar to lay out things you can change and incorporate into your schedule. The calendar can include specific things you want to incorporate into your routine (like a specific exercise), or changes you need to make to reduce barriers (like going to bed early). Use the support column to think of people or things you can use to help you accomplish your goals.

ACTIVITY	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUPPORT

## HOW CAN YOU REWARD YOURSELF FOR SUCCESSFULLY MAKING NEW THINGS PART OF YOUR ROUTINE? Example: if I walk for 30 min, 3 times per week for 2 weeks, I can treat myself to a dinner out.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# SUPPORTING OTHERS



While 1 in 5 people will experience a diagnosable mental health condition in their lives, 5 out of 5 people will go through a challenging time that affects their mental health. There are simple things that every person can say or do to help the people in their life who are struggling to get through the tough times.

## HOW TO BE HELPFUL



**Practice active listening.** Active listening is different than just hearing what a person has to say. A good active listener puts everything aside and gives their complete attention to the person who is talking; asks open-ended questions to get more details about the topic that is being discussed (ex. "And how did that make you feel?"); and takes moments throughout the conversation to summarize what they've been told and make sure they are understanding clearly.



**Don't compare.** If a friend or loved-one is going through a tough situation and they come to you for support, you might feel tempted to tell them about something that happened to you and how you were able to get through it. It's okay to share about similar experiences, but be careful not to compare because it can make someone feel like their pain isn't valid. For instance, if they are telling you about a breakup, don't mention how you had a much harder divorce. Focus on what you did to cope with feelings of loss or loneliness.



**Ask what you can do.** It can be tempting to assume what would be helpful to someone who is struggling, but it's always better to ask them what they need from you. If you ask and get a response like, "nothing, I'm fine," offer up a few suggestions for things you would be willing to do (without being pushy). For instance, you could offer to come sit with them and watch a movie, cook them a meal, or pick up a few things for them at the store.



**Keep your word.** If you have offered your support to someone and told them you would do something, keep your word. When a person is struggling, the last thing they need is to feel abandoned by someone else. If you absolutely can't honor your promise, make a sincere apology and find another time that you can do what you said you would.



**Don't judge.** To be truly supportive of someone, you need to put your personal opinions and biases aside. They may be struggling because of a mistake that they made, or you may think that they are overreacting, but you will never know what it is truly like to be that person in this moment, and criticism is not helpful to their recovery.



**Offer to join them.** When someone is going through a time of sadness or uncertainty, their emotions can take over and leave them feeling paralyzed and unable to take care of life's obligations. Offering to go with someone to help them take care of responsibilities like walking the dog, going to the grocery store, attending doctor appointments, or picking up the dry cleaning can help them feel a sense of accomplishment and lift their spirits.



**Know when more serious help is needed.** Sometimes the support that you can offer won't be enough. If you notice that your friend or loved-one continues to struggle after weeks or months, they may be showing signs of a mental health condition and likely need professional help. Don't be afraid to encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional and offer to help them find a provider if needed. If someone you care about is in immediate danger of taking suicidal action, seek help by calling 911 or going to the closest emergency room. Trained crisis counselors are available 24/7 by texting "MHA" to 741-741 or calling 1-800-273-TALK(8255).

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup>Ozbay, F., Johnson, D. C., Dimoulas, E., Morgan III, C. A., Charney, D., & Southwick, S. (2007). Social support and resilience to stress: from neurobiology to clinical practice. *Psychiatry (Edgmont)*, 4(5), 35.
- <sup>2</sup>Inagaki, T. K., Bryne Haltom, K. E., Suzuki, S., Jevtic, I., Hornstein, E., Bower, J. E., & Eisenberger, N. I. (2016). The Neurobiology of Giving Versus Receiving Support: The Role of Stress-Related and Social Reward-Related Neural Activity. *Psychosomatic medicine*, 78(4), 443-453. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000302>
- <sup>3</sup>The Trevor Project. (2019). National Survey on LGBTQ Mental Health. New York, New York: The Trevor Project.

## FAST FACTS



A strong social support system improves overall mental health outcomes and the ability to bounce back from stressful situations.<sup>1</sup>



One study found that providing support to others increased activity in the part of the brain associated with rewards.<sup>2</sup>



For young people who came out as LGBTQ, those who had at least one accepting and supportive adult were 40% less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>3</sup>

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.



# STARTING A CONVERSATION

If you think someone that you care about is struggling it can be hard to start a conversation with them about what is going on in their life. If a face-to-face talk is too intimidating, you can start with a text message or an email.

Use the prompts below to help you think through what specifically has happened, or what you've noticed about your friend or loved one that has caused you to be concerned about them.

Start the conversation when there is an open window of time to have an in-depth discussion, and you won't have to cut the conversation short to take care of other obligations. Plan to set aside at least 30 minutes to an hour.

**FOR THE PAST (DAY/WEEK/MONTH/YEAR/ \_\_\_\_\_), IT SEEMS LIKE YOU HAVE BEEN FEELING (UNLIKE YOURSELF/SAD/ANGRY/ANXIOUS/MOODY/AGITATED/LONELY/HOPELESS/FEARFUL/OVERWHELMED/DISTRACTED/CONFUSED/STRESSED/RESTLESS/UNABLE TO FUNCTION OR GET OUT OF BED/ \_\_\_\_\_).**

**YOU SEEM TO BE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR (BREAK-UP/DIVORCE/JOB STRESS/JOB LOSS/NEW JOB/DEATH OF A LOVED ONE/HOUSING ISSUES/DEATH OF A PET/RECENT HEALTH DIAGNOSIS/FRIENDSHIP FALLING APART/RELATIONSHIP/FINANCES/ \_\_\_\_\_).**

**I'VE NOTICED YOUR (CHANGES IN APPETITE/CHANGES IN WEIGHT/LOSS OF INTEREST IN THINGS YOU USED TO ENJOY/LACK OF ENERGY/INCREASED ENERGY/INABILITY TO CONCENTRATE/ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE OR ABUSE/SELF-HARM/SKIPPING MEALS/OVEREATING/GUILT/PARANOIA/LACK OF SLEEP/SLEEPING TOO MUCH/RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR/OVERWHELMING SADNESS/ANGER/RAGE/ISOLATION/CUTTING/TALK OF SUICIDE/ \_\_\_\_\_).**

**TALKING TO YOU ABOUT THIS MAKES ME FEEL (NERVOUS/ANXIOUS/HOPEFUL/EMBARRASSED/EMPOWERED/PRO-ACTIVE/SELF-CONSCIOUS/GUILTY/ \_\_\_\_\_), BUT I'M TELLING YOU THIS BECAUSE (I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU/IT IS IMPACTING OUR RELATIONSHIP/I AM AFRAID/I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO ELSE TO DO/I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE ELSE HAS TALKED TO ABOUT THIS/ \_\_\_\_\_).**

**I WOULD LIKE TO HELP YOU (TALK TO A DOCTOR OR THERAPIST/TALK TO A GUIDANCE COUNSELOR/FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO/TALK ABOUT THIS LATER/CREATE A PLAN TO GET BETTER/TALK ABOUT THIS MORE/FIND A SUPPORT GROUP/ \_\_\_\_\_).  
WHAT CAN I DO?**

# CONNECTING WITH OTHERS



It's possible to be surrounded by people and still feel alone. It's the connections we make with other people that help enrich our lives and get us through tough times, but sometimes it's hard to know how to make those connections.

## TIPS FOR CONNECTING



**Connect with others at places you already go to.** There are places that you go to over and over again - these are great places to strike up conversations and start to make friends. At work you might ask a co-worker to join you for lunch or to grab a cup of coffee. If you have kids involved in extracurricular activities, you probably see the same other parents attending their practices or dropping them off each time. If you go to the gym at the same time each day, you may notice others who are on the same workout schedule.



**Use shared experience as a topic of conversation.** Use your current situation as a topic to talk about. Maybe you're stuck waiting in a long line, or you noticed someone is wearing a shirt from a place that you've been. Hometown sports, local news and events, or even the weather can also get a conversation going.



**Give compliments.** If you're struggling to figure out what to say to someone to strike up a conversation, try starting with a compliment. You can comment on a person's outfit, tattoo, or a piece of jewelry that you like and maybe ask them where they got it. Use their response to continue the conversation, for example if they tell you they got it at a certain store, ask where that is.



**Make time to be social.** Going to work and taking care of life's other daily responsibilities is time consuming and many of us feel exhausted by the end of the day. While it's tempting to just sit on the sofa and zone out in front of the TV, that time can be spent in a more meaningful way. Set aside at least half an hour each day to connect with other people outside of work.



**Not all connections have to be done in person.** While spending time with someone face-to-face helps to create the strongest relationships, phone calls, text messaging, emails, and video chats can maintain friendships when distance or time constraints get in the way of hanging out.



**Accept invitations.** If someone asks you to go somewhere or do something with them, accept their invitation. When you turn people down over and over, they may stop inviting you. It may not be your favorite place or activity, but you can use the time to build your friendship and suggest things you like better for the next time you get together with that person.



**Pay attention to what other people are interested in.** For instance, you may notice a family portrait or a pet's picture on a coworker's desk. Ask them how old their children are, or what their pet's name is - and show genuine interest in their answers. Ask follow up questions and if appropriate, share something relevant about yourself, like how many children you have or the name of your pet.



**Organize activities.** If there is something that you are interested in doing, ask someone else (or a group of other people) to join you. It can be hard to make the first move, but it may end up that someone else wanted to do the same thing all along and was waiting to find out who else was interested. Don't be discouraged if schedules don't cooperate sometimes. Keep making invitations!

## FAST FACTS



Research shows it can take 50 hours for someone you don't know that well to turn into a true friend.<sup>1</sup>



During the week, Americans watch an average of 2 ½ hours of TV per day, but only spend half an hour per day socializing.<sup>2</sup>



The number of friendships you have early in your adult life and the closeness of those relationships can influence your wellbeing 30 years later.<sup>3</sup>

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

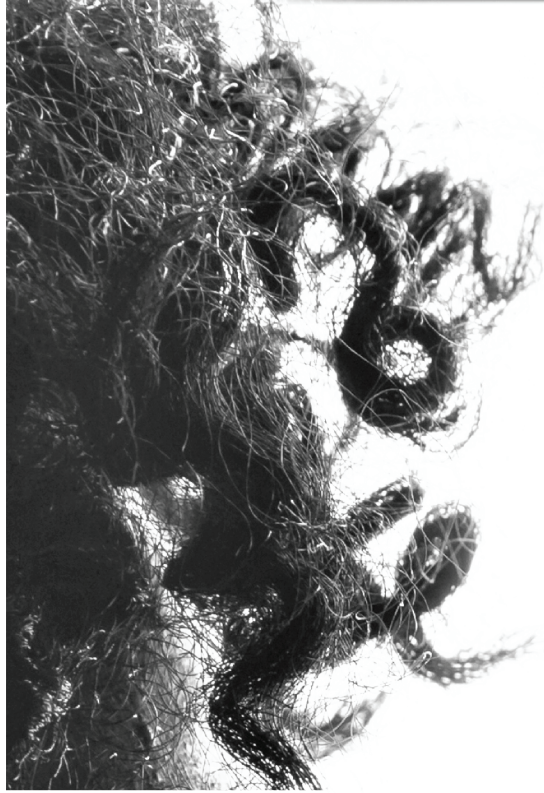
### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Hall, J. A. (2019). How many hours does it take to make a friend? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(4), 1278–1296.

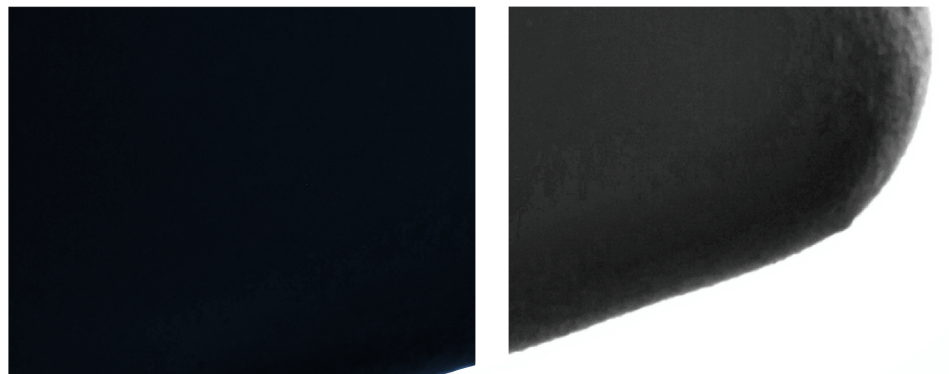
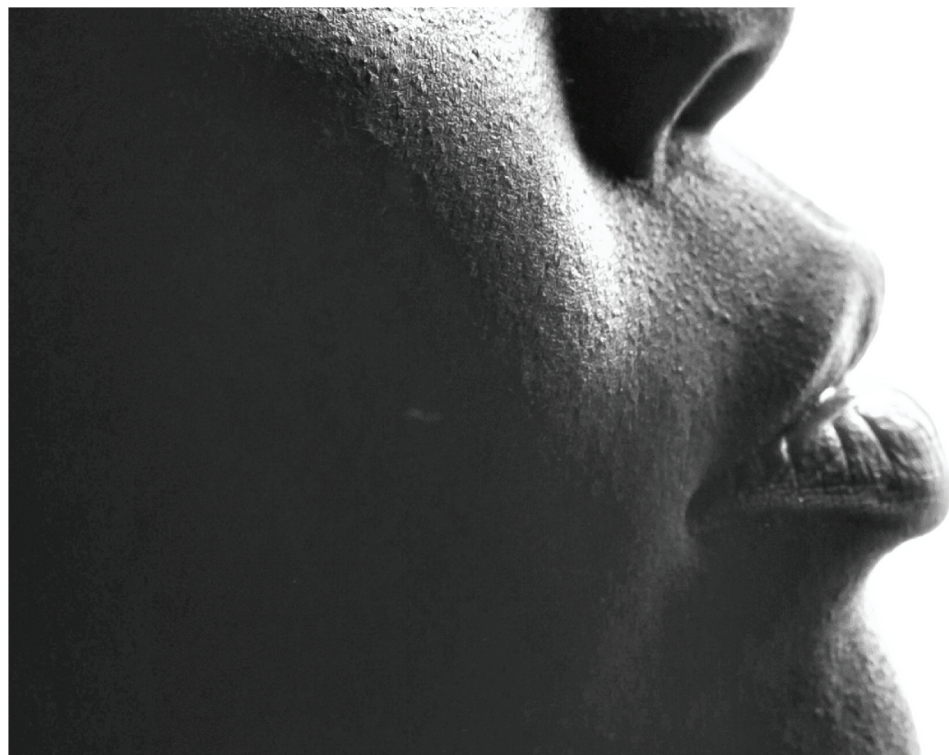
<sup>2</sup>US Dept. of Labor. (2018). American time use survey. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/tus>.

<sup>3</sup>Carmichael, C. L., Reis, H. T., Duberstein, P. R. (2015). In your 20s it's quantity, in your 30s it's quality: The prognostic value of social activity across 30 years of adulthood. *Psychology and Aging*, 30, 95–105.





**THERE ARE PRACTICAL  
TOOLS THAT EVERYONE  
CAN USE TO IMPROVE  
THEIR MENTAL HEALTH  
AND INCREASE  
RESILIENCY REGARDLESS  
OF THE SITUATIONS THEY  
ARE DEALING WITH.**



**VISIT  
MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY  
FOR TOOLS2THRIVE.**



-  /mentalhealthamerica
  -  @mentalhealtham
  -  @mentalhealthamerica
  -  /mentalhealtham
  -  /mentalhealthamerica
- [www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org)








**WHILE 1 IN 5 PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL ILLNESS DURING THEIR LIFETIME, EVERYONE FACES CHALLENGES IN LIFE THAT CAN IMPACT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.**

**HELP US REACH OUR GOAL OF ONE MILLION SCREENS THIS MAY. TAKE A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org).**

**IT IS A QUICK, FREE, AND PRIVATE WAY TO ASSESS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.**

**#MILLIONINMAY**

**MHIA**  
Mental Health America  
**B4Stage4**

 /mentalhealthamerica  
 @mentalhealtham  
 @mentalhealthamerica  
 /mentalhealtham  
 /mentalhealthamerica  
[www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org)

# COVID-19 AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

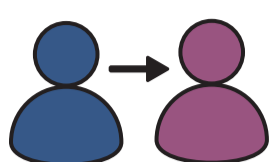
While we are familiar with viruses like the common cold and the flu, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is new and presents a situation that none of us could have imagined a few short months ago. The fact that it is extremely contagious has resulted in business closures, social distancing, and quarantine measures which have disrupted our daily lives. It is more important now than ever to pay attention to mental health during this time of isolation and uncertainty.

## YOUR CONCERNS ARE VALID

There are many reasons that you might be concerned or worried about COVID-19. Some of the most common are:



Getting sick



Passing the virus onto others, especially those that are high-risk



Adjusting to a new reality for an uncertain amount of time



Taking care of and supporting your family



Concern about the health of your friends and family



Financial stress



Not being able connect with friends and family the way you're used to



Shortages of certain common supplies

## REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

One of the most frustrating things about COVID-19 is that so much about the virus and the limitations on where you can go are out of your control. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

### YOUR MIND AND BODY



- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Take care of your mental health
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene

### YOUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT



- Your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to

### WHAT YOU CONSUME



- Don't overdo your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good

### HOW YOU PREPARE



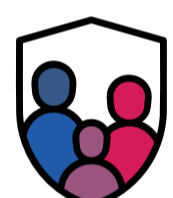
- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month's supply at home if possible

### HOW YOU PROTECT YOURSELF



- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing

### HOW YOU PROTECT OTHERS



- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

## SIGNS OF ANXIETY

It is normal to be worried and stressed during times of crisis. While worry is a part of anxiety, people with anxiety tend to experience more exaggerated feelings of worry and tension. Some common symptoms include:



Uncontrollable worry or dread



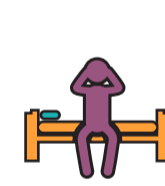
Stomach and digestion problems



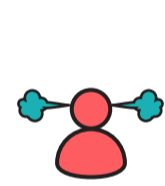
Trouble with concentration, memory, or thinking clearly



Increased heart rate



Changes in energy and difficulty sleeping



Irritability and/or restlessness

In extreme cases of anxiety, people may experience a panic attack. Panic attacks are often mistaken for heart attacks at first, but usually go away when people are able to talk to someone else to calm their fears and practice deep breathing.

## MANAGING ANXIETY

There are small things that everyone can do while practicing social distancing or self-quarantine to help reduce the amount of anxiety they are experiencing.

Ask someone to be your support buddy. Call, text, or video chat as needed.

Exercise at home

Use resources like online support groups or the Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741741)

Set boundaries with your phone

Use a mindfulness or meditation app

Set a timer for every hour to get up and stretch or take a walk

Create a new routine

Take 10 deep breaths when you feel stressed

## WHEN ANXIETY WON'T LET UP

If you're taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis but they don't seem to be helping, there are additional resources you can take advantage of.

### Mental Health Screening

If you feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) to check your symptoms.



It's free, private, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Crisis Hotlines and Textlines

If you experiencing emotional distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746.



If you are in crisis or or thinking about suicide, get connected to a local crisis center and get in touch with someone immediately.

Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text "MHA" to 741741.

Find more information and resources about COVID-19 and mental health at [mhanational.org/covid19](https://mhanational.org/covid19).



[/mentalhealthamerica](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthamerica)  
[@mentalhealtham](https://twitter.com/mentalhealtham)  
[@mentalhealthamerica](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthamerica)  
[/mentalhealtham](https://www.pinterest.com/mentalhealtham)  
[/mentalhealthamerica](https://www.youtube.com/mentalhealthamerica)  
[www.mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)