Mental Health Month 2011
Affiliate Toolkit
DEAR COLLEAGUES,

For more than 50 years, Mental Health America and their hundreds of affiliates from around the country have led the observance of May is Mental Health Month by reaching millions of people through the media, local events and screenings. This unified effort includes educational messages about mental illness and substance use conditions and the importance of mental health. For 2011 Mental Health America will be using two brand “platforms” as themes rather than one specific May is Mental Health Month theme.

This toolkit features the theme Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential. This platform addresses the wellness portion of the Wellness Circle detailed in our Case Statement and encompasses the notion of balance in one’s life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health. A person who has achieved this sense of wellness can be fully engaged in their family and community.

Mental Health America will use both themes throughout 2011 during the membership campaign to recruit 20,000 new members to the MHA Membership Program. Approximately 50 percent of the revenue from that program will be credited towards affiliate’s dues and, once dues are fully offset, will be distributed directly to the affiliates.

Our MHA Affiliates are welcome to use either of the two platforms throughout the year as stand-alone themes or as supporting themes for specific treatment/recovery programs or wellness programs in their local areas.

This toolkit includes:

Marketing materials
  flyer
  poster
Media materials
  Swiss cheese press release
  Drop-in Articles
  PSA scripts
Advocacy materials
  Sample Mayoral Proclamation
  Letter to Legislators on Children’s Mental Health
Frequently Asked Questions
  For Affiliates
  For general public
Fact Sheets
  Stress
  Depression
  Parenting in Tough Times
  Helping Children Grow Up Healthy
  Taking Care of Yourself When You Are a Caretaker
  Coping with the Stress of Ongoing Military Operations

MHA Affiliates are welcome to use these materials as they see fit to supplement their May is Mental Health Month programs or other programs during 2011.
KEY MESSAGES

While life is often stressful, it is possible to maintain and protect our mental health. Good mental health is a vital component of overall wellbeing and essential for people to reach their full potential.

- The challenges, demands and stress of everyday life can take a toll on one’s mental health, regardless of whether or not they have a diagnosed disorder.
- Good mental health strengthens your ability to effectively deal with stress and more serious challenges, helping you achieve your full human potential.

To help Americans handle these challenges, Mental Health America has developed an innovative campaign to provide people with the tools they need to manage stress and ultimately, thrive.

- **Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential** provides information on how to combat stress, promote resiliency and achieve balance in your life.
- The **Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential** campaign encourages people to explore the resources available at [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org), for information on specific tools each of us can use to buffer the effects that stress has on mental health.
- This campaign puts supportive and informative content together in one place. All the information is free as a public service of Mental Health America.
- **Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential** aims to help Americans realize that mental health is important for all people, including but not limited to people with a diagnosable disorder.
- There is a place and role in the community for everyone, and wellness plays a large part in how effectively we fill these roles.

May is Mental Health Month.

For over 50 years, the observance of this month has reached millions of Americans with important messages about mental health.

With a century of service to the nation, Mental Health America is the country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping all people live mentally healthier lives. We represent a growing movement of Americans who promote mental wellness for the health and well-being of the nation; every day and in times of crisis.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)—For Affiliates

What is “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?
“Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential” is a wellness theme developed by Mental Health America that encompasses the notion of balance in one’s life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health. A person who has achieved this sense of wellness can be fully engaged in their family and community.

What is the purpose of “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?
At Mental Health America we believe those who need help should know how and where to find it, and that they should be educated and coached to learn to achieve permanent wellness through prevention. This theme parallels the messaging in our Live Your Life Well campaign, and aims to continue to promote the 10 Tools discussed on the website, www.LiveYourLifeWell.org.

How do I use the “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential” toolkit?
Mental Health America is pleased to provide affiliates with a comprehensive toolkit for May is Mental Health Month. The toolkit, which is branded for the Live Well theme, provides you with a number of marketing tools, media materials, and print publications. As Affiliates, you are welcome to use any of these materials as you see fit to supplement your Mental Health Month programs or other programs during 2011.

Why should I promote “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?
Mental Health America will use the Live Well theme (along with “Do More for 1 in 4”) throughout 2011 during the national membership campaign to recruit 20,000 new members to the MHA Membership Program. Approximately 50 percent of the revenue from that program will be credited towards affiliate’s dues and—once dues are fully offset—will be distributed directly to the affiliates. Affiliates are welcome to use either theme throughout the year as stand-alone themes or as supporting themes for specific treatment/recovery programs or wellness programs in their local areas.

Is there a cost to promote “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?
No. Live Well uses the messaging and concepts available on www.LiveYourLifeWell.org, which is provided at no cost to the public as a service of Mental Health America, a nonprofit organization. As an affiliate of Mental Health America, the toolkit is available for you to download for free as well.

(see next page)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)—For Affiliates
(continued)

How can I get my community to utilize “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential” materials?
If each of us knows that the vast majority of mental health conditions are treatable, we can—no matter how challenging the mental health obstacle we face—always chart a course back to wellness. For perhaps the first time in history, Americans have within their grasp the capacity to achieve a much higher state of “wellness” then ever before. You can use the Live Your Life Well website, as well as the educational materials provided in this toolkit, to spread awareness about mental wellness in your community.

How do I use this to as a fundraising tool in my community?
Ideally, the “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential” theme should act as a general messaging framework to introduce your community to the specific wellness programs your affiliate offers. By highlighting such programs under the broad messaging of “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”, you are illustrating how your affiliate is having a positive effect on the community and inviting each person who interacts with one of your affiliate programs to turn to you for wellness information. This then can become the basis for asking interested individuals to join MHA with a monthly contribution of $5.

Is a computer required to get information about Live Well?
Yes, all of the toolkit materials are uploaded in the Affiliate Portal of the MHA national Website for easy access by any affiliate. Please contact the MHA Development Department with questions about the toolkit contents.
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)—For General Public**

**What is “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?**
“Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential” is a wellness theme developed by Mental Health America that encompasses the notion of balance in one's life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health. A person who has achieved this sense of wellness can be fully engaged in their family and community.

**Who is Mental Health America?**
Celebrating 100 years of mental health advocacy, Mental Health America is the country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping all people live mentally healthier lives. With our more than 300 affiliates nationwide, we represent a growing movement of Americans who promote mental wellness for the health and well-being of the nation—every day and in times of crisis. You can find out more about Mental Health America by visiting our website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

**What is the purpose of “Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”?**
At Mental Health America we believe those who need help should know how and where to find it, and that they should be educated and coached to learn to achieve permanent wellness through prevention. This theme parallels the messaging in our Live Your Life Well campaign, and aims to continue to promote the 10 Tools discussed on the website, [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org).

**Why should I “live well”? How can I “live well”?**
A vast majority of mental health conditions are treatable, we can—no matter how challenging the mental health obstacle we face—always chart a course back to wellness. For perhaps the first time in history, Americans have within their grasp the capacity to achieve a much higher state of “wellness” than ever before. You can use the Live Your Life Well website, as well as various educational materials available at Mental Health America, to learn more about wellness.

**Is there a cost for “Live Well! It’s Essential to Your Potential”?**
No. Live Well uses the messaging and concepts available on [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org), which is provided at no cost to the public as a service of Mental Health America, a nonprofit organization. But, with your help now, we can make this vision a reality. We need your support! Become a member of Mental Health America for just $5 a month. This simple step can save your life, or the life of your 1 in 4. Join today by visiting [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

*(see next page)*
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)—
For General Public
(continued)

How will being a member of Mental Health America benefit me?
Whether you are someone seeking to learn about your own treatable mental health issue, such as depression, anxiety, recovery from trauma, or a substance abuse issue, or whether you know a loved one, family members, friend, or colleague who needs help, MHA can empower you to act. By becoming a member of MHA, you will become an active member of a nationwide network of consumers who benefit from MHA support each and every day. Whether through the extensive educational materials available on our Website, connections through our online issue-specific communities, or periodic electronic action alerts and updates, membership in MHA will ensure you have the tools you need to significantly improve the quality of your life and the lives of those you care about.

What is the scientific basis for the 10 tools featured in Live Your Life Well?
Mental Health America looked at a wide range of research in mental health, a field that has made enormous strides in recent years. There is now a better understanding of how our thoughts and actions can impact our mental health. Live Your Life Well is based on information gathered from hundreds of research studies conducted at major universities or government agencies.

Do I have to use all Live Your Life Well<sup>SM</sup> tools to see a difference in my life?
Read about the tools on the website, www.LiveYourLifeWell.org. Start by working on one or two until the change becomes part of your daily life. Any positive change, no matter how small it may seem, can make a real difference. These tools represent reasonable actions that if used consistently, can increase your comfort and your ability to reduce your level of stress and begin to build a more rewarding life.

Will the activities of Live Your Life Well<sup>SM</sup> prevent me from getting a mental illness, such as anxiety or depression?
Many mental illnesses, like other medical conditions, are caused by a combination of factors, including biology and one’s environment. It’s important to understand that mental illnesses are real and, in most cases, treatable and are never anyone’s “fault.” For some people, it may be possible to reduce the likelihood or severity of some mental illnesses, such as anxiety or depression, by engaging in activities that increase their ability to effectively deal with life’s challenges. Finally, if you do think you have symptoms of a mental illness, it’s important to seek professional help.

Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential is a program of Mental Health America
AUDIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCER SCRIPTS

ANNOUNCER V/O:
Stress can take a toll on your health, your mood and your relationships. Mental Health America’s Live Your Life Well Campaign consists of 10 easy-to-understand tools that can help you protect your health, your relationships and your well-being. We want to help you live well—it’s essential to your potential! Visit us at www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more. You can also become a member of Mental Health America for just $5 a month by visiting www.mentalhealthamerica.net.
This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

ANNOUNCER V/O:
Life can be full of stress and worry. Whether it’s economic woes, a tough job or family concerns, it’s easy to become overwhelmed. But there are things each of us can do to help get through stressful times. Mental Health America’s Live Your Life Well campaign is grounded in research that can make a real difference by suggesting activities you can do to protect and improve your health and your life. We want to help you live well—it’s essential to your potential! Visit us at www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more. You can also become a member of Mental Health America for just $5 a month by visiting www.mentalhealthamerica.net.
This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

ANNOUNCER V/O:
Wellness encompasses the notion of balance in one’s life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health. A person who has achieved this sense of wellness can be fully engaged in their family and community. We believe those who need help should know how and where to find it, and that they should be educated and coached to learn to achieve permanent wellness through prevention. We want to help you live well—it’s essential to your potential! Visit us at www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more. You can also become a member of Mental Health America for just $5 a month by visiting www.mentalhealthamerica.net.
This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].
SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT:

May is Mental Health Month: Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential Americans Have Within Their Grasp the Capacity to Achieve a Much Higher State of “Wellness”

This May is Mental Health Month, [AFFILIATE] believes that those who need help should know how and where to find it, and that they should be educated and coached to learn to achieve permanent wellness through prevention.

“Good mental health is much more than just the absence of illness—it’s about being able to handle life's challenges and even flourish,” said [NAME and TITLE OF MHA EXECUTIVE].

[NAME] said wellness encompasses the notion of balance in one’s life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health. A person who has achieved this sense of wellness can be fully engaged in their family and community.

“Life can be full of stress and worry, and it’s easy to become overwhelmed. We want people to know that there are things they can do to face difficult times with greater resiliency.”

[INSERT PROGRAMS OF LOCAL AFFILIATE]

“We now recognize how essential mental health is to our overall health and well-being,” [NAME] said. “And we know how events and life changes can affect us. It could be a veteran struggling with the invisible wounds of war, someone coping with the stress of caregiving or divorce or losing a loved one. Sometimes, people are dealing with depression associated with a chronic disease such as diabetes, cancer or hypertension. And traumatic events like the BP oil spill can take a huge toll on mental health.”

[NAME] said there are tested tools available that can help every person face difficult times and challenges and improve their resiliency. Visit www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more.

Mental Health Month was created more than 50 years by [AFFILIATE’S] national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of mental wellness for all

[Description of local MHA affiliate]

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May is Mental Health Month: Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential

Mental health is becoming more a part of our everyday vocabulary and having good mental health is recognized as integral to our overall health and well-being.

This May is Mental Health Month, [AFFILIATE] is helping the community understand that and providing tools and resources on how to achieve wellness through prevention.

There are myriad challenges and events that can affect one’s mental health. It could be a veteran struggling with the invisible wounds of war, someone coping with the stress of care giving or divorce or losing a loved one. Sometimes, people are dealing with depression associated with a chronic disease such as diabetes, cancer or hypertension. And traumatic events like the BP oil spill can take a huge toll on mental health.

Good mental health is much more than just the absence of illness—it's about being able to handle life's challenges and even flourish. It is about achieving wellness, which encompasses the principle of balance in one’s life and mental, physical and emotional health.

There are many steps that a person can take so they are able to face difficult times with greater resiliency. Mental Health America’s Live Your Life Well program ([www.liveyourlifewell.org](http://www.liveyourlifewell.org)) offers ten tools based on extensive scientific evidence that can help people relax, grow and flourish.

It was designed to help increase the number of people who take action to protect their mental health so they can handle life’s challenges, build resiliency and flourish.

Mental Health Month was created more than 50 years by [AFFILIATE’S] national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of mental wellness for all.
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 2011
“Do More for 1in4”
“Live Well! It’s Essential for Your Potential”

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

WHEREAS, all Americans experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives; and

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

WHEREAS, there is a strong body of research that supports specific tools that all Americans can use to better handle challenges, and protect their health and well-being; 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 2011 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.
Dear [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR] [LAST NAME]:

The recent tragedy in Tucson reminds us all of the importance of protecting state funding for the prevention, identification and effective treatment of mental illness in children and youth. While we may never know the whole story, signs point to untreated mental illness as a potentially significant factor. As a legislator, you have the opportunity to protect mental health spending and to make the early identification of mental illness and effective treatment services a priority in the 2012 budget.

Mental illness is real, treatable and impacts approximately 20 percent of our nation’s youth. Yet, the majority do not receive treatment. When left untreated, these disorders can lead to tragic consequences, including the loss of critical developmental years, school drop-out, involvement with law enforcement and suicide.

The good news is that when we identify and treat mental illness early, we can improve outcomes and help our youth lead productive lives. We ask our state legislators to safeguard our youth by taking the following six steps:

1. Preserve mental health budgets that provide needed mental health services and supports for children, their families and communities;
2. Require state Medicaid officials to follow the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) provisions of the federal law;
3. Require schools to become well-informed about the early warning signs of mental illness;
4. Ensure that schools have adequate resources to provide and link students with effective mental health services and supports;
5. Require systems that serve children, youth and young adults to provide an appropriate array of effective mental health services and supports; and
6. Ensure that families understand how to access these services.

We understand that [STATE] is facing unprecedented budget challenges, but as the events in Tucson remind us, children with mental illness cannot wait for better budget years. Service cuts devastate our children and families and threaten the health and well-being of our communities. Funds must be available for the prevention, identification and treatment of mental illness in children and youth.

We stand ready to work with you to become part of the solution.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[CITY], [STATE]

Part of a national coalition of parents, educators and mental health professionals united to ensure the mental health and well-being of our nation’s children and adolescents.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation (CABF)
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Mental Health America (MHA)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Help yourself to live well...

it’s essential for your potential.

For information on how to assess and improve your wellness visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/liveyourlifewell.

If not dealt with properly, the stresses of everyday life can build up to a point that drains your ability to rest, have energy, be productive, concentrate, have relationships, and enjoy your life.

Being healthy is about taking care of your mind and your body—Mental Health America has 10 simple tools to help you combat stress and improve your overall wellness so you can achieve your full potential.

For just $5 a month you can become a member and support our efforts to spread the message that wellness is attainable and essential to living a full life.

Join Mental Health America today at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.
Help yourself to live well...

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For just $5 a month you can become a member and support our efforts to spread the message that wellness is attainable and essential to living a full life.

Join Mental Health America today at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.
We all go through stressful times. In small doses, stress may be good for you when it gives you a burst of energy. But too much stress or stress that lasts for a long time can take its toll on your body.

If you’re feeling overwhelmed by stress, you’re not alone. In fact, a survey of Americans found that one-third of people are living with extreme stress. Get in tune to how you’re feeling and learn about the effects of stress on your whole body.

**BRAIN AND NERVES**
- Headaches, feelings of despair, lack of energy, sadness, nervousness, anger, irritability, increased or decreased eating, trouble concentrating, memory problems, trouble sleeping, mental health problems (such as panic attacks, anxiety disorders and depression)

**SKIN**
- Acne and other skin problems

**MUSCLES AND JOINTS**
- Muscle aches and tension (especially in the neck, shoulders and back), increased risk of reduced bone density

**HEART**
- Faster heartbeat, rise in blood pressure, increased risk of high cholesterol and heart attack

**STOMACH**
- Nausea, stomach pain, heartburn, weight gain

**PANCREAS**
- Increased risk of diabetes

**INTESTINES**
- Diarrhea, constipation and other digestive problems

**REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**
- For women – irregular or more painful periods, reduced sexual desire
- For men – impotence, lower sperm production, reduced sexual desire

**IMMUNE SYSTEM**
- Lowered ability to fight or recover from illness
Are you experiencing signs of stress?

☐ Feeling angry, irritable or easily frustrated
☐ Feeling overwhelmed
☐ Change in eating habits
☐ Problems concentrating
☐ Feeling nervous or anxious
☐ Trouble sleeping
☐ Problems with memory
☐ Feeling burned out from work
☐ Feeling that you can't overcome difficulties in your life
☐ Having trouble functioning in your job or personal life

If you're having any of these symptoms, it's important that you take care of yourself. There are healthy steps you can take to stay well when you're stressed, like connecting to people close to you, getting enough sleep or being physically active. Visit www.LiveYourLifeWell.org for more information.

If you feel overwhelmed, unable to cope and feel as though your stress is affecting how you function every day, it could be something more, like depression or anxiety. Don't let it go unchecked. Contact your health care provider.

For more information on this topic or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mental-healthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.
Recognizing Depression - It’s Essential for Your Potential

Depression affects more people than any other mental health condition—more than 19 million Americans each year. Could it be affecting you?

Everyone gets down from time to time, but sometimes it’s more than “the blues.” Clinical depression is a real illness that can be treated effectively. Unfortunately, fewer than half of the people who have depression seek treatment.

Too many people believe that depression is a normal part of life’s ups and downs, rather than a real health problem. As a result, they may delay seeking help or not seek help at all. It’s important to know that depression is real, and it can be effectively treated.

What Are the Signs of Depression?

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping more than usual
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain
- Loss of pleasure and interest in once-enjoyable activities
- Restlessness, irritability
- Difficulty concentrating at work or at school, or difficulty remembering things or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of suicide or death

If you experience five or more of these symptoms for two weeks or longer, you may have depression. See a doctor or mental health professional for help right away. It’s also important to connect to the people in your life who care about you and can give you support. Getting enough rest and engaging in physical activity can help too. For additional tips on protecting your mental health, visit www.LiveYourLifeWell.org.

For more information on this topic or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.
If you’re a parent with money worries, life can be pretty tough. You might need time to earn extra money, work on your finances or just unwind from a draining, demanding day. But your kids still need your attention, and they may have worries of their own. How can you parent well when times are tough?

Here are some steps that can support your family and preserve your own health and well-being:

**Limit kids’ exposure to worries.** Try not to talk too much about your own fears when the kids are listening, and consider turning off the TV news. You may think your 5-year-old tunes out adult topics, but he may hear just enough to spark his active imagination.

**Share honestly but appropriately.** Secrets can be scary. You certainly don’t want to overwhelm your child with information, but it’s probably best to share some of your family’s financial situation. Take a reassuring approach by pointing out any areas you know are stable, such as staying in the same school despite any other changes.

**Economize in a way that’s clear and fair.** If you need to scale back on your children’s after-school activities, letting them pick from a few options may decrease their disappointment. You might also consider less-expensive options at local community centers and libraries too. And don’t forget to show kids that you’re cutting back on some of your own “extras” as well.

**Keep predictability high.** Kids like routines. Make sure your child’s includes exercise to burn off energy, soothing nighttime activities and, above all, some special time with you. Children crave attention, and if they’re not getting it in positive ways they may get it by acting out.

**Let kids contribute.** Even little kids can help around the house to ease your load. They also can donate old clothes or toys to a local shelter. Offering help builds self-esteem and a child’s sense of effectiveness in the world.

**Take a breather.** Let’s face it: Raising kids can be a ton of work. If you feel that your stress is affecting your ability to be kind and gentle, go off somewhere to regain your composure. Don’t let your kids feel it’s their fault you’re having a bad moment.

**Set aside “me” time.** You’re probably working hard at work and then working hard at home. If you don’t refuel somehow, you’re going to run out of steam. Get enough rest, squeeze in a little fun, and maybe take just 10 minutes to connect with friends. Learn more about some simple ways to take care of yourself and boost your emotional strength at www.LiveYourLifeWell.org.

**Get professional help if you need it.** If you’re having trouble parenting—or dealing with any of your other day-to-day responsibilities—a mental health professional can help you learn new coping skills. Some sources for finding therapists include your primary care doctor, clergy member or Mental Health America affiliate. If your child is showing signs of stress like trouble sleeping, headaches, or acting sullen or angry, you also can talk with a school psychologist or guidance counselor.

For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

*If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.*
It is easy for parents to identify a child's physical needs—nutritious and balanced meals; adequate shelter and clothing; sufficient rest and physical activity; immunizations; and a healthy living environment.

However, a child's mental and emotional needs may not be as obvious. Good mental health allows children to think clearly, develop socially, learn new skills, build self-esteem, and develop a positive mental outlook.

The basics for a child’s good mental health:

Give children unconditional love. Children need to know that your love does not depend on their accomplishments.


Encourage children to play. Play time is as important to a child's development as food. Play helps children be creative, develop problem-solving skills and self-control, and learn how to get along with others.

Enroll children in an after school activity, especially if they are otherwise home alone after school. This is a great way for kids to stay productive, learn something new, gain self-esteem and have something to look forward to during the week. Or check in on children after school if they are home alone. Children need to know that even if you’re not there physically, you’re thinking about them, and interested in how they spent their day and how they’ll spend the rest of it.

Provide a safe and secure environment. Fear can be very real for a child. Try to find out what is frightening him or her. Be loving, patient and reassuring; not critical.

Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary. Be firm, but kind and realistic with your expectations. The goal is not to control the child, but to help him or her learn self-control.

Communicate. Make time each day after work and school to listen to your children and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. Share emotions and feelings with your children.

Get help. If you’re concerned about your child’s mental health, consult with teachers, a guidance counselor or another adult who may have information about his or her behavior. If you think there is a problem, seek professional help. Early identification and treatment can help children with mental health problems reach their full potential.

In order to assure that your child grows up healthy, it is also important as a parent to stay well when you’re stressed. Visit www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more about the 10 Tools to Live Your Life Well.

For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.
Are you a member of the “sandwich” generation? You are if you are caring for young children as well as one or more aging parents. According to a Pew Research Center survey, one out of every 8 Americans ages 40 to 60 is raising a child and caring for a parent at home. And, nearly two-thirds of primary caregivers are women; an AARP study shows. In addition to being a primary caregiver, most of these individuals are also either working full or part-time. Taking care of children, performing on the job and keeping up with the household chores are just some of life’s daily stresses. When you also take care of an aging parent or relative, you can feel stretched beyond your limits.

There are also other healthy steps you can take to stay well when you’re stressed, like connecting to people close to you, getting enough sleep or being physically active. Visit www.LiveYourLifeWell.org to learn more about the 10 Tools to Live Your Life.

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Information for Military Families

As our service men and women continue to carry out missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, their families, friends and significant others continue to experience varying amounts of worry and fear.

In the face of this anxiety, you or someone you know may be experiencing some of the following signs of the emotional impact of stress:

- Difficulty completing tasks
- Extreme hunger or lack of appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Crying for “no apparent reason”
- Apathy and emotional numbing

When facing stress, some people will maintain their routines to achieve a sense of control and to distract themselves, and others will have difficulty focusing for some time. Both reactions are common responses to this situation.

Some tips for coping during these difficult times:

- Talk about it. By talking with others, particularly other military spouses, you will reduce your stress and realize that others share your feelings. Support groups exist at most military installations. If there’s one available to you, join; if not, consider starting one.

- Take care of your physical health. Get plenty of rest and exercise, avoid excessive drinking and drugs, and eat properly.

- Limit your exposure to the news media. The images, rumors and speculation can be damaging to your sense of well-being.

- Engage in activities you find relaxing. Plant flowers, attend a concert, visit an art gallery, or take a long bath. Be kind to yourself.

- Do something positive. Contact community volunteer organizations to see how you can help. Give blood, prepare “care packages” for service men and women, or support a friend or neighbor who is having trouble coping.

- Take care of your children. Acknowledge their worries and uncertainties. Reassure them that their feelings are normal. Maintain your family routines and keep the lines of communication open.

- Seek help. If you have strong feelings that won’t go away or are troubled for more than four to six weeks, you may want to seek professional help. Military One Source provides 24-hour access to information and help. Contact them at 800-342-9647 or www.militaryonesource.com.
**Resources for Additional Information and Support**

**TRICARE**, the administrator of health and mental health services for the armed services, provides information about mental health benefits programs for the military at their website, www.tricare.osd.mil. Or contact them at 888-363-2273.

**The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs** operates a website (www.va.gov) that contains information on and applications for compensation, health, burial, and other benefits.

**The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** (www.ncptsd.org) is a program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs that focuses on research and education on post-traumatic stress.

**The Vietnam Veterans of America** website has a section on post-traumatic stress that includes suggestions for veterans or their survivors seeking VA benefits. It can be accessed at www.vva.org/benefits/ptsd.htm.

**The Anxiety Disorders Association of America** offers information on all anxiety disorders, as well as a referral network of professional therapists and self-help groups. Call 240-485-1001, or visit www.adaa.org.

**The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies** has research and clinical information about PTSD and can be accessed at www.istss.org.

**The Sidran Institute** (www.sidran.org) is a charitable organization that collects, produces and publishes information on traumatic stress.

**The College of Human Ecology at Kansas State University** has information for families dealing with the impact of deployment at: www.humec.k-state.edu/news/2003/militarymain.html.

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc.** (TAPS) assists people who have lost family members in the Armed Forces. TAPS provides a survivor peer support network, grief counseling referrals, and crisis information and can be reached at 1-800-959-TAPS (8277) or www.taps.org.

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**Other websites for military families include:**

- www.lifelines2000.org
- www.militarycity.com
- www.armytimes.com
- www.navytimes.com
- www.airforcetimes.com
- www.marinecorpstimes.com
- www.afsv.af.mil/FMP
- www.sgtmoms.com

For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

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