



Behavioral Health Department

May, 2024 NEWSLETTER



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental health is dependent on one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It's characterized by more than just the absence of a mental illness—but instead is what influences your overall health and quality of life. By practicing self-care, not only is it a way to help manage your mental health, but it also makes a big difference in a person's treatment and recovery, for those who have a mental illness.

Self-care Tips to Improve Mental Health

Self-care is when you set aside time, in order to do actions that will help you live your life well and make improvements to the current state of your physical health and mental health.

The more effort you put towards self-care, the better you'll be at managing stress, see less risk of a illness diagnosis, and go on to experience an increase of energy. Self-care is beneficial if you take the time to include it in your routine everyday, even if the action you choose to do ends up being something that's just small and simple to carry out.

Here's some self-care tips you can try out:

- **Exercise.** Walking 30 minutes each day is enough to result in benefits like a boost to one's mood and improvements to your health. The time you spend exercising does add up, so if you are unable to exercise continuously for the full 30 minutes, don't be discouraged as you can just devote a few minutes to exercise here and there until you reach that time yourself.
- **Eat Well and Stay Hydrated.** A balanced diet of eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water can help give you more energy and improve your ability to focus. Be cautious around caffeine and alcohol as they can influence mood and well-being—sometimes decreasing caffeine and alcohol intake is needed for health and safety reasons.
- **Prioritize Sleep.** It's important you get enough sleep each night, do this by choosing an appropriate sleep schedule and stick to it. Avoid spending time on electronic devices, such as your phone or computer before going to bed, as the blue light they produce makes it difficult for you to fall and stay asleep.
- **Try a Relaxing Activity to Help You Unwind.** Consider looking at the apps available on your electronic devices, since you should be able to find some instructional programs that can teach you about relaxation, including meditation techniques, muscle relaxation, and mindful breathing. Set aside some time each day to do the lessons on these relaxation apps, along with any other low-stress activities that you find enjoyable such as listening to music, reading a book, or going outside for a walk.
- **Set Goals and Priorities for Yourself.** Go over what you need to do, then decide what should be completed immediately and what can wait until later. To avoid being overloaded with a bunch of tasks at one time, it's important to learn to say "no" to others if you already have a lot on your plate. At the end of each day, lookback on what you were able to accomplish and try to be appreciative of the work you were able to get done.
- **Practice Gratitude and Appreciation.** Each day reserve some time to think over the things in your life you are grateful for. After you've thought up your responses, review them by either writing down what you ended up coming up with or letting them replay in your mind.
- **Be Positive.** Identify whether there are any negative and unhelpful thoughts plaguing you, if so, challenge and try to overcome them.
- **Stay Connected and Keep Communication Open.** If you ever need emotional support or practical help, contact friends or family members you can rely on.

There's no one kind of self-care that benefits everyone, instead it's important for each individual to find out what self-care practices work best for them, even if this means having to go through a trial and error process to do so.

When to Seek Professional Help for Mental Health

You should reach out to get professional help when you have severe symptoms that last longer than 2 weeks, this could include:

- Sleep Problems
- Changes to eating habits or unexpected weight changes
- Being unmotivated to get out of bed in the mornings
- Inability to concentrate
- No longer having interest in things you once enjoyed
- Difficulty completing tasks and activities you previously could do
- Feeling constantly angry, upset, or restless

Source

CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST SERVICES

A Peer Specialist is an individual with lived recovery experience who has been trained and certified to help their peers gain hope and move forward in their own recovery. By sharing experiences, peers bring hope to people in recovery and promote a sense of belonging within the community (SAMSHA)

PEER SUPPORT IS..

- Delivered by individuals who have common lived experiences.
- People with mental health and/or substance use disorders have a unique power to help one another based on shared connection and deep understanding of this experience.
- Peer Specialists offer support, strength, and hope to their peers, which allows for personal growth, wellness, and recovery. (SAMSHA)
- Peer support is ongoing, available, and flexible.
- Peer support enhances other health care services by creating emotional, social and practical assistance necessary for staying healthy and managing. (Peers for Progress)

WHAT SERVICES DO PEER SPECIALISTS PROVIDE?

Peer specialists support their peers both individually and in small groups.

- Help peers create individual service plans based on recovery goals and steps to achieve those goals
- Use recovery-oriented tools to help their peers address challenges
- Assist others to build their own self-directed wellness plans
- Support peers in their decision-making
- Offer a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on...and more!

PROVIDING HOPE

Modeling recovery, engaging, and connecting are just some of the ways peers make a difference in the lives of others. The bond that is essential in peer support means that both the person giving support and the person receiving support benefit from the relationship. (MHA)

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Education and skill- building

- ⇒ Wellness planning
- ⇒ Crisis planning
- ⇒ Self- advocacy skills
- ⇒ Budgeting

Services that help

- ⇒ Identify strengths and use the strengths to reach goals
- ⇒ Identify and overcome barriers to participate in community resources

Connect with resources

- ⇒ Visiting community resources to familiarize
- ⇒ Teaching and modeling skills needed to utilize resources
- ⇒ Wrap around services
- ⇒ Cultural wellness and healing

Building relationships and encouraging community based activities

- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Relationships
- ⇒ Physical activity
- ⇒ Self- directed hobbies

Using SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness to guide a holistic approach to recovery, a Certified Peer Specialist will work with you to discuss meaningful goals in one or more of these important dimensions; financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and emotional. Each of the dimensions contribute to your overall wellness and individual recovery.

How to Prevent Heat-Related Illness

In celebration of National Heat Awareness Day on May 31st, below are some tips of how to react in extreme heat, so you can avoid suffering damage from heat exposure; the information contained here comes from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website (<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.html>).



Attempt to Stay Cool

Wear Weather-Appropriate Clothing: Choose clothing that's lightweight and loose-fitting.

Stay Indoors to Cool Down: Spend as much time as possible in a place that has air-conditioning. If your home isn't air-conditioned, try going to a public place that is. Your body benefits from spending even just a few hours in air conditioning, as it can help significantly cool down your body before you go back out into the heat.

- Don't rely solely on an electric fan for comfort, as it does little to help with the heat, especially once the outside temperatures reach up to the high 90's. If you are looking for a much more effective way to cool off, you can take a cold shower or bath. To maintain a cooler temperature and prevent it from getting hot in your home, avoid using your stove and oven as much as possible.

Schedule Your Outdoor Activities Wisely: Go outside to do some activities during the coolest times of the day, usually this will be in the mornings and evenings, Give your body a chance to recover when it's outside by resting under some shade.

Pace Yourself, Conserve Energy: Limit the amount of time you spend exercising in the heat. If you are unfamiliar with being outside in a hot environment for prolonged periods of time as you work or exercise, consider taking things slowly first and gradually pick up the pace once you find yourself ready to. However, if the heat causes your heart to pound erratically and leaves you grasping for air, STOP any activity you are doing immediately. If you are starting to feel either lightheaded, confused, weak or faint, go find some shade to sit under and cool off.

Apply Sunscreen if You Plan To Be Outside: Getting sunburns on your body can affect its ability to cool down and this in turn, can make you become dehydrated. If you decide to go outdoors, you can protect yourself from the sun by wearing the following: a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and by rubbing sunscreen into your skin that's SPF 15 or higher at least 30 minutes before you go out. For sunscreen to be effective, it needs to be reapplied after a certain period of time, follow the instructions on the sunscreen packaging to determine how often this needs to be done.

- **Tip:** The best sunscreen to get is one who's label says it has either "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection".

Don't Leave Children Alone in Hot Cars: Even if you crack a window open, that's not enough to prevent the inside of a car from reaching dangerous temperatures. While there are risks for anyone who sits in a parked car when it's hot outside, children are the demographic who are the most at risk of getting heat stroke or dying.

When you have children traveling with you in a car, keep these things in mind:

- Never leave the car with infants, children, or pets still inside, even if you roll the windows down, this won't do much to prevent heat from collecting in the car.
- Rely on a visual reminder to help you remember that a child is in the car, so you don't accidentally forget them. Consider keeping a stuffed animal in your car for this occasion, so after you've buckled the child in, you can place the stuffed animal up front by you as a sign to yourself that you aren't alone in the car.
- Before you leave your car, quickly check the inside to make sure everyone has gotten out. Be careful to not overlook any children who may have fallen asleep, as it can be easy to leave someone behind when they are quiet and not making a sound.

Avoid Eating Hot and Heavy Meals: These type of meals just add more heat to your body!

Stay Hydrated in the Heat

Remember to Drink Plenty of Fluids: Regardless of whether you are someone who's physically active, it's important that everyone drink fluids to prevent against dehydration. Try to drink quite frequently, don't just drink when you are thirsty.

- **Warning:** If you are on orders from your doctor to limit the amount you drink or you are prescribed water pills, be sure to ask how much is okay for you to drink when the weather is hot outside.
- **Avoid Drinks that are Alcoholic or Too Sugary:** These types of drinks don't help you to retain body fluid, but can result in the opposite instead—loss of body fluids. Also stay away from very cold drinks, as you may get a stomach cramp.

Replenish Salt and Minerals: Heat can cause heavy sweating, which could lead to salt and minerals being expelled from the body. To replace the salt and minerals you've loss from sweating, a sports drink will do the trick.

- If you are someone who's on a low-salt diet, has diabetes, high blood pressure, or lives with a chronic condition of any sort, reach out to your doctor first to see if it's safe for you to drink a sports beverage or take salt tablets.

Keep Your Pets Cool: Make sure your pet has access to fresh water and place the water underneath somewhere with plenty of shade.

Stay Informed and Stay Safe

Monitor High Risk Individuals: Although heat-related illness can affect anyone at anytime, below are some of the individuals who are at the greatest risk of developing it:

- Infants and children
- People who are age 65 and older
- People who are overweight
- People who have labor intensive jobs
- People who overexert themselves when they exercise
- People who have physical ailments, like heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take medications for certain conditions such as depression, insomnia, or poor blood circulation.

It's recommended that you should check on high risk adults at least twice a day, to ensure they don't suffer from heat exhaustion or heat stroke. For infants and children, they need to be more frequently monitored to keep them safe from heat-related illnesses.

Proper Body Posture

“Oh, my aching back”. This exclamation is one that’s commonly heard when referring to a nagging muscle or a pulsing ligament. While the cause can be due to a variety of reasons including slipping on the ice, tripping over one’s feet, or lifting something up improperly, there’s another common culprit that’s responsible for body aches. This guilty party in question is poor posture. If you go about exhibiting poor posture when you are doing actions like lying, sitting, standing, and walking, then it’s likely you’ll be putting some major strain on your body.

Contributing factors that could lead to poor posture include the following: stress, obesity, pregnancy, weak muscles, chronically stiff muscles, and wearing high-heeled shoes. Other additional factors that could result in poor body positioning habits, occur because of a decreased state of flexibility, a sedentary work environment, and incorrect sitting and standing postures.

In celebration of May being Correct Posture Month, below are some tips of how one could go about improving a number of postures often used for everyday life; the content featured here comes from the website, Mayo Clinic Health System (<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/proper-posture-is-important-for-good-health>).

Standing Posture:

- Lift your chest high
- Relax and droop your shoulders back
- Pull in your stomach and backside
- Don’t lock your knees, instead try keeping a slight bend to them
- Avoid tilting your head
- Balance your weight using both feet
- Keep your feet parallel to one another

Walking Posture:

- Hold your head up high
- Look forward ahead of you, not down and attempt to keep your chin parallel to the ground
- Be sure to lightly contract your abdominal muscles
- Maintain a slight bend to your elbows and allow your arms to swing freely
- Let your shoulders move naturally
- Don’t arch your back, try to keep it straight

Lying Posture:

- Find a mattress that’s comfortable for you
- Use a pillow to rest your head on when you sleep
- Make an effort to avoid sleeping on your stomach
- If you sleep lying in a sideways position, place a pillow between your legs
- If you sleep on your back, put a pillow under your knees

Ergonomics

Jobs where you sit at a desk all day can result in your body having some aches and pains. On the other hand, maintenance of good ergonomics in the office is something you could do to upkeep the health of your muscles and ligaments.

- **Adjust the height of your office chair.** The ideal office chair position is one that will allow you to plant your feet flat on the ground, with your knees level to where your hips are. If you are seeking to make your office chair more comfortable, you may want to consider getting a cushion for your chair that you could rest the small of your back against; this will help with lumbar support.
- **Position your office space effectively.** By keeping all your go-to items within reach, this will prevent you from having to unnecessarily move around your work area to get ahold of what you need.
- **Be mindful of how you treat your wrists.** When you type on a computer try to keep your wrists straight and have a wrist rest by your keyboard for support.
- **Don’t slouch, sit up straight.** As you work in front of your computer or at your desk, position yourself in the center of that space while maintaining an upright sitting posture.
- **Use a hands-free headset.** Answering your phone by using your shoulder to hold it to the side of your face while working on other tasks isn’t very comfortable. However, relying on a headset to answer incoming calls will help to reduce some of the strain your body feels.

Better posture can have an impact on the state of one’s health. If you happen to be interested in seeking out advice of how to improve your posture, reach out to a health care professional for their opinion.

**NEW 24/7, FREE, AND CONFIDENTIAL
SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**



9-8-8

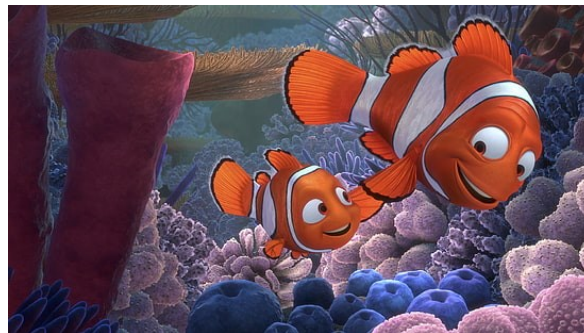
OR VISIT [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) TO CHAT

Dial 988

If you are facing a suicidal crisis or are in emotional distress, dial 988 to contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The lifeline will connect you to a local crisis center, where you'll talk to a crisis counselor who can provide emotional support and can help find crisis resources for you as well. This lifeline offers free, confidential support—24 hours a day, 7 days a week



·WORRY· *Name it to Tame*



If you have ever seen the movie, "Finding Nemo" you probably know what "worry" is. The movie focuses on the relationship between a father and son, who are clownfish that live in the Great Barrier Reef. Due to a traumatic event that happened at the start of the movie, resulting in the loss of family members like the wife/mother and multiple children as well, the clownfish dad, Marlin makes a promise to his one surviving son, Nemo that he'll always be by his side to protect him.

Several years pass and while Marlin continues to maintain his promise to keep his son away from danger, Marlin has a habit where he tends to worry and be concerned about everything his son interacts with, despite how minimal the risk actually might be. With Nemo's dad being a constant worrier, it's something that starts to bug Nemo, as he feels his dad is overreacting to everything and is embarrassing him in front of others. This leads to the film's conflict where Nemo ends up disobeying his dad by wondering too close to a boat and being captured by a human. Resulting in the main plot of the film being set off, where Marlin has to learn to overcome his worries about the dangers of the ocean, in order to save his son and bring him back home.

To learn more about the emotion, worry, including tips to help you worry less and the ways in which worry can effect your wellbeing, visit the links below:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-can-i-stop-worrying-so-much-2583982>

And

<https://www.talkspace.com/blog/worried-sick/>