

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH **2022** **OUTREACH TOOLKIT**



BACK
TO
BASICS
MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY



-  /mentalhealthamerica
-  @mentalhealtham
-  @mentalhealthamerica
-  /mentalhealtham
-  /mentalhealthamerica
- www.mhanational.org

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

FOREWORD

This last year has been challenging, to say the least.

From the ongoing pandemic to the continuing injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of systemic oppression, it can be hard to get through the day without something in the news cycle feeling really difficult. And of course, what some people read about in the news, other people experience in real life.

We know that around half of all people in the U.S. will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their lives. We also know that communities who are targeted by racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and other forms of systemic oppression and violence can face an even heavier mental health burden because of these harms.

For this year's Mental Health Month, which we proudly started in 1949, Mental Health America is taking our annual toolkit back to basics. Because no matter how heavy and hard the world feels – and maybe especially because the world feels quite challenging right now – focusing on our mental health must remain a priority.

So we kept it simple. Our toolkit provides free, practical resources to introduce mental health topics like recognizing warning signs, knowing the factors that can lead to mental health conditions, maintaining mental wellness, and seeking help for mental health.

Creating a world where everyone can get the mental health care they need and where everyone can thrive is imperative – and within our reach. We have already seen once-unthinkable leaps and bounds in how our society addresses mental health, and this toolkit empowers us to push the conversation – and the real, tangible resources for people who need them – forward.

The other part of this work is you – the readers of this toolkit, the supporters of MHA, and our mission to make mental health supports and services available and accessible to everyone who needs them. Thank you for all you're doing, day in and day out, to make it so everyone has the care and resources they need, no matter who they are or where they are from. It is making a real difference, and I cannot wait to see what this next year brings.

Thank you for being a part of this work. All of us at MHA are honored to be on this road with you.



Schroeder Stribling

Schroeder Stribling
President and CEO



INTRODUCTION

With mental health entering more and more of our daily conversations, it's critical that everyone has a solid foundation of knowledge about mental health. That's why for Mental Health Month this year, Mental Health America is going *Back to Basics*.

Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit provides free, practical resources to introduce mental health topics like recognizing warning signs, knowing the factors that can lead to mental health conditions, maintaining mental wellness, seeking help for mental health. This year's toolkit includes:

Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Drop-In Articles
- 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
- Pop Under (Horizontal) Web Banners
- Wide Skyscraper (Vertical) Web Banners

Posters

- Back to Basics Posters (Horizontal and Vertical)
- Screening Posters (Horizontal and Vertical)

Fact Sheets

- Starting To Think About Mental Health
- What Plays A Role In Developing Mental Health Conditions
- Maintaining Good Mental Health
- Recognizing When You Need Help With Your Mental Health
- What To Do When You Need Help
- Where To Go
- Terms To Know

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?

MHA merchandise is available through the Mental Health America store to supplement your outreach efforts. Visit the Mental Health America store at <https://store.mhanational.org>.

***MHA Affiliates** – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on materials at the MHA store. Contact Valerie Sterns at vsterns@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, Vice President of Public Education and Design at dfritze@mhanational.org or Emily Skehill, Director of Public Awareness & Education at eskehill@mhanational.org.

OUTREACH IDEAS

WHAT YOU CAN DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Share information locally:

- Ask wellness-oriented businesses like your local gym, yoga studio, or health food store to put up one of the posters from this toolkit.
- Reach out to your personal and professional contacts to encourage them to download the toolkit and share its resources with their customers and employees through newsletters and social media.
- Think about other groups in your community that could benefit from downloading the *Back to Basics* toolkit – doctors' offices, schools, churches, synagogues, and other religious gathering places are a good start. You can be a tremendous help in getting this information to people who need it!
- Include mhanational.org/may in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other platform posts so people can access the different Back to Basics webpages.

Help spread the word about screening:

- Put MHA's screening site in the bio of your Instagram profile. For example, say "Check up on your mental health at the link below" and link to mhascreening.org in the website blank.
- Take a screen at mhascreening.org and share that you "took a check-up from the neck up" – encourage others to do the same.

Start a Facebook, Twitch, or Instagram fundraiser:

- Share why mental health matters to you or share your screening story.
- Share why catching symptoms of mental health conditions and taking action early is important.
- Incorporate mental health fast facts into your fundraiser. Get them at www.mhanational.org/mentalhealthfacts.
- Start an online 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

- Ask your governor or mayor to declare May as Mental Health Month. Use the sample proclamation in the toolkit.
- Get in touch with your senators: www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm
- Contact your representative: www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
- 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
- Check out MHA's series of reports on Communities in Need Across the U.S. during COVID-19:
 - Suicide: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/suicide-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Severe Depression: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/severe-depression-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Trauma: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/trauma-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Psychosis: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/psychosis-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us

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. Visit www.mhanational.org/mind-workplace to access MHA's 2022 Mind the Workplace report, scheduled for release in mid-April.
- 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 by contacting your local MHA affiliate: <https://arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate>.

Share your story

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

Reach out individually

- Think about 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 start the conversation.

Show your support

- Shop MHA's online store to stock up on your mental health awareness swag: <https://store.mhanational.org/>.
- 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). Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Email your partners, family members and friends, donors, and local officials inviting them to participate.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, church, mall or library). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to www.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.
- Team up with other local mental health and wellness organizations to host a community meet-and-greet.

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 are aware of and know how to access available resources.
- Include mental health as part of the conversation in alumni newsletters, department wide communications, student life, and social media.
- Direct people to MHA's Mental Health Month Toolkit in your messaging for the month at www.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.
- Lime green is the official awareness color for mental health – coordinate a day, such as a spirit day or "paint the school green" day, to celebrate and honor mental health awareness.

WHAT BUSINESSES CAN DO

- Use the the drop-in article from this year's toolkit and send a Mental Health Month themed email to your constituents.
- Put out 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.
- 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 posters from MHA's *Back to Basics* toolkit in your office or business.
- Shop MHA's store and take a picture with your merch to share online <https://store.mhanational.org>.

- 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 MHA's profile using the account information below so we can see it!

 /mentalhealthamerica

 /mentalhealtham

 @mentalhealtham

 /mentalhealthamerica

 @mentalhealthamerica

HELP US LIGHT UP GREEN FOR MENTAL HEALTH MONTH!

MHA would like to enlist your help with a coordinated effort to reach out to buildings and landmarks across the country with a request to light up green for Mental Health Month. **Our goal is to light up as many buildings as possible on the evening of May 1, 2022** (since May 1 is a Sunday your local area building may want to light up on a different date or if they already traditionally light up on a different date - that's fine too). If they are willing to light up green for longer than a day, the first week of May or even the entire month would be awesome! Email Jackie Zimmermann at jzimmermann@mhanational.org to let her know your city/state, which building you've requested be green-lit, and if your request was approved.

KEY MESSAGES

- With mental health entering more and more of our daily conversations, it's critical that everyone has a solid foundation of knowledge about mental health. That's why for Mental Health Month this year, Mental Health America is getting back to basics.
- Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit provides free, practical resources to introduce mental health topics like recognizing warning signs, knowing the factors that can lead to mental health conditions, maintaining mental wellness, seeking help for mental health.
- Addressing mental health symptoms early is critically important for overall health.
- From social determinants of health to genetics, many factors are in play when it comes to mental health conditions, but there are protective measures that can prevent mental health conditions from developing or keep symptoms from becoming severe.
- While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.
- About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, with symptoms starting by age 24 for the majority of people.
- The average delay between symptom onset and treatment is 11 years, meaning a lot of people spend months or years facing mental health challenges before getting a diagnosis. It is never too early to seek treatment for your mental health. Intervening effectively during early stages can save lives and is critically important for people living with mental health conditions.
- Social, cultural, and historical factors often impact the mental health of communities that have traditionally been marginalized. These communities experience overt racism and bigotry far too often, which leads to a mental health burden that is deeper than what others may face.
- Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn't feel hard or out of your control. If it does, one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health screening at mhascreening.org.
- The delays in treatment for mental health conditions are longer than for many other health conditions. Getting screened increases the chances of getting treatment. Mental Health America has free, anonymous, and scientifically validated mental health screens at mhascreening.org.
- Your screening results can be used to start a conversation with your primary care provider or a trusted friend or family member, and you can begin to plan a course of action for addressing your mental health.
- When facing a mental health concern or living with a mental health condition, it's common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. You aren't alone – help is available, and recovery is possible.
- Starting July 16, 2022, call 988 for matters of mental health crisis. Calling 988 will connect you directly to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is staffed by trained crisis counselors 24/7, 365 days a year.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with the assorted statistics and tips included on the fact sheets.

DROP-IN ARTICLE

Back To Basics: Practical Mental Health Information

Since the start of the pandemic, more and more people are talking about mental health. An increasing number of folks are starting to see it for what it is: one important component of your overall health and well-being, just like your physical health. But mental health conditions, resources, and conversations can still feel complicated and out of reach.

Are there common warning signs for mental health conditions or crises? Specific factors that can lead to mental health conditions or even crises? What resources are out there – and how do I know if they're right for me?

Many people are learning about mental health topics for the first time. Having a widespread understanding of the topic can help you be more informed if you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health condition or crisis. Around half of people in the U.S. will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life, so everyone should know what to look out for.

Everyone should have the support needed to thrive. Communities that have been historically and presently oppressed face a deeper mental health burden because of the added impact of trauma, oppression, and harm.

There's often no one single cause for a mental health condition. Instead, there are many possible risk factors that can influence how likely a person is to experience a mental health condition or how serious the symptoms may be.

Some risk factors for mental health conditions include: trauma, which can be a one-time event or ongoing; your environment and how it impacts your health and quality of life (also known as social determinants of health like financial stability and health care access); genetics; brain chemistry; and your habits and lifestyle such as a lack of sleep.

Of course, understanding the risk factors for a mental health condition can be more difficult when it's your own mental health. Take time to ask yourself about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to see if this is part of a pattern that may be caused by a mental health condition. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Have things that used to feel easy started feeling difficult?
- Does the idea of doing daily tasks like making your bed now feel really, really hard?
- Have you lost interest in activities and hobbies you used to enjoy?
- Do you feel irritated, possibly to the point of lashing out at people you care about?

Our society focuses much more on physical health than mental health, but both are equally important. If you are concerned about your mental health, there are several options available. You are not alone – help is out there, and recovery is possible. It may be hard to talk about your concerns, but simply acknowledging to yourself that you're struggling is a really big step.

Taking a screen at mhascreening.org can help you to better understand what you are experiencing and get helpful resources. After that, consider talking to someone you trust about your results, and seek out a professional to find the support you need.

While you may not need this information today, knowing the basics about mental health will mean you're prepared if you ever need it. Go to mhanational.org/may to learn more.

DROP-IN ARTICLE

988 Coming Soon: New Number to Call for People Facing Mental Health Crises

Everyone deserves access to the support they need, when they need it – and that includes mental health support. That's why this year, starting on July 16, 2022, anyone facing a mental health crisis can call 988 and get connected to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (also called the Lifeline).

The line will be staffed with trained crisis counselors who know what callers are going through and know what local resources might make a difference. The phone line is staffed 24/7, and is free and confidential.

When someone is facing a mental health concern or living with a mental health condition, it's really common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. It may be difficult to imagine that someone who picks up the phone could totally understand what you're feeling, and even harder to imagine that recovery is possible.

The current way of doing things isn't working. Calling 911, the de facto response in our country, is not serving people in a mental health crisis well. A police response can inflict additional trauma on someone in crisis, or worse, attempt to criminalize the person.

Unlike 911, counselors will be at the other end of the Lifeline when you dial 988. They are trained to understand exactly how you're feeling and to pair you with resources that are specifically tailored to helping you meet the moment you're in.

Having concerns about your mental health is a common experience. It's time to make this kind of support just as common. This is why 988 is an easy, three-digit phone number to remember. This resource was created for everyone, including you: if you're ever feeling like you need help with a mental health or substance use crisis, but not sure if you should call, starting in July, you can just dial 988. It is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible support.

It's never too early – or too late – to seek help. In the U.S., the average amount of time between the onset of symptoms of a mental health condition or challenge and a diagnosis is 11 years. It's never too early to get support: If you're facing a mental health crisis for the first time, reaching out can help.

Mental health challenges and crises are widespread. This is why resources and support for people facing mental health and substance use crises must be just as widespread. Starting July 16, 2022, it will become even easier for people living with these challenges to get the help they need.

If you or someone you know needs to be connected to someone who will understand what you're going through and how to help, they can soon call 988 to be directly connected with a trained crisis counselor at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Note: 988 will not be available to everyone until July 16, 2022. In the meantime, if you or someone you know is in crisis, please continue to contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Crisis Text Line by texting MHA to 741741.

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 2022 "Back to Basics"

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 early and 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 2022 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 MEDIA POSTS

DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- Are you prepared for Mental Health Month? Mental Health America's free toolkit includes fact sheets, resources, and graphics about mental health to share throughout the month of May. Download the toolkit at mhanational.org/may
- For Mental Health Month this year, Mental Health America is bringing it back to basics. With mental health entering mainstream conversations, it's critical that solid foundations of knowledge are formed. Learn more: mhanational.org/may
- May is Mental Health Month! Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit provides free, practical resources to introduce topics in mental health such as recognizing warning signs and tools to maintain mental wellness. Learn more: mhanational.org/may

GENERAL SCREENING AND LEARN MORE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

- Screening can help catch mental health problems early. Get screened at mhascreening.org. A screening only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results.
- Feeling like something "isn't quite right"? Taking a free, anonymous mental health screen at mhascreening.org is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine if what you are experiencing might be signs of a mental health condition.
- The delays in treatment for mental illnesses are longer than for many other health conditions. Getting screened increases the chances of getting treatment. Mental Health America has free, anonymous, and confidential mental health screens at mhascreening.org

SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC TOPICS:

- With mental health entering the mainstream, it's critical that we get the basics right, like maintaining good mental health or recognizing warning signs. Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit provides free resources to learn more: mhanational.org/may
- When is it time to start thinking about mental health? Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit takes us back to the basics with practical resources on starting your mental health journey for life. Learn more: mhanational.org/may
- What contributes to developing a mental health condition? How do we recognize warning signs? What are ways to maintain good mental health? Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month Toolkit answers all these and more at mhanational.org/may
- While it's common to discuss ways to maintain our physical health, like regular exercise or a healthy diet, maintaining good mental health is less known. Explore mental wellness with Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit: mhanational.org/may
- Sometimes people are aware enough to recognize that something "isn't quite right" with their mental health. But what are next steps? Learn the basics with Mental Health America's 2022 Mental Health Month toolkit at mhanational.org/may

- What does “mental health” mean? What does it consist of? Feelings and emotions? Mental Health America is bringing it back to basics with the 2022 Mental Health Month Toolkit. Learn more and download the toolkit at mhanational.org/may
- From social determinants of health to brain chemistry, a lot of factors come into play when it comes to mental health conditions. Learn about what can cause mental health conditions and what we can do to prevent them at mhanational.org/may

CRISIS:

- If you or someone you know is in crisis, text MHA to 741741 to reach a trained Crisis Counselor 24/7 or call 1-800-273-8255 to reach a local crisis center through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- Starting July 16, 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will be available for mental health or emotional crisis situations by calling 988.

HASHTAGS:

- #BackToMHBasics
- #MentalHealthMonth
- #MHM2022

LINKS:

- www.mhascreening.org
- 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-2022-toolkit-download> and downloading the images zip file.

Horizontal Banners

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2022

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

Mental health is becoming more common in mainstream conversations and it can be an overwhelming topic if you're just starting to explore it. We can help.

LEARN MORE AT MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2022

Take some time to take a screen. It's an easy way to check in on your mental health.

VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org)

MHA Mental Health America

Vertical Banners

20 MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 22

Taking a screen is an easy way to check in on your mental health.

Take a Mental Health Test

VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org)

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

Facebook Covers

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

MHA Mental Health America

Feeling like something "isn't quite right"?

Visit mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

Twitter Headers

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Feeling like something "isn't quite right"?

Check your symptoms at mhascreening.org. It's free, confidential, and anonymous.

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

MHA Mental Health America

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

MHA Mental Health America

Shareables (for all social media platforms)



BACK TO BASICS

Feeling like something "isn't quite right"?

Taking a free, anonymous mental health screen at mhascreening.org is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine if what you are experiencing might be signs of a mental health condition.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may



BACK TO BASICS

IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org).

FREE. CONFIDENTIAL. ANONYMOUS.

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

20 MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

BACK TO BASICS

For Mental Health Month this year, Mental Health America is bringing it back to basics.

With mental health entering mainstream conversations, it's critical that solid foundations of knowledge are formed.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO GET **BACK TO BASICS**

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

FAST FACT:



21% OF ALL U.S. ADULTS LIVE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

FAST FACT:



THE PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IS HIGHEST AMONG ADULTS REPORTING TWO OR MORE RACES (35.8%)

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

FAST FACT:



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AFFECT MORE FEMALES (25.8%) THAN MALES (15.8%)

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

FAST FACT:



46% OF AMERICANS WILL MEET THE CRITERIA FOR A DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION AT SOMETIME IN THEIR LIFE

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

FAST FACT:

CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE TRAUMA ARE APPROXIMATELY **1.3X MORE LIKELY** TO DEVELOP A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION AS ADULTS THAN CHILDREN WHO DON'T EXPERIENCE TRAUMA.

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

FAST FACT:



STUDIES HAVE FOUND CHILDREN OF PARENTS WITH GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD) TO BE **2-6X AS LIKELY** AS OTHER CHILDREN TO RECEIVE A GAD DIAGNOSIS.

BACK TO BASICS **LEARN MORE** mhanational.org/may

MLIA Mental Health America

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

COPING SKILL: a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and reduce unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

HEALTH INSURANCE: a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

LIVED EXPERIENCE: first-hand, personal experience dealing with a mental health or substance use challenge.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN: anything that causes a person to believe their mental health may be suffering; could be a symptom, a group of symptoms, or a diagnosable mental health condition.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION: a set of related symptoms that have been recognized by the mental health community; includes conditions defined in the DSM-V, ICD-11, and by people with lived experience.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL: a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider.

(See bit.ly/mhprofs for a detailed list.)

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN: an evaluation of your mental health and well-being through scientifically validated assessment tools. Visit mhascreening.org for free, confidential screening tools.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

NEUROTRANSMITTERS: chemicals that carry messages throughout your brain.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

TERM TO KNOW **BACK TO BASICS**

OUTPATIENT: treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays.

MLIA Mental Health America

LEARN MORE mhanational.org/may

and more!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CRISIS RESOURCES

[Crisis Text Line](https://crisistextline.org) - crisistextline.org

Text MHA to 741-741 to text with a trained Crisis Counselor for free, anonymous, 24/7 support.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) - suicidepreventionlifeline.org

The Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7. Services are available for:

- English speakers: 1-800-273-8255
- Spanish speakers: 1-888-628-9454
- For deaf & hard of hearing individuals: for TTY users, use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255

[Want to know what it's actually like to call?](#)

[Warmline.org](https://warmline.org)

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

RESOURCES FROM MHA:

Starting to Think About Mental Health

- [The B4Stage4 Philosophy](#)
- [Information on various mental health conditions](#)
- Information on factors that can impact your mental health
 - [Fitness 4Mind4Body: Diet And Nutrition](#)
 - [Fitness 4Mind4Body: The Gut-Brain Connection](#)
 - [Fitness 4Mind4Body: Exercise](#)
 - [Fitness 4Mind4Body: Sleep](#)
 - [Fitness 4Mind4Body: Stress](#)
 - [4Mind4Body: Social Connections And Recreation](#)

What Plays a Role in Developing Mental Health Conditions

- [What causes mental illness?](#)
- [Is mental illness genetic?](#)
- [What is trauma?](#)
- [Is all trauma the same?](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health](#)
- [Neurons: How the Brain Communicates](#)
- Neurotransmitters
 - [What is Serotonin?](#)
 - [What is GABA?](#)
 - [What is Acetylcholine?](#)
 - [What is Glutamate?](#)
 - [What are Endorphins?](#)
 - [What is Dopamine?](#)
 - [What is Adrenaline?](#)
 - [What is Noradrenaline?](#)

Maintaining Good Mental Health

- [Living Mentally Healthy](#)
- [Staying Mentally Healthy](#)
- [Wellness Planning and Maintenance](#)
- [Tools2Thrive Hub](#) – Information, tips, and practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency (materials available in English and Spanish).
- Information on factors that can improve your mental health
 - [4Mind4Body: Animal Companionship](#)
 - [4Mind4Body: Work-Life Balance](#)
 - [4Mind4Body: Humor](#)
 - [4Mind4Body: Spirituality and Religion](#)
- [Protective and Risk Factors for Toxic Stress](#)
- [31 Tips to Boost Your Mental Health](#)
- [Do-It-Yourself Tools](#) – Find apps, worksheets, and other tools to improve your mental health on your own.

Recognizing When You Need Help with Your Mental Health

- Screening Tools
 - [Screens for Mental Health Conditions](#)
 - [Stress Screener](#)
- [Finding Help: When to Get It and Where to Go](#)
- [Health Care Decision Aid: Your Mind and Your Body](#)

What to Do When You Need Help

- [Recovery is a Journey](#)
- [Self-Help Tools](#)
- Talking to Someone About Your Mental Health
 - [Preparing to Share: Talking About Hard Topics \(Article and Worksheet\)](#)
 - [Time To Talk: Tips for Talking About Your Mental Health](#)
 - [How to Talk to Your Parents About Mental Health](#)
- [Types of Mental Health Professionals](#)
- [IAMNOTALONE](#) – Meet and connect with new people to build meaningful friendships.
- Finding Care
 - [Where to Get Help: Interactive Tool](#)
 - [Finding Therapy](#)
 - [Finding Support Groups](#)
 - [Finding In-Patient Care](#)
 - [Find an MHA Affiliate](#)
 - [Finding Other Local Services](#)
- [Questions to Help QTBIPOC Find Affirming Mental Health Providers](#)
- [Choosing a Provider](#)
- [Working with a Provider](#)
- [Paying for Care](#)
- [Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Mental Health](#)

Culturally Responsive Resources

- mhanational.org/BIPOC
- mhanational.org/LGBTQ

COVID-19

A wealth of articles, webinars, blogs, and podcasts about how to deal with the mental health struggles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at mhanational.org/covid19.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Resources mentioned below come from MHA's network of trusted partners and supporters.

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

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

[ChoicesInRecovery.com](#): Support and information for people with Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective, and Bipolar Disorder and their caregivers, including [Strategies for Success](#) that can be used daily by people living with mental health conditions.

[Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance \(DBSA\)](#): DBSA envisions wellness for people living with mood disorders. DBSA offers peer-based, wellness-oriented support and empowering services and resources available when people need them, where they need them, and how they need to receive them – online 24/7, in local support groups, in audio and video casts, or in printed materials distributed by DBSA, their chapters, and mental health care facilities across America.

[Effective School Solutions \(ESS\)](#): ESS partners with school districts to help them implement culturally inclusive mental health and behavioral support programs that improve care, strengthen outcomes, address trauma, and maintain students in their home district.

[Equoo](#): Equoo is a game that teaches individuals psychological skills in a fun and captivating way to deal with emotional and mental stressors in a healthy and productive fashion.

[Happify](#): Happify brings you effective tools and programs (via the web and an app) to help you take control of your feelings and thoughts using proven techniques developed by leading scientists and experts who've been studying evidence-based interventions in the fields of positive psychology, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioral therapy.

[IDONTMIND](#): IDONTMIND is a mental health awareness campaign and lifestyle brand working to get people talking about their minds and to generate positive messaging about mental health. Check out their [online journal](#) for articles on all things mental health.

[Inspire](#): Access Mental Health America's Inspire Community to engage with peers who share similar experiences across hundreds of condition-specific support communities.

[Lyf](#): Lyf is a social media app where users share highly personal aspects of themselves without the fear of judgment. Lyf users receive support during some of their most grueling, challenging, confronting or even "embarrassing" stages of their lives from other people who have no preconceptions about their fellow Lyfers. Lyfers have the opportunity to connect with and chat to others on the same life paths or journeys; whether it's a struggle or celebration, in Lyf, you aren't alone.

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

[Minding Your Mind](#): Minding Your Mind creates experiences that open minds and show people they are not alone when they are struggling. Their group of young adult speakers, who have successfully and productively coped with their mental health challenges, share their stories of hope, recovery, and resilience. They use the power of storytelling to provide evidence-based education about mental health challenges in schools, communities, and workplaces. Minding Your Mind encourages youth to seek help and ensures that those around them are effectively prepared to provide that help.

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#): NCTSN was created to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for children and families who experience or witness traumatic events.

[National Alliance for Eating Disorders](#): The National Alliance for Eating Disorders is a national non-profit organization dedicated to the outreach, education, early intervention, support, and advocacy for all eating disorders.

[notOK App](#): The notOK App® is a free app that takes the guesswork out of asking for help when you're feeling vulnerable.

[OPEN Mental Health](#): Stories and advice from people who either live with mental health issues or care for someone who does.

[PositivePsychology.com](#): PositivePsychology.com is a science-based online resource of courses, techniques, tools, and tips to help you put positive psychology into practice.

[Postpartum Support International](#): The mission of Postpartum Support International is to promote awareness, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues related to childbearing in every country worldwide.

[Psychology Today Therapist Finder](#): Psychology Today has an extensive database of therapists where you can filter search results based on therapist gender, accepted insurance, types of therapy, and more.

[SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#): SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator is a confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. Territories for substance use/addiction and/or mental health concerns.

[Self-Injury Recovery Anonymous \(SIRA\)](#): SIRA provides a safe space for individuals who engage in physical self-injury to come together to share experiences, strength, and hope without judgment or criticism, with the goal of stopping physical self-injury.

[Supportiv](#): Supportiv is a digital peer-to-peer support network that enables people to process, cope with, heal from, and problem solve mental health (anxiety, depression) + daily life struggles (loneliness, family pressure, parenting challenges, relationship conflicts, work stress) in safe, professionally moderated micro-community chats.

[Teen Talk](#): Teen Talk is a free mobile app that helps teens get social and emotional support from a group of people they trust most: their peers. Download for [iPhone](#) or [Android](#).

[wikiHow](#): wikiHow is an online community consisting of an extensive database of how-to guides. Check out their course, created in collaboration with MHA: [Boost Your Well-Being: wikiHow's Healthy Mind Masterclass](#).

STARTING TO THINK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health refers to our emotional and social well-being and impacts how we think, feel, and behave. It plays a role in connecting with others, making decisions, handling stress, and many other aspects of daily life. Everyone has mental health, and it deserves your attention just as much as your physical health does.

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

A mental health condition, or mental illness, refers to a set of symptoms that have been identified by the mental health community. Mental health conditions are described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), or by people with lived experience.

People with mental health conditions deal with changes in emotions, thinking, and/or behavior. For some, this means extreme and unexpected changes in mood – like feeling much more sad or worried than usual. For others, it means not thinking clearly, pulling away from friends and activities you used to enjoy, or hearing voices that others do not. No matter what kind of mental health condition someone is facing, it's always possible to recover.

IS POOR MENTAL HEALTH THE SAME THING AS HAVING A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

No. We all have tough days and weeks and struggling with your mental health doesn't automatically mean you have a mental health condition. To be diagnosed, the changes in your thinking and emotions must be seriously hurting your ability to do the things you want to do; and sticking around longer than they should – weeks or months, depending on the condition.

TERMS TO KNOW

SYMPTOMS:

physical or mental features that indicate the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis

LIVED EXPERIENCE:

first-hand, personal experience dealing with a mental health or substance use challenge

STRESS:

a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure

TRAUMA:

an emotional response to a disturbing, scary, or shocking experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope

COPING SKILLS:

a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and lessen unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors

MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN:

an evaluation of your mental health and wellbeing through scientifically validated assessment tools

CONDITION		FOR DIAGNOSIS SYMPTOMS MUST LAST AT LEAST:
ANXIETY		6 MONTHS
DEPRESSION		2 WEEKS
BIPOLAR	DEPRESSIVE EPISODE AND MANIA OR HYPOMANIA	2 WEEKS 1 WEEK 4 DAYS
SCHIZOPHRENIA		6 MONTHS
PTSD		1 MONTH
OCD		2 WEEKS

You can have times of poor mental health without having a diagnosable condition – just like you can be generally physically unhealthy without having a particular illness.

WHO NEEDS TO LOOK AFTER THEIR MENTAL HEALTH?

Everyone! Mental health is important for all of us. Taking care of yourself is critical to prevent your mental health from worsening – factors like nutrition and gut health, stress, sleep, relationships, trauma, and more can contribute to poor mental health. If your mental health is in a good spot, it is a great time to practice coping skills – ways to help you deal with hard feelings – so that you're better able to handle tough times when they happen.



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.

FAST FACTS

21% OF ALL U.S. ADULTS LIVE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.¹



THE PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IS HIGHEST AMONG ADULTS REPORTING TWO OR MORE RACES (35.8%).²

46% OF AMERICANS WILL MEET THE CRITERIA FOR A DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION AT SOMETIME IN THEIR LIFE.³

SOURCES

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2021). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP21-07-01-003, NSDUH Series H-56). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2020-nsduh-annual-national-report>.

² Ibid.

³ Kessler, R.C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., et al. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593-602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593.

WHAT PLAYS A ROLE IN DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS?

Most mental health conditions don't have a single cause – they have many possible causes, called risk factors. The more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to develop a mental health condition in your lifetime. Mental health conditions can develop slowly, or symptoms can start to appear more suddenly after you've experienced a stressful event or big change.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors don't just affect who will and won't develop a mental health condition. They also impact the seriousness of symptoms and when those symptoms will show up. There are several risk factors, including:

Social determinants of health (SDOH)

SDOH are the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that impact their health and quality of life. There are five main categories – financial stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and living environment, and social and community life.

One example of how SDOH affect mental health is poverty. High poverty neighborhoods can cause stress, weaken healthy social connections, and harm the overall mental health of the people who live there, even when controlling for individual poverty.¹

Trauma

Any experience that was highly stressful, shocking, or dangerous to you can be traumatic. Trauma is different for everyone – what feels normal to someone else might be traumatic to you, and vice versa. A traumatic event can threaten your physical safety (like being in a car accident), or it can be more emotional (like the sudden death of a loved one). Traumatic experiences can be one-time events (like getting in a fight) or ongoing (like bullying or childhood neglect). Situations like loneliness, seeing an accident, natural disasters, poverty, and racism can all cause a trauma response.

Genetics

Your genes are passed down from your parents and ancestors. They act as the blueprint for how your body and brain develop and function. There's no one gene that decides if you'll have a mental health condition. Instead, many genes affect the way your

TERMS TO KNOW

RISK FACTOR:

something that increases the chances of developing a condition

NEUROTRANSMITTERS:

chemicals that carry messages throughout your brain

PROTECTIVE FACTOR:

something that decreases the chances of developing a condition and/or balances out an existing risk factor

brain develops, making you more or less likely to develop a mental health condition later.

Biology and brain chemistry

Some brains are wired differently, have too high or too low levels of certain neurotransmitters, or are damaged after a head injury. Abnormalities in the prefrontal cortex, frontal cortex, and other parts of the brain can also increase your chances of developing a mental health condition.

Habits and lifestyle

It's important to take care of your body and mind. Things like not getting enough high-quality sleep, regularly unhealthy food choices, lack of exercise, and poor stress management can all play a role in developing a mental health condition.

For instance, the occasional night of tossing and turning won't hurt you long-term, but chronic exhaustion can. Sleep problems like insomnia, consistently poor sleep quality, and frequent nightmares are related to mental health concerns and conditions, including a higher risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors.²

Substance use

Using drugs or alcohol can trigger a mental health condition by affecting mood, sleep, relationships, and physical health. It can also lead to changes in some of the same brain areas involved in other mental health conditions like depression and schizophrenia.³ It's common for individuals already struggling with their mental health to turn to substances as a coping mechanism. This substance use can impact the effectiveness of medications and make it harder to recover from a mental health condition. When someone has a mental health condition that overlaps with a substance use disorder, it is either referred to as dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorders.

AM I DESTINED TO HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

It is important to know that experiencing any of these factors doesn't mean that you'll definitely develop a mental health condition. You can take steps to reduce your risk factors or increase your protective factors – like building supportive relationships, taking care of your body, and practicing gratitude. Just like any health condition, knowing the risk factors can help you identify and address symptoms early on and plan a course of action to overall health.



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.

FAST FACTS



CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE TRAUMA ARE APPROXIMATELY 1.3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION AS ADULTS THAN CHILDREN WHO DON'T EXPERIENCE TRAUMA.⁴



STUDIES HAVE FOUND CHILDREN OF PARENTS WITH GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD) TO BE 2-6 TIMES AS LIKELY AS OTHER CHILDREN TO RECEIVE A GAD DIAGNOSIS.⁵



THE BRAIN CHEMICAL DOPAMINE, SOMETIMES KNOWN AS "THE FEEL-GOOD NEUROTRANSMITTER," IS WHAT ALLOWS YOU TO FEEL PLEASURE AND MOTIVATION. WHEN THE BRAIN'S DOPAMINE SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING AS IT IS MEANT TO, IT HAS BEEN LINKED TO SCHIZOPHRENIA SYMPTOMS.⁶



INDIVIDUALS WHO FREQUENTLY DRINK ALCOHOL ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE DEPRESSED THAN THOSE WHO MODERATE THEIR USE.⁷ DRINKING IN MODERATION IS DEFINED AS ONE DRINK OR LESS IN A DAY FOR WOMEN AND TWO DRINKS OR LESS IN A DAY FOR MEN.⁸

SOURCES

- 1 Chun-Chung Chow, J., Johnson, M.A., & Austin, M.J. (2005). The status of low-income neighborhoods in the post-welfare reform environment: Mapping the relationship between poverty and place. *Journal of Health & Social Policy*, 21(1), 1-32. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16418126/>
- 2 Bernert, R.A., Kim, J.S., Iwata, N.G., & Perlis, M.L. (2015). Sleep disturbances as an evidence-based suicide risk factor. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 17(3). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25698339/>
- 3 National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2021). Why is there comorbidity between substance use disorders and mental illnesses? <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/common-comorbidities-substance-use-disorders/why-there-comorbidity-between-substance-use-disorders-mental-illnesses>
- 4 Copeland, W., Shanahan, L., & Hinesley, J. (2018). Association of childhood trauma exposure with adult psychiatric disorders and functional outcomes. *JAMA Netw Open*, 1(7). doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.4493
- 5 Gottschalk, M.G., & Domschke, K. (2017). Genetics of generalized anxiety disorder and related traits. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 19(2), 159-168. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5573560/>
- 6 Li, P., Snyder, G.L., & Vanover, K. E. (2016). Dopamine targeting drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia: Past, present, and future. *Current Topics in Medicinal Chemistry*, 16(29), 3385-3402. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5112764/>
- 7 Holland, K. (2019). Understanding the link between alcohol use and depression. <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/alcohol-and-depression>
- 8 U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (December 2020). *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025*. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials>

MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Whether you realize it or not, mental health plays a big role in your overall well-being. When you're mentally healthy, you are able to enjoy your life and the people in it, feel good about yourself, keep up good relationships, and deal with stress. It's normal for your mental health to shift over time – we all face difficult situations in our lives. Creating positive habits is a great way to support your mental health when you're doing well and helps you build skills to use if you do face symptoms of a mental health condition.

FOOD CHOICES AND NUTRITION

The quality of food you eat can impact your overall physical and mental health. Your gut is often called "the second brain" and communicates with your actual brain – physically through the vagus nerve and chemically through hormones and neurotransmitters (chemical messengers that carry signals between cells). The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut are called the "gut microbiome" – eating nutritious foods is the number one thing you can do to keep your gut microbiome healthy and protect your brain.

Important nutrients for mental health:¹

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS:

essential to brain health and reduce inflammation and risk of heart disease

B-GROUP VITAMINS:

help to regulate brain chemicals, immune function, and amino acids (the building blocks of proteins)

VITAMIN D:

important for brain function, including mood and critical thinking

Learn more at mhanational.org/food and mhanational.org/gut-brain.

EXERCISE

Staying active benefits many aspects of health and can prevent physical and mental health symptoms from worsening. Making time for exercise and movement each day improves self-esteem, brain function, and sleep and has been found to lessen social withdrawal and stress.

Getting exercise doesn't have to be intimidating!

You don't have to work out for hours on end – just 15 minutes of intense exercise at a time, ten times a week, will get you the recommended amount of physical activity. Just one hour of exercise per week can help prevent symptoms of depression.²

Choose activities that are easy to work into your life – walk the dog for an extra 20 minutes or do some floor exercises while you're watching a movie or your favorite show.

Learn more at mhanational.org/exercise.

SLEEP

Your health heavily depends on how rested you are. Sleep plays a role in your moods, ability to learn and make memories, organ health, immune system, and other bodily functions like appetite, metabolism, and hormone release.³ It also helps the body re-energize its cells and clear out toxins.⁴

Quality of sleep matters, not just how many hours you get.

Good quality sleep means:⁵



BEING ASLEEP FOR 85% OF THE TIME YOU'RE IN BED OR MORE.



FALLING ASLEEP IN UNDER 30 MINUTES.



WAKING UP NO MORE THAN ONCE PER NIGHT FOR NO LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES.

Learn more at mhanational.org/sleep.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Dealing with stress is a normal part of life – we all experience it during times of too much responsibility, too little sleep, or external worries like money or relationships. In most cases, stress comes and goes fairly quickly, and the body can return to its typical state. However, consistently high stress – because you are unable to relieve your stress or are constantly facing stressful situations (chronic stress) – can negatively impact attention, memory, and how you deal with emotions in the long term.

Learn more at mhanational.org/stress.

IDENTIFY COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are activities or strategies you can use to reduce or tolerate tough feelings. No one thing works for everyone, so it might take a few tries to figure out what helps you. Test out a range of techniques so that you're prepared for those times when your well-being starts to slip.

You may want to keep a running list (on your phone or on paper) of what works for you, like calling a friend or doing an at-home workout. This makes it easier to get started when you're in a tough mental state.

If you're starting from scratch, MHA has resources for "Building Your Coping Toolbox."

Learn more at mhanational.org/coping-toolbox and mhanational.org/manage-emotions.

BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having people in your life who you relate to and can lean on goes a long way in improving your mood and general well-being. Humans are social beings, and our brains are wired to seek connection. Having people to support you during times of hardship protects your long-term mental health. Not only can a strong social support system often prevent mental health concerns or symptoms from developing into a diagnosable mental health condition – a strong social support system has also been shown to improve overall outcomes in recovering from a mental health condition.

Find your people:

Connect with people over shared hobbies and interests – it's less intimidating to make new friends when you already have something in common.

Consider community service or volunteering. Giving back is a great way to feel less alone – you'll meet new people and likely learn about local events and resources.

Focus on quality relationships – having one person you really trust will serve you better than many surface-level connections.

Learn more at mhanational.org/social-connections.



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.

SOURCES

- 1 Seide, M. (2022, January 27). *Vitamins and supplements to boost your mood and brain health*. <https://www.verywellmind.com/your-brain-needs-these-vitamins-5114455>
- 2 Harvey, S.B., Øverland, S., et al. (2017). Exercise and the prevention of depression: Results of the HUNT Cohort Study. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 175(1), 28-36. <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2017.16111223>
- 3 National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. *Sleep deprivation and deficiency*. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency>
- 4 Xie, L., Kang, H., et al. (2013). Sleep drives metabolite clearance from the adult brain. *Science*, 342(6156), 373-377. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1241224>
- 5 The National Sleep Foundation. (2020, October 28). *What is sleep quality*. <https://www.thensf.org/what-is-sleep-quality/>

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Think about your physical health. We all have days where we feel a bit sore, have a headache, or are extra tired. That doesn't necessarily mean you're sick. You're sick when something suddenly and significantly changes for the worse or prevents you from functioning properly.

Mental health is similar – the occasional bad day is to be expected, but when things that used to be easy become a lot more difficult, something's going on. Instead of focusing on physical symptoms, you'll want to look at your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN?

A mental health concern is anything that causes a person to believe their mental health may be suffering. You don't need to be diagnosed with a mental health condition to be dealing with a mental health concern.

Common signs of mental health concerns:

ISOLATION:

You used to be really outgoing and positive, but lately, you want to spend most of your time home alone.

LOSING INTEREST:

You aren't as interested in things you used to like – food, music, hobbies, friends, work/school.

TROUBLE FOCUSING:

You can't concentrate enough to follow conversations with friends.

SHORT TEMPER:

You're easily irritated and keep lashing out at people you care about.

Many people struggle with not feeling "sick enough" to seek help early on in their mental health journey. The average delay between symptom onset and treatment is 11 years,¹ meaning a lot of people spend months or years facing mental health challenges before getting a diagnosis. It is never too early to seek treatment – if you want help for your mental health, you deserve to get it.

LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

It's hard to know when your mental health is slipping if you aren't in touch with yourself or paying attention to your usual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors:

Take some time to think about your daily life.

How is your typical mood? Energy level? Appetite? Sleep routine? Social life? Physical health? When one or more of these things changes significantly, it could be a sign of an underlying mental health concern.

Consider tracking your mood and energy to see if you can find any patterns.

For instance, if you don't have a regular sleep schedule, track the hours you spend asleep each night – you might find that waking up earlier makes for happier days than sleeping in.

Think about other factors that might relate to your mental health.

These could be factors like the weather or spending time with certain people. Maybe you'll realize that rainy days often mean your mood will be a bit lower than usual or that conversations with a certain friend have been draining you lately. Sometimes there's nothing you can do to change your circumstances – but being aware of your triggers can help you manage your expectations and get ahead of taking care of yourself.

LEARN ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

You've taken a great first step by learning how to proactively take care of your mental health. But sometimes, mental health conditions sneak up on you. Some people have mental health conditions and don't realize it – if it's something you've always dealt with, it's easy to assume that's just how it is for everyone. Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn't feel hard or out of your control. If it does, learn more about the symptoms of different mental health conditions to see if something aligns with your experiences.



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.

SOURCES

1 Wang, P.S., Berglund, P.A., Olfson, M., Kessler, R.C. (2004). Delays in initial treatment contact after first onset of a mental disorder. *Health Services Research, 39*(2). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361014/>

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED HELP

When living with a mental health condition or facing a mental health concern, it's common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. But many people overcome the mental health challenges they face. You aren't alone – help is out there, and recovery is possible.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS CAN BE HARD AND CONFUSING.

It's becoming more and more common to talk about mental health in the open, but there's still a lot of stigma, or judgment, that people have about mental health conditions. If you've seen or heard negativity about the same challenges you deal with, you might internalize those attitudes and feel shame about your experiences. This shame, or self-stigma, makes it difficult to talk about your concerns.

ADMIT TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE STRUGGLING.

Accepting that you might have a mental health condition can be scary – it suddenly feels so real. But it can also put you on a path to getting the help you deserve. Take a mental health screen at mhascreening.org to get an idea of how severe your symptoms are. Having some language to describe what you're dealing with is helpful in doing more research and connecting with peers.

TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

It can be hard to know what to say, but just naming what you're experiencing is a good start. Friends and family can be key supporters as you start your recovery journey – healing is hard to manage alone, and your loved ones can only support you if they know what's going on. Talking in person can feel overwhelming – try writing down what you want to say to gather your thoughts or put everything into a letter to give them and talk about it later.

If you're worried that the people closest to you won't be supportive, try reaching out to other people who seem kind: coworkers, teachers, friends' parents, or that person you haven't talked to in a few years but who posts about their mental health on social media. Can't think of anyone in your life who you are comfortable opening up to? Consider calling a warmline – they are staffed by trained peers who have gone through their own mental health struggles and know what it's like to need help. You can find a list of available warmlines at mhanational.org/warmlines.

TERMS TO KNOW

RECOVERY:

a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential

STIGMA:

negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

SELF-STIGMA:

negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's own mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

PEER:

someone who shares the experience of living with a mental health condition and/or substance use disorder

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL:

a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider

THERAPIST:

a mental health professional trained to help individuals understand and cope with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; may assess and/or diagnose mental health conditions

PSYCHIATRIST:

a licensed medical doctor who has completed additional psychiatric training; can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe and manage medication, and provide therapy

HEALTH INSURANCE:

a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs

SLIDING SCALE PAYMENT:

a payment model providers can use to make treatment financially accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it due to income or lack of health insurance coverage

OUTPATIENT:

treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays

TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL.

Finding help can be intimidating. For some people, just the thought of talking to a doctor about your mental health is scary. There might be long wait times or words you don't understand, and how do you even know where to begin? No matter what, you are deserving of help.

Start by reaching out to your primary care doctor. It might feel weird to talk to them about emotional issues, but they can help in many ways. They can ask questions to help you better understand what you're going through, let you know what kinds of support are out there, and recommend lifestyle changes or medication. They can also help connect you to specialized mental health professionals, like a therapist and psychiatrist.

Therapy, medication, and other mental health treatments can be amazing experiences, but for some, the cost just isn't realistic. If you don't have insurance, or if your insurance doesn't cover mental health services, you may not know what to do next.

Options for people without insurance:

Ask therapists about their sliding-scale payment options. Get started by visiting mhanational.org/finding-therapy.

Look into local colleges or universities for an outpatient psychology program. Do a Google search for "outpatient psychology program" followed by the name of a nearby school, or search for "university hospitals" followed by your town or state if you don't know of specific colleges.

Group therapy generally costs about a third of the price of an individual session – a local community center should be able to guide you to a group that fits your needs. Check out your state's Department of Behavioral Health website or this directory of peer-run services at cdsdirectory.org.

Reach out to local nonprofits or resource centers – locate the MHA affiliate near you at mhanational.org/find-affiliate.

THE TRADITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DOESN'T MEET EVERYONE'S NEEDS.

Most of the western health care industry has taken on the medical model of understanding and treating health conditions – focusing on the diagnosis and management of symptoms. Often, the social, cultural, and historical factors that impact the mental health of communities that have traditionally been marginalized are ignored.

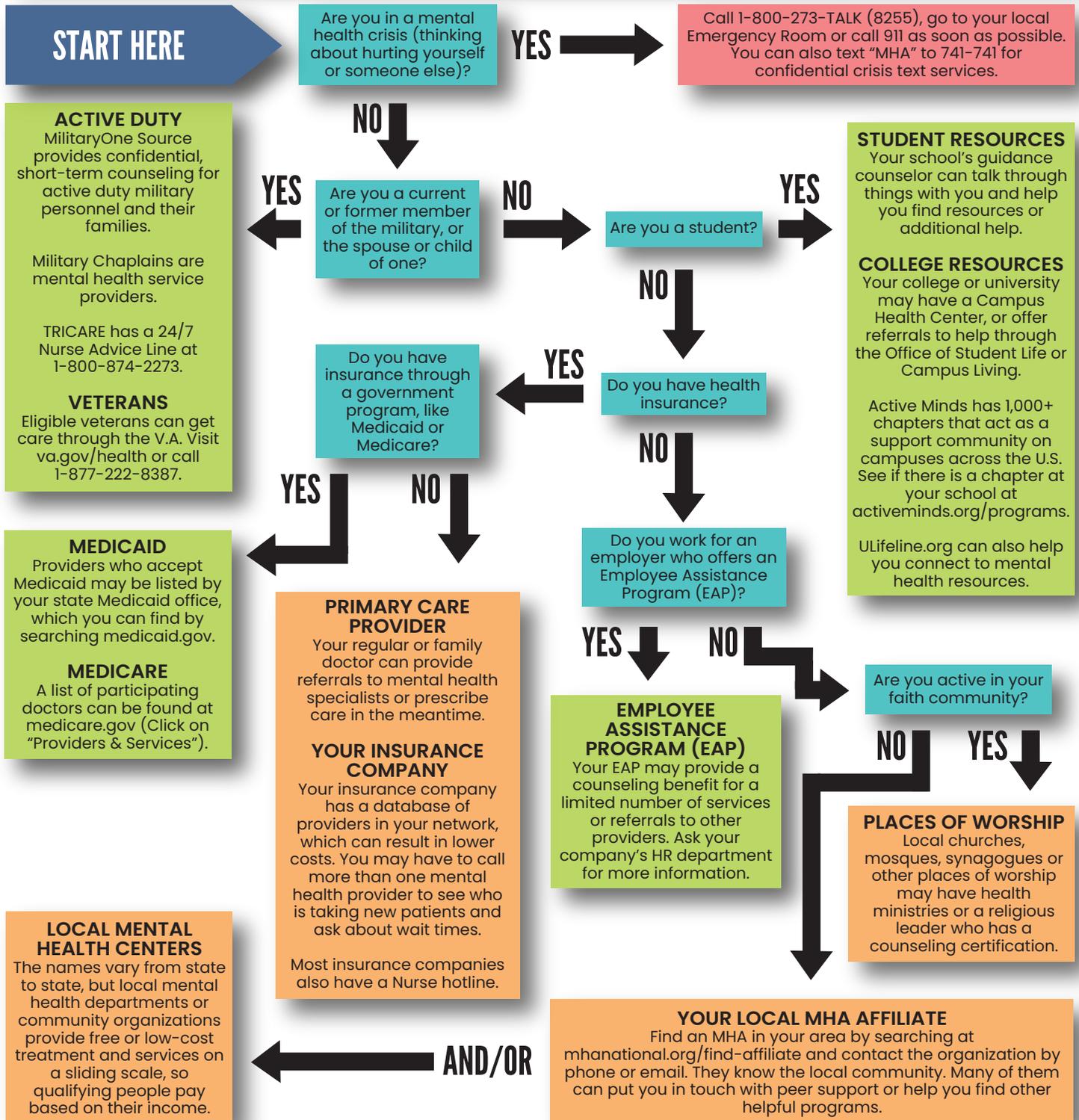
Other types of treatment include community care, culturally-based practices, and self-directed care. Learn more about these at mhanational.org/july. You might also want to consider support groups or peer support. These are all valid forms of mental health support – if it works for you, then it works!



IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.

WHERE TO GO

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



TERMS TO KNOW

If you're thinking about addressing your mental health for the first time, you may come across words that seem simple but you aren't *exactly* sure what they mean. Below is a list of terms used throughout the 2022 "Back to Basics" Mental Health Month Toolkit.

COPING SKILL:

a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and lessen unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors

HEALTH INSURANCE:

a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs

LIVED EXPERIENCE:

first-hand, personal experience dealing with a mental health or substance use challenge

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN:

anything that causes a person to believe their mental health may be suffering; could be a symptom, a group of symptoms, or a diagnosable mental health condition

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION:

a set of related symptoms that have been recognized by the mental health community; includes conditions defined in the DSM-V, ICD-11, and by people with lived experience

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL:

a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider (See mhanational.org/types-mental-health-professionals for a detailed list)

MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN:

an evaluation of your mental health and well-being through scientifically validated assessment tools (Visit mhascreening.org for free, confidential screening tools)

NEUROTRANSMITTERS:

chemicals that carry messages throughout your brain

OUTPATIENT:

treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays

PEER:

someone who shares the experience of living with a mental health condition and/or substance use disorder

PROTECTIVE FACTOR:

something that decreases the chances of developing a condition and/or balances out an existing risk factor

PSYCHIATRIST:

a licensed medical doctor who has completed additional psychiatric training; can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe and manage medication, and provide therapy

RECOVERY:

a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential

RISK FACTOR:

something that increases the chances of developing a condition

SELF-STIGMA:

negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's own mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

SLIDING SCALE PAYMENT:

a payment model providers can use to make treatment financially accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it due to income or lack of health insurance coverage

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH:

the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that impact their health and quality of life

STIGMA:

negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

STRESS:

a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental/emotional pressure

SYMPTOM:

a physical or mental feature that indicates the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis

THERAPIST:

a mental health professional trained to help individuals understand and cope with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; may assess and/or diagnose mental health conditions

TRAUMA:

an emotional response to a disturbing, scary, or shocking experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

**Take some time to take a screen.
It's an easy way to check in on your mental health.**

VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org)

MHIA
Mental Health America

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2022

Mental health is becoming more common in mainstream conversations, and it can be an overwhelming topic if you're just starting to explore it.

We can help.



LEARN MORE
mhanational.org/may



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2022



Mental health is becoming more common in conversations, and it can be an overwhelming topic if you're just starting to explore it.

We can help.



LEARN MORE
mhanational.org/may



**MAY IS MENTAL
HEALTH MONTH 2022**

**Take some time to take a screen.
It's an easy way to check in on your mental health.**



VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org)

MHIA
Mental Health America