



Mental Wellness Starts With Friendship



Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit

National Mental Health Awareness Month is here! This May, join us in supporting mental wellness for people of all ages and cultures through meaningful friendship, and emphasize the power of donating, volunteering, and the campaign #checkonyourfriends. Check out these resources below for suggested messaging on how to engage with your networks this month on social media, email, and the web!

KEY MESSAGING

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being. You can help decrease the stigma by sharing these key speaking points below with your friends and followers during the month of May and beyond!

- While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that impact their mental health. Mental health challenges are common and treatable.
- It is important to check in on your friends, family, co-workers, and yourself on a regular basis.
- Loneliness is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day- Compeer programs provide social support to those struggling with loneliness and other mental health struggles.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Hashtags: #compeer #mentalhealth
#checkonyourfriends
#mentalhealthmonth #letstalkstigma
#MHM22

Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter:
@compeerbuffalo

Call to Action: Go to compeerbuffalo.org to find out how you can be more involved by donating or volunteering!

We've created graphics you can use on your social media throughout the month of May. When posting about mental health, please utilize them!

Check n
Your Friends



#CHECKONYOURFRIENDS

When it comes to checking on a friend, family member, or even a co-worker, finding the right words can be tough. To end the stigma around mental health, and improve overall mental wellness, we encourage you to #CheckOnYourFriends on a regular basis. Whether someone is struggling with their mental health or not, reaching out and showing that you care can be life-changing for someone who needs it. Look at some examples below on creative ways to check on someone- and be sure to share them with your connections!

CONSIDER SAYING:

- I know you said you're not ready to talk, but I'm here when you are
- Hey, I'm stopping by the grocery store. Let me know if you need anything
- Wanted to let you know, I'm thinking of you
- Hi, I saw this and immediately thought of you. How have you been feeling lately
- Want to go for a walk after work
- No need to respond, I just wanted to say hey
- I saw what you posted on social media, and I just wanted to make sure you were OK
- Hey, just wanted to hear more about what's going in your life lately

CONSIDER DOING:

- Arranging for a time to talk on the phone or meet for a walk in the park or dinner
- Drop a meal off, send a gift card to their favorite restaurant, or start a meal train
- Send a card in the mail- it brings a smile to someone's face
- Set reminders in your phone to send a text message or make a phone call
- Have a list of resources that are helpful to share with your friend(s) when they ask for help (apps, groups, websites, etc.)

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Ask how you can help- it shows you care and it takes some of the guesswork away
- Be understanding of their limitations
- Don't gossip
- Change the subject- listening is important, but all conversations do not need to be about their mental health
- Offer a non-judgmental approach with all your interactions and conversations
- Take their lead- if they don't want to talk, don't put pressure on them, unless you are worried about their safety



Maintaining Good 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 every day life. Everyone has mental health, and it deserves your attention just as much as your physical health. Creating and encouraging positive habits for yourself and others 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 challenge. Here are some ways to get started:

EVERY DAY BASICS

- Healthy food choices & nutrition
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Self-care; doing something you enjoy
- Spending time with supports
- Improving time management
- Setting boundaries (personal/professional)
- Ask for help

IDENTIFYING COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are activities or strategies that you can use to help when you are struggling with your mental health. Take time to identify and write down potential coping skill, so you have them available when you are struggling with your mental health. Finding skills that help you may take some time. Here are some examples:

- Watch a funny video
- Play with an animal or pet
- Watch your favorite movie, listen to your favorite song
- Take a nap
- Take a shower or bath
- Draw how you are feeling
- Let yourself cry or scream
- Go for a walk
- Text a friend, call a family member

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Dealing with stress is a normal part of life, we all experience it. However, consistent high-stress and being unable to relieve your stress, can negatively impact your mental health long term.

Stress is carried by each individual differently, and it can impact your ability to make strides in other areas of maintaining good mental health. It is important to be knowledgeable about stress, and ways to improve managing it.

Learn more at mhanational.org/stress

BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Whether it be 1 person or 10 people, having individuals or groups in your life that you can connect with when you are needing some support, is a crucial stepping stone to mental wellness. Your parent, neighbor, colleague, friend, or someone you've met recently could help you through hardships when they happen. Here are some ideas for building support:

- Community service/volunteering
- Focus on quality relationships
- Connect with people over shared hobbies and interests



The Importance of Self-Care

As much as you want to help your friend, co-worker, or family member, remember you are never solely responsible for another person's mental health. Whether you are the soundboard for other people who are struggling, a part of someone's support system, or find yourself involved in a situation that you were not expecting, it is always important to take care of yourself on a consistent basis. The main difference between self-care and coping skills is self-care should be a priority no matter where you fall on the mental health continuum, and coping skills are tools to have when you are in emotional, mental, or behavioral distress.

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is important in maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself. It means doing things to take care of our minds, bodies, and souls by engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress. Doing so enhances our ability to live fully, vibrantly, and effectively. The practice of self-care also reminds both you and others that your needs are valid and a priority.

EXAMPLES OF SELF-CARE

- Clean
- Cook or Bake
- Listen to a podcast
- Get out of the house/stay in the house
- Practice deep breathing
- Schedule an activity that brings you joy
- Be in nature
- Try something new
- Focus on a single task
- Go out to eat
- Do something you've been putting off
- Check-in with yourself - ask how are you feeling and what do you need



Important Concepts

Resource taken from:
Mental Health First Aid

Develop your self-care plan by brainstorming people, programs, & activities within each domain.

3



Intellectual



Emotional



Occupational



Environment



Community



Physical



Financial



Spiritual



MAKE SELF-CARE A
PRIORITY BY UTILIZING
THIS RESOURCE AND
PLANNING YOUR SELF-
CARE ACTIVITIES AHEAD
OF TIME!



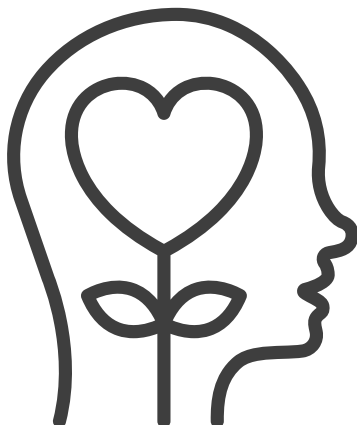
De-stigmatizing Language...What Does it Mean?

Despite the progress we have made in the past decade, the stigma associated with mental illness still exists in our community. The way we talk about mental illness and the things we express publicly through media, social media, in our homes and in our workplaces can make a difference. Certain ways of talking about mental illness can alienate members of the community, sensationalize the issue and contribute to stigma and discrimination.

Below is a summary of preferred language to use when communicating about mental health.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE:

- A person is 'living with' or 'has a diagnosis' of mental illness
- A person is 'being treated for' or 'someone with' a mental illness
- A person has a 'diagnosis of' or 'is being treated for' schizophrenia
- The person's behavior was unusual or erratic
- Antidepressants, psychiatrists or psychologists, mental health hospital
- A person 'died by suicide' or 'completed' suicide



**Mental
health
matters**

NON-HELPFUL APPROACH

- Saying the words 'mental patient', 'nutter', 'lunatic', 'psycho', 'schizo', 'deranged', 'mad'
- Saying the words 'victim', 'suffering from', or 'affected with' a mental illness
- Saying phrases like a person is 'a schizophrenic', 'an anorexic' 'that depressed person'
- Describing behavior as 'crazed', 'deranged', 'mad', 'psychotic'
- Identifying treatment methods as 'happy pills', 'shrinks', 'mental institution'
- Saying someone 'committed suicide' or had a 'successful suicide'



Facts over Myths

Mental illness is common, but it is still often misunderstood. Myths and misconceptions about mental illness add to stigma and make life harder for the people affected. Below are the most common myths, and a factual response you can share!

MYTH: MENTAL ILLNESS IS A LIFE SENTENCE

- Most people will recover fully, especially if they receive help early. Recovery will be different for everyone and some people may require ongoing treatment to manage their illness.

MYTH: PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ARE VIOLENT

- Research indicates people receiving treatment for a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the general population. Only 5% of violent crimes are completed by people living with a mental illness. People living with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence, especially self-harm.

MYTH: THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THOSE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

- Studies show that people with mental health problems get better and many recover completely. Recovery refers to the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. There are more treatments, services, and community support systems than ever before, and they work.

MYTH: I CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR SOMEONE LIVING WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

Friends and loved ones can make a big difference. Friends, family, and coworkers can be important influences to help someone get the treatment and services they need by:

- Reaching out and letting them know you are available to help
- Helping them access mental health services
- Learning and sharing the facts about mental health, especially if you hear something that isn't true
- Treating them with respect and listening non-judgmentally
- Refusing to define them by their diagnosis or using labels such as "crazy", but instead use person-first language



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How to be a Mental Health Champion

With mental health entering more and more of our daily conversations, many people are wondering how they can contribute to decreasing the stigma and support those they care about. Compeer is committed to educating our communities on how to recognize when someone may be struggling, giving you the tools that empower you to help, and connect to the appropriate resources. That person, at any time, could be you. Below are some ideas on how you can be a champion of mental health:

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Volunteer with Compeer
- Donate to Compeer
- Talk about mental health with people you care about
- Schedule a Mental Health First Aid Training with Compeer
- Share, like, comment, and post the information shared by Compeer Buffalo on social media to be a part of the conversation
- Use de-stigmatizing language when talking about mental health
- Take the pledge to end the stigma around mental health: <https://letstalkstigma.org/support/pledge/>
- Get your employer involved! Let them know that May is Mental Health Month
- Share your story
- Check on your friends
- Lime green is the official awareness color for mental health- wear it proud!
- Host/attend webinars related to mental health topics
- Call or e-mail elected officials and let them know why you think mental health should be a priority
- Become familiar with the signs and symptoms of various mental health challenges

Direct all training inquiries to:
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Check n
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