

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

TOOL KIT



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a national observance dedicated to raising awareness about mental health and emotional well-being. The goal is to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage individuals and communities to prioritize mental health alongside physical health.

Mental Health Awareness Month encourages open, honest conversations about mental health and its impact on daily life, relationships, school, work, and overall wellness. Through increased awareness and education, this month supports prevention, early intervention, and compassionate responses to mental health challenges.

Why it Matters:

Promoting awareness and education helps individuals:

- Understand common mental health conditions and emotional responses
- Recognize signs of stress, anxiety, depression, or crisis
- Learn healthy coping skills and self-care strategies
- Know when and where to seek support or professional help

Who It's For:

- Children, youth, and adolescents
- Parents, caregivers, and families
- Educators, school staff, and helping professionals
- Community members and organizations

Mental health affects everyone. Mental Health Awareness Month reminds us that awareness, empathy, and access to support are essential to building healthier individuals and stronger, more connected communities.

ACTIVITIES

Emotion Check-In Wall

The Emotion Check-In Wall is a simple, interactive activity that encourages individuals to pause and reflect on how they are feeling in the moment. Participants place a sticky note or sticker under emotions such as calm, stressed, hopeful, or overwhelmed, creating a visual snapshot of the group's emotional well-being. This activity helps normalize conversations about mental health, promotes emotional awareness, and can serve as a gentle starting point for support and connection.

Feelings Wheel Activity

To facilitate the Feelings Wheel Activity, provide participants with a printed feelings wheel and a quiet space for reflection. Ask them to start at the center of the wheel by identifying a general emotion they are experiencing, then move outward to pinpoint more specific feelings that best describe their current state. Participants can share their chosen emotions in small groups or keep them private, depending on comfort level. Conclude by briefly discussing how accurately naming emotions can support self-awareness, communication, and coping strategies.

Click [here](#) for the Feelings Wheel.

Wear Green/Self-care Day

Wear Green / Self-Care Day is a visible and engaging activity that promotes mental health awareness and the importance of prioritizing well-being. Participants are encouraged to wear green to symbolize mental health support while also taking intentional steps to practice self-care throughout the day. This activity helps reduce stigma, fosters a sense of community, and reinforces the message that caring for mental health is just as important as caring for physical health.

ACTIVITIES

Mindfulness Minute

The Mindfulness Minute is a simple, intentional pause at the beginning of a meeting or class to help participants reset, focus, and be present. For one minute, a facilitator guides a brief breathing or grounding exercise—such as slow, deep breaths or noticing what you can see, hear, and feel. This practice helps reduce stress, calm busy minds, and create a supportive, focused environment, reminding everyone that taking care of mental health can fit into even the busiest day.

Here is an example:

1. Box Breathing

“Breathe in for four... hold for four... breathe out for four... hold for four. Repeat this cycle once more.

Notice how your body feels as your breath slows.”

Movement for Mental Health

Participants are invited to take a 5-minute movement break once a day for a week to support both physical and mental well-being. Each day highlights a different, accessible type of movement that helps reduce stress and boost focus.

Here is an example of what you could do:

- Monday: Stretch break – gentle neck, shoulder, and arm stretches
- Tuesday: Walk & Talk – a short walk with a friend or group
- Wednesday: Chair yoga – seated stretches and slow breathing
- Thursday: Dance it out – move to one favorite song
- Friday: Power pause – slow squats, wall push-ups, or marching in place

ACTIVITIES

Take a Break and Blow Bubbles

Pause what you are doing and take a few slow breaths. This calming activity encourages individuals to pause, slow their breathing, and refocus by gently blowing bubbles. It promotes relaxation, emotional regulation, and mindfulness while providing a simple, engaging way to reduce stress and regain a sense of calm.

Chalk the Walk

Chalk the Walk is a community-driven art initiative designed to spread joy, inspiration, and positivity by decorating sidewalks, driveways, and public spaces with colorful chalk art and uplifting messages.

Deep Breathing Exercises

Click [here](#) for a youtube video offering guidance through a breathing exercise.

Guided Meditation for Kids

Click [here](#) for a youtube video offering guidance through a meditation session geared towards kids.

Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Click [here](#) for a youtube video guiding you through a muscle relaxation exercise.

**MORE
GOOD
DAYS**
together



Mental Health Awareness Month 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					Share a mental health resource online using the hashtag: #MentalHealthAwareness ¹	Volunteer for a local cause you care about, such as a community coalition, school event, or local nonprofit ²
Get outside and enjoy a South Dakota park, trail, lake area, or neighborhood walk ³	<u>Request a training</u> for your community, school, or workplace ⁴	Contact local landmarks (courthouse, schools, etc.) and ask if they can light up green ⁵	Ask local media to share a short message about 988 and mental health resources ⁶	Encourage 5 people to add '988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline' to their email signature ⁷	Partner with local businesses like coffee shops or gyms to create pop-up wellness spaces ⁸	Wear green at events and encourage others to start conversations about mental health support in their community. ⁹
Connect with a friend or family member ¹⁰	Encourage others to take a free, anonymous mental health test at mhascreening.org ¹¹	Host a mental health screening event at a library, community center, or local business ¹²	Check out and share resources from South Dakota Behavioral Health ¹³	Call or message a SD Prevention Resource Center to discuss how you can get involved in prevention ¹⁴	Set up a 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline table at a local event (farmers market, rodeo, etc.) ¹⁵	Share safe firearm storage messaging or other relevant safe storage resources on social media ¹⁶
Make a gratitude list ¹⁷	Ask a faith-based organization to include a mental health message, bulletin insert, or announcement during service ¹⁸	Download and share SAMHSA's " Key Differences between 988 & 911 " Factsheet ¹⁹	<u>Provide 988 wallet cards, stickers, or posters</u> to schools, clinics, or local businesses ²⁰	Schedule an awareness event with a local coalition, health provider, law enforcement partner, or school ²¹	Spread awareness About the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline on social media ²²	Send a "thinking of you" card to someone in your life who needs a pick-me-up ²³
Do some coloring or artwork to clear your mind ²⁴	Hold a workplace wellness event and invite a behavioral health partner if available ²⁵	Share the South Dakota Suicide Prevention State Plan with a community group, school, or workplace ²⁶	Collect short community stories, with permission, to support local advocacy efforts ²⁷	Ask to include a brief 988 announcement or mental health message before a game or community event ²⁸	Share a safety planning resource such as a 988 safety planning tool or MY3 ²⁹	Check in with a friend that might need support ³⁰
Take a "digital detox" - put your phone away for a few hours ³¹	<p>Check out these resources to support your Mental Health Awareness Month planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health America's Mental Health America Toolkit: https://mhanational.org/mental-health-month/ SAMHSA's Mental Health Awareness Month: https://www.samhsa.gov/about/digital-toolkits/mental-health-awareness-month NEPRC's Mental Health Awareness Month toolkit: https://www.humanserviceagency.org/NEPrevention/resources/May-Mental-Health-Month-Toolkit.pdf 					

RESOURCES

You can call or text 988 if you are worried about a loved one in crisis.

Farm and Rural Stress Hotline: 1-800-691-4336

Veteran Crisis Line: Call 988, then press 1 to connect with a VA responder

LGBTQ Support 24/7: call 1.866.488.7386 or text 678-678

Make a Safety Plan

- A safety plan is a personalized guide that helps individuals identify warning signs, coping strategies, trusted supports, and resources to use during times of distress or crisis. It is designed to promote safety, increase preparedness, and empower individuals to respond effectively when they feel at risk. Click [here](#) to create your own safety plan.

30 Days of Self-Care

- Click [here](#) for a calendar of self-care prompts for each day.

Warning Signs/Risk Factors

- Click [here](#) for education addressing warning signs/risk factors for the risk of suicide.

Implement Worksite Wellness

- The workplace provides many opportunities for promoting health and emotional well-being. Employers can inspire positive change with workplace wellness programs and policies designed to reduce health risks that contribute to chronic disease. Even small steps can improve quality of life and support healthy behaviors. Click [here](#) for resources to implement worksite wellness.

RESOURCES

Calming/Wellness Apps

- Click [here](#) for a listing of apps that provide calming and wellness skills.

211 - Search for Local Resources

- 211 is a resource that can connect you with all community resources in your area. Click [here](#) to search for your community supports.

Wellness Journal

- Click [here](#) for access to a Wellness Journal

Art Worksheets for Self-Exploration and Grief

- Click [here](#) for access to therapeutic art worksheets.

SD Behavioral Health

- [South Dakota Behavioral Health](#) is dedicated to strengthening and supporting the behavioral health needs of children and adults through prevention, treatment, crisis care and recovery support services.

SD Statewide Family Engagement Center

- The [South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center \(SFEC\)](#) unites students, families, schools, and communities together by focusing on learner needs. Helping Resources can be found on protective factors, warning signs, and talking with children about their mental health.

National Institute of Mental Health

- [Brochures and information sheets](#) on topics such as anxiety, stress, depression, etc.

RESOURCES

SD Suicide Prevention

- Click [here](#) for access to a resource hub for those seeking help, resources, data and free suicide prevention training and materials

Community Mental Health Centers

- Click [here](#) for a listing of SD community mental health centers. These centers are funded through the state of SD. Individuals who are concerned about the financial aspect of seeking help can potentially receive some financial assistance for getting help due to the sliding fee scale.

After a Suicide Tool Kit

- Click [here](#) for access. This is designed to help schools respond immediately in the minutes, hours, and days after a suicide, as well as in the weeks and months it takes the school community to heal and move forward. Since significant numbers of high school-aged youth die by suicide across the United States every year, every school needs to be prepared to respond to such an event.

Student Mental Health Toolkits for in the Classroom

- Click [here](#) for access to tool kits for elementary schools, middle schools and high schools that can be incorporated into lessons.

Mental Health Video Series Toolkits

- Click [here](#) for access to Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids video series for elementary, middle and high schools from PBS Learning Media

NIMH Resources for Students and Educators

- Provides [learning resources](#) for students and teachers about mental health and the brain. Includes videos, coloring books, hands-on quizzes and activities to help understand mental health challenges, promote emotional well-being and how to care for your own mental health.

SOCIAL MEDIA



Possible Caption:

“May is Mental Health Awareness Month. If you’re feeling sad, overwhelmed, anxious, or lonely—know that you’re not alone. Small steps can make a big difference.”



Possible Caption:

“May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and prioritize emotional well-being in our communities.”



Possible Caption:

““You’re not alone.” Sometimes “I’m fine” hides a quiet “help me.” This Mental Health Awareness Month, let’s check in, listen closely, and support one another.”

SOCIAL MEDIA

Click the icon on the right for access to all social media posts!

Click Here!



Possible Caption:

"Mental Health Awareness Month is a reminder that we don't have to carry things alone. Reach out, check in, and remind your friends they matter."



Possible Caption:

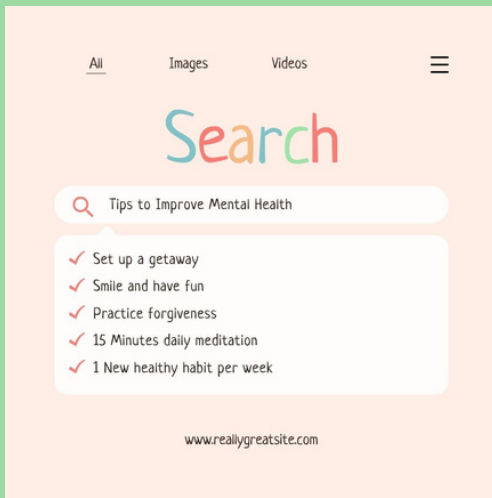
"Your thoughts matter. Your emotions are valid. You are constantly growing. Take a moment today to affirm your strength."



Possible Caption:

"Prioritizing rest, creativity, and connection supports overall well-being. Make space for the habits that restore your energy."

SOCIAL MEDIA



Possible Caption:

“Taking care of your mind is just as important as taking care of your body. One step at a time.”



Possible Caption:

“Make your mental health a priority — not an afterthought.”



Possible Caption:

“Healing isn’t linear. Rest. Reflect. Reach out.”

SOCIAL MEDIA



Possible Caption:

“Stop scrolling. Unclench your jaw. Drop your shoulders. You do not need to justify rest for yourself. You are not heartless for taking a break—rest is radical.”



Possible Caption:

“Stop overthinking your ‘Me Time’.”

Click the icon on the right for access to all social media posts!

Click Here!