

Vermont Department of Mental Health

MENTAL HEALTH

AWARENESS MONTH

Week One

May 2020

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Each year we celebrate mental health through the month of May. This year has an added focus with the current coronavirus pandemic.

Everyone has mental health. Mental health is an important part of our overall health. It's important to know that we all, at some point in our lives, have depression, anxiety, ongoing anger and other difficult feelings that don't go away easily or quickly. There are effective treatments that can help us regain our mental health and wellness. And for those of us — nearly one in five — who live with mental illness, wellness and recovery is possible.

Throughout the month, we will share ideas about how to take care of ourselves and support others during what is an uncertain and nervous time for all of us. While feeling worried or sad are completely normal emotions to be experiencing given current events, there are things we can do to help keep that anxiety or sadness under control and allow us to function and even thrive.

Thinking About Mental Health

Most people can name lots of ways to measure physical health: strong muscles and bones that carry us through the day, internal organs that work well, an immune system that kills germs and repairs injuries. You don't need a doctor to know you are OK.

Mental health is harder to define. We know what it's like to be happy, sad, angry, or content. But how much of any emotion is too much? At what point does joy become frenzy? When does anger turn to rage? How much sorrow does it take to have sadness become depression?

Though there are no easy answers, there is a simple way to think about mental health. We have good mental health when we can manage our emotions.

The same situation might make two different people feel very different emotions. But it is how we react to our emotions that effects our mental health. People who can name their feelings and talk about them are better at getting out of a slump. They notice what they are feeling and are quicker to figure out why they feel stressed. That makes it easier to choose what to do the next time to relax and feel better.

For Families

As a parent, we can teach our children how to identify and talk about their feelings. The ways we act when we are angry, upset, worried, sad, or happy and joyful effect how our children will behave when they feel those things. We can also talk with our children about how we handle stress and stay calm when under pressure.

Most importantly, we can let our children know that they matter. We can help them see that everyone, of any age, with any abilities, has value and can help others. Whether at home with siblings or pets, at school with friends or teachers, or in the community with clubs, sports, and recreation, each of us has something to give. Each of us can make a difference. Showing children how they fit in will help them see meaning in life as they grow. And having a purpose can help us through even the toughest and most troubling times.

As parents, we can help our children develop helpful mental health habits. Let's start today.



Resources:



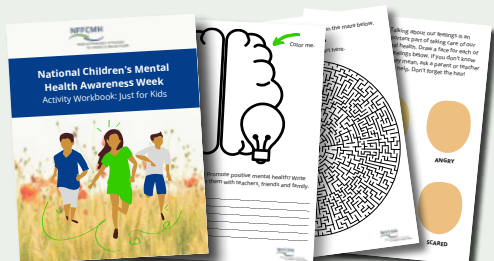
You Are Not Alone

Available 24/7 – If you need help, text VT to 741741

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 at 800-273-8255

Dial 2-1-1 to find mental health services in your area

Vermont Peer Support Line – open 24 / 7
Call or text 833-888-2557



The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has activities, worksheets and videos for children and youth on various mental health topics. Here is one [Activity Workbook: Just for Kids](#). Others can be found [here](#).