

## MENTAL HEALTH *awareness month*

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May is Mental Health Awareness Month, the perfect time to discuss ways we can reconnect with ourselves, our mental health, and others. By now, most of us know that our mental well-being affects how well we think, feel, and function in our day-to-day lives. It can influence how we handle stress, maintain relationships, make decisions, and more. Like physical health, mental health needs to be taken care of and regularly checked in on.

Mental Health Awareness Month is a time to highlight symptoms of mental illness, break down barriers, and encourage support. One way is to recognize warning signs, such as withdrawal, mood changes, difficulty concentrating, or disrupted sleep. Recognizing these signs and addressing mental health proactively, rather than reactively, can help you and your loved ones receive support before challenges escalate or become overwhelming.



Here are a few practical but meaningful ways to support your mental well-being in everyday life.

- Exercise not only benefits physical health, but also boosts feel-good hormones and can help with stress, anger, and even sleep.
- Getting 7–9 hours of sleep helps your brain recharge, improves focus, and regulates your mood
- Mindfulness, such as going for a walk and noticing the smells and sounds, helps you focus on the present moment.
- Being outside, especially with the weather warming up, can give you more vitamin D from the sun and boost your mood.
- Journaling can help you get any racing or negative thoughts out of your brain and onto paper, whether to talk about with a therapist later or simply get out of your head.
- Supporting others through encouragement, practicing gratitude, or listening without judgment benefits both you, them, and your relationship.

Mental health awareness is not just about doing one act of self-care, but about making self-care a continuous habit. It's about taking steps to make your life more fulfilling, having more energy to pursue what makes you happy, and connecting with others. By prioritizing mental health, you're not only improving your own life, but also helping to create a more compassionate and resilient community.