



Counseling Gazette

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

Now is a good time to take a pause and reflect on all that we have been through these past few years. As a society, we all have experienced a life changing pandemic and one issue continues to make our headlines daily; the importance of our mental health. Specifically the effect COVID-19 has had on our students, families, and community. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, so we want to make sure we recognize a difficult truth: Nearly one in five Americans lives with a mental health condition, according to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#). But it's important to remember that you are not alone. Experts stress that now is the time to focus on healing, reaching out, and connecting in safe ways by acknowledging that it is okay to not be okay.

What is mental health? Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life.

What are common practices to stay mentally healthy? One of the best things you can do is to practice self-compassion. Be nice to yourself.

Ideas for this include:

- Remain hopeful. Find things to be grateful about. You could start a gratitude journal, or keep notes in a gratitude jar.
- Use your phone or computer to stay connected, but also know when to disconnect.

- Enjoy a healthy snack and stay hydrated
- Light exercise and enjoy the outdoors
- Focus on what you can do to stay prepared and in the present.
- Establish routines/structures
- Setting boundaries with yourself and others
- Taking deep breaths
- Engage in positive self talk

Develop positive coping skills

As a parent/caregiver you can be observant and mindful of your child's needs. It's normal for kids to go through some changes as they mature, but pay attention if you notice changes to mood, behavior, energy level, or appetite. Likewise, take note if they stop wanting to do things that used to make them happy, or if you notice them isolating themselves. If you see a change in your child's daily ability to function, ask about it and be supportive (without being judgmental). They may need your help and it could be a sign they need to talk to a mental health professional.

12 Questions Every Parent Should Ask

If the answer is yes to 4 or more of the following questions and these behaviors last longer than 2 weeks, you should seek professional help

DOES MY CHILD...

1. Often seem sad, tired, restless or out of sorts?
2. Spend a lot of time alone?
3. Have low self-esteem?
4. Have trouble getting along with family, friends, and peers?

5. Have frequent outbursts of shouting, complaining, or crying?
6. Have trouble performing or behaving in school?
7. Show sudden changes in eating patterns?
8. Sleep too much or not enough?
9. Have frequent outbursts of shouting, complaining, or crying?
10. Have trouble performing or behaving in school?
11. Show sudden changes in eating patterns?
12. Sleep too much or not enough?

WHO TO CALL

If you or someone you know are experiencing a personal emergency, please call 911 or one of the mental health hotlines below:

Ventura County Crisis Team (24/7)
866 998-2243

Trevor Project Life Line (24/7)
866 488-7386

California Youth Crisis Line (24/7)
800 843-5200

Crisis Text Line (24/7)
Text HOME to 741741

National Suicide Prevention Hotline (24/7) 800 273-8255

