



# Mental Health TOOLKIT for LEADERSHIP



# FORWARD



Dear Management Team:

I appreciate your leadership and support over the past 18 months as we responded to the needs of the community and our employees during this public health pandemic. We have all witnessed fellow employees struggle with health challenges while also juggling the well-being of their loved ones and job responsibilities. The ripple effect can be detrimental, especially to someone's mental health.

According to Mental Health America, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of people experiencing behavioral health problems throughout the nation. In November 2020, the Centers for Disease Control reported 44 percent of people were dealing with either depression or anxiety. Orange County Government employees and their families are no exception. To ensure our employees and their families are aware of the vast array of FREE resources available, we created the behavioral health initiatives OC MINDMATTERS.

**The goal of OC MINDMATTERS is to:**

- provide relevant information about emotional and behavioral health
- equip employees with strategies to build resilience
- increase awareness of resources and tools available to employees

One of our management team's vital roles is to ensure the OC MINDMATTERS information is shared with our employees. To that end, our staff has created an OC MINDMATTERS toolkit for department directors, managers, and supervisors. The toolkit provides resources from Mental Health America, links to online courses, apps, activities, tips for success when dealing with stress, checklists for self-assessment, and tools on how to navigate tough situations. We encourage our management team to share the following information with your staff. The OC MINDMATTERS website, [www.ocfl.net.ocmindmatters](http://www.ocfl.net.ocmindmatters) and email, [OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net](mailto:OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net) have been set up for employees and their family members to explore information and navigate available resources.

Thank you again for everything you do for our community and our Orange County family. The health and well-being of our employees are a top priority, and it is my goal to ensure our employees work in a safe and healthy environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry L. Demings". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Jerry L. Demings**  
Orange County Mayor



# INTRODUCTION

**According to Mental Health America, one in five people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime.** The reality is, everyone faces challenges throughout life that impact their mental health. The past 18 months are certainly no exception as we continue to endure the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier this year, Orange County Government implemented the **OC MINDMATTERS** campaign designed specifically for our employees and their families. The purpose of this initiative is to shed greater light on the **FREE** County and community resources available, as well as reinforce the message – **WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.**

The enclosed toolkit was compiled to equip County directors and managers the knowledge, tools and resources to help in educating their staff, and also create an environment in which everyone feels safe and cared for. It includes the following items:

- **Visual flow chart of the formal referral process for our Employee Assistance Program through ComPsych ..... 5**
- **Emotional Wellness Checklist ..... 6**
- **Tip and Fact sheets ..... 8**
- **Worksheets for processing and prioritizing emotions ..... 14**
- **Additional communication collateral to share ..... 17**

The **OC MINDMATTERS** website is updated with new information and topics regularly, and communication will continue to be shared via email and mail as needed. For questions or assistance, [email OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net](mailto:OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net).





Office of the  
Orange County Mayor

# Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, excellent mental health is important for an individual's well-being and vitality, as well as that of their family and community; and

**WHEREAS**, one in five Americans experience a mental health illness that requires treatment at some point in their lives, especially during a pandemic, financial crisis, or when dealing with a long-term illness; and

**WHEREAS**, mental health awareness month is an opportunity to increase public awareness of the importance of stable mental health and an occasion to promote the identification and treatment of mental illness; and

**WHEREAS**, addressing the complex mental health needs of residents of all ages is fundamental to the success and future of Orange County; and

**WHEREAS**, community involvement is an essential part of ending the silence and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness; and

**WHEREAS**, raising awareness about the social impacts of serious mental illness increases conversations about creating permanent supportive solutions for those who suffer with serious mental illness; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange Connects is a free online navigation platform that connects residents experiencing mental and behavioral health difficulties with providers who can help; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange County has developed an employee mental health campaign called MIND MATTERS designed to equip employees with relevant information and strategies to build resilience, increase awareness, and support superior mental health and wellbeing.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Jerry L. Demings, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Orange County Mayor, do hereby proclaim May 2021, as

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

in Orange County, Florida.

**DONE AND ORDERED** this 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2021.

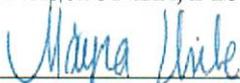




NICOLE H. WILSON, ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 1



CHRISTINE MOORE, ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 2



MAYRA URIBE, ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 3



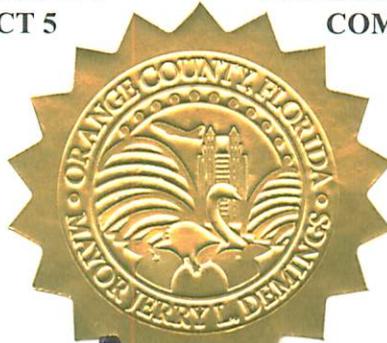
MARIBEL GOMEZ CORDERO, ORANGE  
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 4



EMILY BONILLA, ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 5



VICTORIA P. SIPLIN, ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 6



# FORMAL REFERRAL PROCESS

## FORMAL REFERRAL REQUESTED



Copyright © 2021  
ComPsych Corporation.  
All rights reserved.

# Emotional Wellness Checklist

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Here are tips for improving your emotional health:

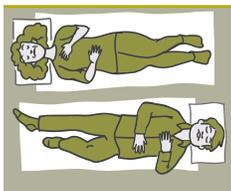


## BRIGHTEN YOUR OUTLOOK

People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Another sign of emotional wellness is being able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate the good times.

### To develop a more positive mindset:

- Remember your good deeds.
- Forgive yourself.
- Spend more time with your friends.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- Develop healthy physical habits.



## REDUCE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

### To help manage your stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Build a social support network.
- Set priorities.
- Think positive.
- Try relaxation methods.
- Seek help.

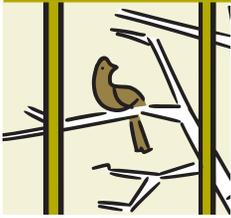


## GET QUALITY SLEEP

To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.

### To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- Exercise daily.
- Limit the use of electronics.
- Relax before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine, & stimulants late in the day.
- Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.



### BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what's happening in the present—of all that's going on inside and all that's happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

#### To be more mindful:

- Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll and notice the sights around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you're full.
- Find mindfulness resources in your local community, including classes, programs, or books.



### COPE WITH LOSS

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.

#### To help cope with loss:

- Take care of yourself.
- Talk to a caring friend.
- Try not to make any major changes right away.
- Join a grief support group.
- Consider professional support.
- Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.



### STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.

#### To build healthy support systems:

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.

# ADAPTING AFTER TRAUMA AND STRESS



We all face trauma, adversity, and other stresses throughout our lives. When people think of trauma, they often think of things like abuse, terrorism, or catastrophic events (big 'T' trauma). Trauma can also be caused by events that may be less obvious but can still overwhelm your capacity to cope, like frequent arguing at home or losing your job (little 't' trauma). Trauma of any kind can be hard on your mental health but working on becoming more resilient can help you feel more at ease.

## TIPS FOR HEALING



**Process your thoughts.** During and after experiencing trauma, it's common to go into survival mode and not have energy to wrap your head around what happened. It may feel safest to bury painful feelings and avoid confronting them, but acknowledging what happened and how it has impacted you is an important part of healing. When you feel ready, take time to think about how you've been affected (and be proud of yourself for pushing through).



**Connect with people.** The pain of trauma can lead some people to isolate themselves, but having a support system is a crucial part of wellbeing. Emotional support helps us to feel less alone or overwhelmed by what's going on or has happened in our lives. Talking to someone who has gone through a similar experience or someone who cares about you can be validating - and help you feel more able to overcome the challenges you're facing.



**Don't compare your experience to others!** We often question our own thoughts or experiences, and you may convince yourself that what you experienced wasn't a big deal because "others have it worse." Everyone experiences trauma differently, and no one trauma is "worse" than another. If it hurt you, then it hurt you - and your feelings and experiences are valid.



**Take care of your body.** Stress and trauma impact your body and physical health just as much as your mind. Listening to your body and giving it what it needs will help you heal. This includes eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and exercising regularly. Moving your body is especially helpful in trauma healing<sup>1</sup> - aim to do it every day, even if it's only a few minutes of stretching.



**Know it will take time.** There is no set timeline for how you "should" heal. Remove the pressure of needing to bounce back quickly and focus on taking it one step at a time. Remember: recovery isn't linear, and it's normal to have bad days and setbacks. It doesn't mean you're failing - it's just part of the process.



**Give yourself grace.** Dealing with trauma and stress is no easy feat, but it's still common to get frustrated with yourself and what can sometimes be a slow recovery process. Try to catch when you hold yourself to unreasonable standards - instead of angrily asking yourself "why am I acting like this?!", think about how impressive it is that you keep going, despite what you have faced.



**Don't feel ashamed to ask for help.** It's easy to compare how you're feeling to how you *assume* others who have been through similar experiences are feeling, and you may get down on yourself because it seems like everyone else is doing just fine. What others experience and how they cope doesn't matter in your journey - if you feel like you need (or want) help, it's important to get that as soon as you can.

## FAST FACTS

#2

Among people who took a screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, past trauma was the second most reported cause for mental distress among screeners after loneliness.<sup>2</sup>

3x

People who have been through trauma are 3 times more likely to experience depression.<sup>3</sup>

53%

Of people who took a screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020 who scored with moderate to severe symptoms, over half (53%) reported past trauma as one of the three main contributors to their mental health problems.<sup>4</sup>

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Ivan de Kamp, M. M., Scheffers, M., Hatzmann, J., Emck, C., Cuijpers, P., & Beek, P. J. (2019). Body- and Movement-Oriented Interventions for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 32(6), 967-976. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22465>

<sup>2</sup>Proprietary data. [MHAScreening.org](https://mhascreening.org), 2020.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nd.gov/dhs/Info/pubs/docs/mhsa/trauma-statistics.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Proprietary data. [MHAScreening.org](https://mhascreening.org), 2020.

# DEALING WITH ANGER AND FRUSTRATION



In challenging times, you may find that you have little patience with other people or get upset over minor things. Anger and frustration are complicated emotions that often stem from other feelings, like disappointment, fear, and stress. Taking some extra steps to decrease your overall tension can prevent your feelings (and the reactions that they cause) from spiraling out of control.

## TIPS FOR COPING



**Pause before reacting.** When you feel yourself getting mad, take a moment to notice what you're thinking, then take a few deep breaths or count to ten in your head. By giving yourself even just a few seconds before reacting, you can put some emotional distance between you and whatever is upsetting you – and you might even realize that you're actually tense because of something else.



**Change your surroundings.** Anger can make you feel trapped. Whether you're mad at someone in the same room as you or just angry at the world, sometimes physically relocating yourself can help you start to calm down. Go to another room or step outside for a few minutes of fresh air to help disrupt the track that your mind is on.



**Get it all out.** Keeping your feelings bottled up never works, so allow yourself time to be angry and complain. As long as you don't focus on it for too long, venting can be a healthy outlet for your anger. You can open up to a trusted friend or write it all down in a journal. Sometimes it feels better to pretend to talk directly to the person (or situation) that you're angry at – pick an empty chair, pretend they're sitting in it, and say what you need to get off your chest.



**Release built up energy.** Anger is a high-energy emotion, and we store that energy and tension physically in our bodies. Exercise is a great way to get rid of extra energy and can improve your mood. Some people find grounding exercises (like meditation or deep breathing) helpful to calm intense feelings, while others prefer more high impact activities like running or weightlifting. Think about what you usually do to decompress, like taking a hot shower or blasting your favorite music and use the tools that you know work for you.



**Get organized.** When things around you feel chaotic, it's often a lot easier to get frustrated and snap at people. Dedicate a few minutes each day to tidying, planning, or reorganizing. Implementing a routine can also help you feel more on top of things by adding structure and certainty to your daily life.



**Eliminate stressors if possible.** Sometimes there's no way to completely get rid of a big problem, but there's often more than just one issue contributing to your frustration. Things like an overwhelming workload or unhealthy relationship can make you feel on edge. Pay attention to how and why you're feeling stressed and see if you can make small changes to improve a challenging situation to make it less burdensome.



**Manage your expectations.** Negative feelings often stem from people or situations not meeting your standards or assumptions. It's frustrating to feel let down but recognize that you can't fully predict anyone else's behavior or how situations will play out. Shift your mental framework so that you aren't setting yourself up for disappointment.



**Don't be afraid to ask for help.** If you're working to cope with your anger but feel like you can't get it under control, it's time to get some extra support. Anger can fester and become explosive if not resolved. A number of mental health conditions can manifest as anger, so this may actually be a sign of depression or anxiety – treating an underlying condition can help heal your anger as well.

## FAST FACTS



Of people who took an anxiety screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, 71% felt easily annoyed or irritable at least half of the time or nearly every day.<sup>1</sup>



Of people who took a bipolar screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, 82% reported being so irritable that they shouted at people or started fights or arguments.<sup>2</sup>



One poll found that 91% of respondents said that they feel people are more likely to express their anger on social media than they are face-to-face.<sup>3</sup>

**TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.**



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Proprietary data. MHAScreening.org. 2020.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>IBM Watson Health-NPR Health Poll. November 1-14, 2018. <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/2YQ8NLD5>

# BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

## COPING WITH LOSS



In our hearts, we all know that death is a part of life. In fact, death gives meaning to our existence because it reminds us how precious life is. The loss of a loved one is life's most stressful event and can cause a major emotional crisis. After the death of someone you love, you experience bereavement, which literally means "to be deprived by death."

### Knowing What To Expect

When a death takes place, you may experience a wide range of emotions, even when the death is expected. Many people report feeling an initial stage of numbness after first learning of a death, but there is no real order to the grieving process. Some emotions you may experience include:

Denial	Yearning
Disbelief	Anger
Confusion	Humiliation
Shock	Despair
Sadness	Guilt

These feelings are normal and common reactions to loss. You may not be prepared for the intensity and duration of your emotions or how swiftly your moods may change. You may even begin to doubt the stability of your mental health. But be assured that these feelings are healthy and appropriate and will help you come to terms with your loss.

**Remember:** It takes time to fully absorb the impact of a major loss. You never stop missing your loved one, but the pain eases after time and allows you to go on with your life.

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](http://MHASCREENING.ORG) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Dealing With A Major Loss

The death of a loved one is always difficult. Your reactions are influenced by the circumstances of a death, particularly when it is sudden or accidental. Your reactions are also influenced by your relationship with the person who died.

**A child's death** arouses an overwhelming sense of injustice — for lost potential, unfulfilled dreams and senseless suffering. Parents may feel responsible for the child's death, no matter how irrational that may seem. Parents may also feel that they have lost a vital part of their own identity.

**A spouse's death** is very traumatic. In addition to the severe emotional shock, the death may cause a potential financial crisis if the spouse was the family's main income source. The death may necessitate major social adjustments requiring the surviving spouse to parent alone, adjust to single life and maybe even return to work.

**Elderly people** may be especially vulnerable when they lose a spouse because it means losing a lifetime of shared experiences. At this time, feelings of loneliness may be compounded by the death of close friends.

**A loss due to suicide** can be among the most difficult losses to bear. They may leave the survivors with a tremendous burden of guilt, anger and shame. Survivors may even feel responsible for the death. Seeking counseling during the first weeks after the suicide is particularly beneficial and advisable.

### Living With Grief

Coping with death is vital to your mental health. It is only natural to experience grief when a loved one dies. The best thing you can do is allow yourself to grieve. There are many ways to cope effectively with your pain.

**Seek out caring people.** Find relatives and friends who can understand your feelings of loss. Join support groups with others who are experiencing similar losses.

**Express your feelings.** Tell others how you are feeling; it will help you to work through the grieving process.

**Take care of your health.** Maintain regular contact with your family physician and be sure to eat well and get plenty of rest. Be aware of the danger of developing a dependence on medication or alcohol to deal with your grief.

**Accept that life is for the living.** It takes effort to begin to live again in the present and not dwell on the past.

**Postpone major life changes.** Try to hold off on making any major changes, such as moving, remarrying, changing jobs or having another child. You should give yourself time to adjust to your loss.

**Be patient.** It can take months or even years to absorb a major loss and accept your changed life.

**Seek outside help when necessary.** If your grief seems like it is too much to bear, seek professional assistance to help work through your grief. It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help.

# GETTING OUT OF THINKING TRAPS



It's easy to fall into negative thinking patterns and spend time bullying yourself, dwelling on the past, or worrying about the future. It's part of how we're wired – the human brain reacts more intensely to negative events than to positive ones and is more likely to remember insults than praise. During tough times, negative thoughts are especially likely to spiral out of control. When these thoughts make something out to be worse in your head than it is in reality, they are called cognitive distortions.

## COMMON COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

**Overgeneralization:** Making a broad statement based off one situation or piece of evidence.

**Personalization:** Blaming yourself for events beyond your control; taking things personally when they aren't actually connected to you.

**Filtering:** Focusing on the negative details of a situation while ignoring the positive.

**All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Only seeing the extremes of a situation.

**Catastrophizing:** Blowing things out of proportion; dwelling on the worst possible outcomes.

**Jumping to Conclusions:** Judging or deciding something without all the facts.

**Emotional Reasoning:** Thinking that however you feel is fully and unarguably true. **Discounting the Positive:** Explaining all positives away as luck or coincidence.

**"Should" Statements:** Making yourself feel guilty by pointing out what you should or shouldn't be doing, feeling, or thinking.

## TIPS FOR CHALLENGING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS



**Reframe.** Think of a different way to view the situation. If your negative thought is "I can't do anything right," a kinder way to reframe it is, "I messed up, but nobody's perfect," or a more constructive thought is "I messed up, but now I know to prepare more for next time." It can be hard to do this when you're feeling down on yourself, so ask yourself what you'd tell your best friend if they were saying those things about themselves.



**Prove yourself wrong.** The things you do impact how you feel – what actions can you take to combat your negative thoughts? For instance, if you're telling yourself you aren't smart because you don't understand how the stock market works, learn more about a subject you understand and enjoy, like history. If you feel like no one cares about you, call a friend. Give yourself evidence that these thoughts aren't entirely true.



**Counter negative thoughts with positive ones.** When you catch your inner dialogue being mean to you, make yourself say something nice to balance it out. This may feel cheesy at first and self-love can be hard, so don't give up if it feels awkward in the beginning. Name things you love, like, or even just don't hate about yourself – we all have to start somewhere!



**Remember: thoughts aren't facts.** Your thoughts and feelings are valid, but they aren't always reality. You might feel ugly, but that doesn't mean you *are*. Often times we can be our own worst enemies – other people are seeing us in a much nicer light than how we see ourselves.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Proprietary data. MHAScreening.org. 2020.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Matthews, G., Wells, A. (2000). Attention, automaticity, and affective disorder. *Behavior Modification*, 24, 69-93.

## FAST FACTS



Of people who took an anxiety screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, 64% felt afraid, as if something awful might happen at least half of the time or nearly every day.<sup>1</sup>



Half of people who took a depression screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020 felt that they were a failure or had let themselves or their families down nearly every day.<sup>2</sup>



One study found that 85% of what we worry about never happens at all, and in the 15% of times where worries came true, 79% of people handled the difficulty better than expected, or learned a valuable lesson.<sup>3</sup>

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

# PROCESSING BIG CHANGES



Change is a guaranteed part of life. It's something everyone experiences at one point or another — good or bad. Sometimes that change happens in big ways when we aren't expecting it or aren't prepared for it. These types of situations can make navigating your path forward really difficult. By providing yourself with tools for processing change, you can adapt more easily.

## TIPS FOR PROCESSING CHANGE



**Focus on what you can control.** One of the hardest things about big change is how helpless it can often make you feel. At some point, you'll probably have to accept the change that you're experiencing and then focus on what you can control within that. For example, you can control how you react to situations, how you start each day, or how nice you are to yourself and others. It can be comforting to know that there are still things that you have control over, even when other things are changing.



**Write out your feelings on paper.** When you're processing big changes, your brain may feel like it's constantly racing. It's easy to feel overwhelmed with all of the things you're feeling and thinking. Instead of holding it all in your mind, allow yourself to release it. Writing things down is one of the best ways to do that. Start a journal—jot down a quick list of your thoughts and feelings or write a letter to yourself or someone else. Just get it all out onto paper.



**Keep up your self-care where you can.** When so much of your life feels different and overwhelming, it's tempting to want to stay in bed or on the sofa and avoid what's bothering you. However, it's important to keep up your normal habits as much as possible, especially when it comes to protecting your mental health. The changes you're facing may mean a totally different routine, but incorporating the small, familiar self-care habits that you know work for you — even if it's something simple like showering or taking a walk after dinner — can give you the mental clarity to process the big changes.



**Find support.** With any change that you're facing right now, there's a good chance that someone else has felt the exact same way that you're feeling too. Depending on what you're struggling with, you may be able to talk to friends or family about it, find an online support group, or open up to a mental health professional. Whoever it ends up being that you turn to, having someone who can listen and provide support can help you through any transition you're working through.



**Tune into the good.** No matter what kind of change has come into your life, there is most likely some grief that coincides with processing it. Even a seemingly good change like getting a new job can have you grieving the day-to-day interactions you had with coworkers where you used to work. Let yourself grieve, but also try not to get stuck spiraling into the fear, anguish, and negativity that those changes may bring. Instead, try and retrain your brain to think of the positives in your life by doing things like practicing gratitude, focusing on the small things that bring you joy, or reframing challenges as opportunities.



**Make plans.** It's okay if you aren't an incredibly organized person, but when you're processing big changes, it can be helpful to focus on planning. You don't have to stick to your plan perfectly; just starting small with what your day or week is going to look like can help get rid of that uncertainty that comes with change.



**Think of your strength.** Big changes tend to challenge and test you, but it's likely that you'll grow from all of the things that you're facing. Remind yourself as often as possible that you are strong and capable and can make it through whatever challenges you're facing (and that you've made it through some tough changes in the past). Maybe even say it out loud to yourself to really let it sink in. With each passing day, you're building resilience.

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup>Lyubomirsky, S., Sousa, L., & Dickerhoof, R. (2006). The Costs and Benefits of Writing, Talking, and Thinking About Life's Triumphs and Defeats. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(4), 692–708. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.4.692>
- <sup>2</sup>Manczak, E., Skerrett, K., Gabriel, L., Ryan, K., & Langenecker, S. (2018). Family Support: A Possible Buffer Against Disruptive Events for Individuals With and Without Remitted Depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32(7), 926–935. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000451>
- <sup>3</sup>Holahan, C., Moos, R., Holahan, C., Brennan, P., & Schutte, K. (2005). Stress Generation, Avoidance Coping, and Depressive Symptoms: A 10-Year Model. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(4), 658–666. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.4.658>

## FAST FACTS



People that journaled about significant events reported more satisfaction with their lives and better mental health over those that did not.<sup>1</sup>



Strong social support from family members following significant life events seriously lessens depression symptoms in teens and has a lasting positive effect in dealing with life changes.<sup>2</sup>



Adults who avoid problems struggle more with depression later on than those who actively approach problems with coping strategies.<sup>3</sup>

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

# TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF



There are always a handful of roles that each of us are juggling. If you are a parent, a student, an employee, a caretaker, someone struggling with a mental health concern, or are just feeling overwhelmed with the responsibilities of day-to-day life, the idea of taking time for yourself may seem unimaginable. Sometimes it can be difficult to even take basic care of ourselves - but there are small things that can be done to make self-care and taking time for ourselves a little bit easier.

## TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF



**Accept yourself as you are.** Remember that you are running your own race. Try not to compare your life and what it looks like right now to anyone else's. When you start comparing yourself to others, it's easy to feel inadequate, which makes it hard to even take the very first step in self-care. Instead, try your best to accept the person that you are and where you are in life right now.



**Focus on the basics.** Sometimes being an adult is not easy and it can feel impossible to get even the littlest things done. Taking time for yourself doesn't necessarily mean treating yourself to special things. One of the most important things you can do is focus on steps to ensure you're living a healthy lifestyle. Showering and brushing your teeth every day, eating nutrient-rich food, moving your body, and getting good sleep are all building blocks of good self-care.



**Find what makes you happy.** If you're caught up in taking care of all of your responsibilities — rather than taking care of yourself — you may not even really know what kind of self-care you need. What works for someone else may not work for you. Take time to think about what things you can do to make yourself feel happy or accomplished and include them in building the self-care routine that makes the most sense for you, your schedule, and your health overall.



**Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is one of the best ways to make the most out of any amount of time that you do have to care for yourself. Take a few slow, deep breaths, focus on each of your senses, and try to be fully present in whatever you're doing. Not only does mindfulness reduce stress, it also has the power to help you slow down and really take care of yourself — even in the midst of all of life's challenges and responsibilities.



**Make small goals.** Unfortunately, taking time for yourself doesn't just happen overnight, so try to be patient. Instead of putting pressure on yourself to immediately have the perfect self-care routine established, set small goals that you want to accomplish for yourself. Focus on small, daily tasks like wanting to take a 15-minute walk outside each day, or journaling for 10 minutes every night — rather than a complete overhaul of your life, all at once.



**Set some boundaries.** Sometimes, the only way to really be able to make time for self-care is to lessen the amount of time or energy that you are giving away to other people. Having the sometimes tough conversations with people that set boundaries around your time, your emotions, your things, your other relationships, your health, and your opinions can give you an opportunity to devote more time and effort to yourself and your own mental health.



**Remember that you are not alone.** Everyone struggles to take time for themselves, so try not to get down on yourself for not having everything perfectly balanced all of the time. As circumstances change, you'll probably have to rethink your routines and how you use your time many times throughout your life. There will always be people that understand where you're coming from and are willing to help. Ask your friends and family for help when you need to take some time for your mental health. They may even be able to offer you some guidance on how they manage self-care and take time for their own well-being.

## FAST FACTS



On average, people only spend 15 minutes a day on health-related self-care.<sup>1</sup>



Self-care is proven to reduce stress and anxiety levels while increasing self-compassion.<sup>2</sup>



Of people who took a depression screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, 73% felt tired or said that they had very little energy at least half of the time or nearly every day.<sup>3</sup>

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Yaribeygi, H., Panahi, Y., Sahraei, H., Johnston, T. P., & Sahebkar, A. (2017). The impact of stress on body function: A review. *EXCLI Journal*, 16, 1057–1072. <https://doi.org/10.17179/excli2017-480>

<sup>2</sup>Shapiro, S., Brown, K., & Biegel, G. (2007). Teaching Self-Care to Caregivers: Effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on the Mental Health of Therapists in Training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 1(2), 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1931-3918.1.2.105>

<sup>3</sup>Proprietary data. [MHAScreening.org](https://mhascreening.org). 2020.

# PROCESSING TRAUMA AND STRESS

After a traumatic experience, it can be helpful to get your thoughts outside of your head. Writing down your experiences can help you gain perspective about your situation and help to reduce how distressing they are. Use the lines below to jot down anything that comes to mind related to your traumatic experiences.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

When you've experienced multiple traumatic experiences, or carried trauma for a long time, it can shape the way you see yourself, the world, and others. These changes in beliefs are there to protect you from future harm, even when threats are gone. They can change the way you relate to others, whether or how you take risks, or how you feel positively about yourself.

## HOW HAVE YOUR TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES SHAPED THE WAY YOU SEE:

### YOURSELF?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### OTHERS?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### THE WORLD?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Reflecting on your writing experience above, do you notice how your body has changed in response to your feelings? Use the space below to identify the feelings you experience while reflecting on your story and draw lines to the corresponding area of your body where you experience that emotion.

### FEELINGS

---

---

---

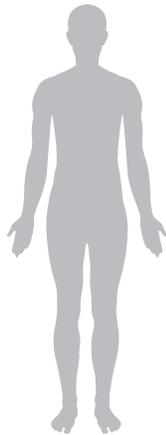
---

---

---

---

---



### FEELINGS

---

---

---

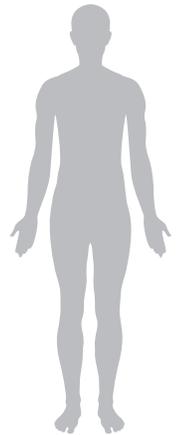
---

---

---

---

---



Practicing grounding techniques can help you get unstuck from your mind and your body. Use the *Keep Your Mind Grounded* worksheet to learn and practice staying grounded as a coping skill for your unwanted thoughts and feelings. Use the *Stopping Stupid Thoughts* worksheet to reflect on and change the beliefs above.

Both worksheets, as well as others, can be accessed at [screening.mhanational.org/diy](https://screening.mhanational.org/diy).

# MANAGING FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Anger and frustration are both common emotional responses that everyone faces. However, if these feelings become too intense, they can lead to both mental and physical distress, and cause problems in relationships. This worksheet can help you identify the emotions and thoughts behind your anger and frustration, and help you determine what you need to feel better.

**DESCRIBE THE EVENT AND IDENTIFY SPECIFIC THINGS SOMEONE SAID OR DID THAT BROUGHT ON YOUR ANGER OR FRUSTRATION.**

---

---

---

---

**LIST OUT ANY EMOTIONS THAT WERE UNDERLYING YOUR FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION OR ANGER.**

For a list of emotions, visit <http://bit.ly/emotionsunderneath>

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**WHAT PARTS OF THE DESCRIPTION ABOVE ARE FOCUSED ON FACTS, ACTIONS, OR BEHAVIORS (AND NOT A JUDGEMENT OR OPINION)? WRITE IT DOWN.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Take some time to think about what needs to happen for you to be less angry. Focus on what you can do and what you need others to do.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO TO FEEL BETTER?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**WHAT DO YOU NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO DO TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER?**

*Remember - we can only control our own actions. However, writing down what you need from others can help you advocate for yourself.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED, WALK YOURSELF THROUGH THESE SAME STEPS TO HELP YOU PROCESS YOUR FEELINGS. ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:**

**WHAT HAPPENED? → WHAT DO I FEEL? → WHAT DO I NEED?**

# PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE

When we have a lot on our plates or we are facing mental health challenges, it can feel easy to push our own needs to the side. However, making time for ourselves is essential to our overall well-being. Use this worksheet to help you better understand what is holding you back from taking time for yourself and your needs.

**WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER, BUT YOU CANNOT SEEM TO DO?**

---

---

---

Write out some thoughts and expectations that are preventing you from doing the self-care that you need. Don't worry about whether these thoughts or expectations are true. Instead, write down anything that comes to mind.

## THOUGHTS

Examples: I don't have time; my needs don't matter

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EXPECTATIONS

Examples: I should be better at \_\_; I would do \_\_ if it helped me

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pick one thought or expectation from either list above and re-write it here.

### THOUGHT OR EXPECTATION

---

---

Focusing in on this specific thought or expectation, answer the following questions.

**WHERE DOES THIS THOUGHT, OR EXPECTATION COME FROM? WHO SETS IT?**

**HOW DOES IT GET IN THE WAY OF TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Now that you have answered the questions above, rewrite this thought so that it supports you and your self-care needs.

### NEW THOUGHT OR EXPECTATION

Examples: If I do \_\_ I may feel better; It is ok to take time for myself

---

---

While we only worked through one thought, we can use this process to evaluate how our negative thoughts and expectations prevent us from taking care of ourselves regularly. On a separate sheet of paper, follow these same steps with the other thoughts and expectations you listed in the first set of boxes.

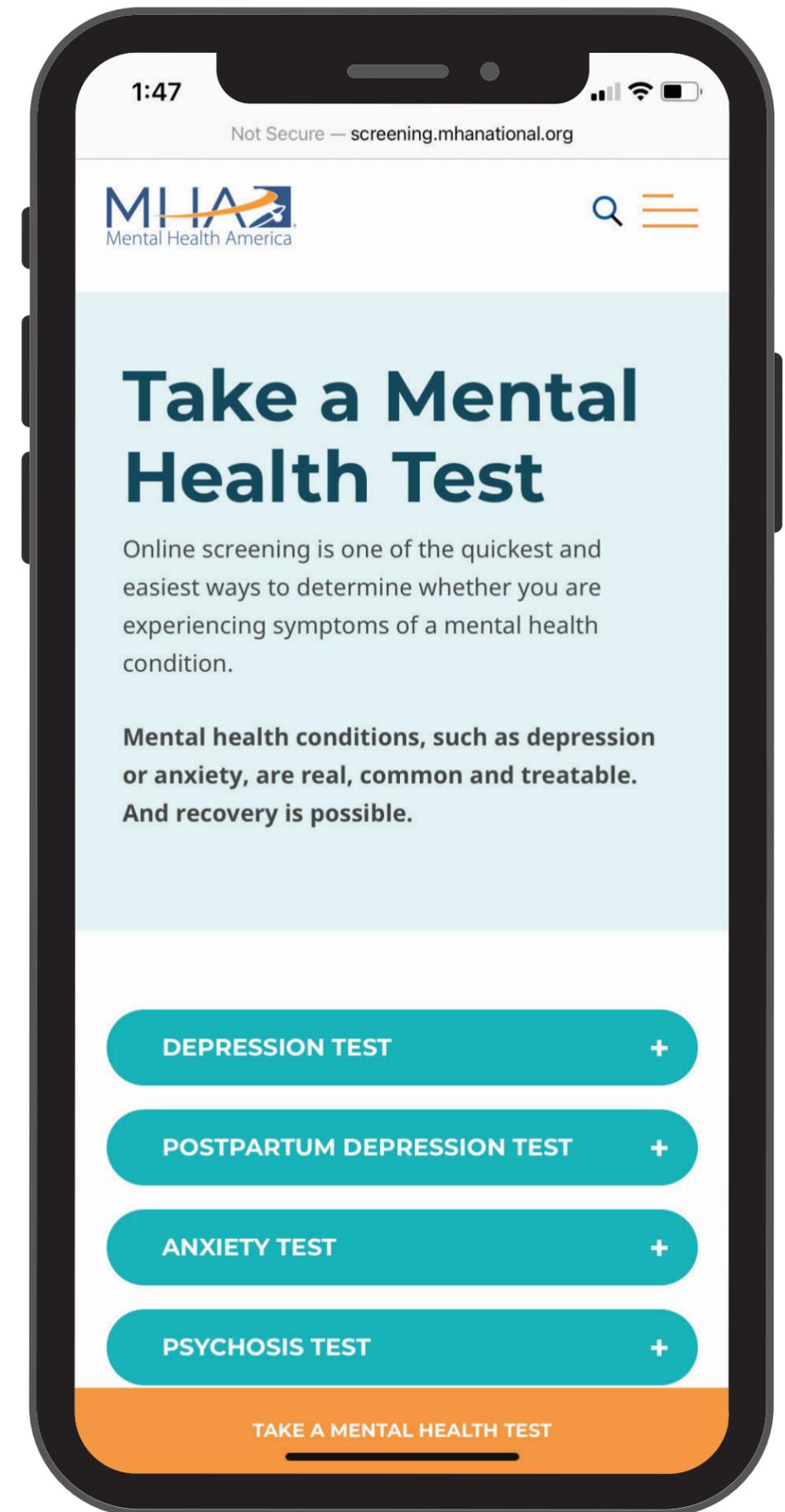
EVERYONE FACES CHALLENGES IN LIFE THAT CAN IMPACT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

THIS MAY, TAKE A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org).

IT IS A QUICK, FREE, AND PRIVATE WAY TO ASSESS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.



 /mentalhealthamerica  
 @mentalhealtham  
 @mentalhealthamerica  
 /mentalhealtham  
 /mentalhealthamerica  
[www.mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)





**LIFE CAN BE HARD.**

**YOUR MENTAL HEALTH  
DOESN'T HAVE TO  
SUFFER.**

**GET INFORMATION AND  
TOOLS THAT CAN HELP.**

**VISIT [MHANATIONAL.ORG/MAY](https://mhanational.org/may) FOR TOOLS2THRIVE.**

**MAY IS 2  
MENTAL 0  
HEALTH 2  
MONTH 1**



**MHIA**  
Mental Health America  
**B4Stage4**

 /mentalhealthamerica  
 @mentalhealtham  
 @mentalhealthamerica  
 /mentalhealtham  
 /mentalhealthamerica  
[www.mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)

# How are you feeling?

**GRIEVING**

LONELY

**ANXIOUS**

STRESSED

**ANGRY**

CONFUSED

**AFRAID**

SAD



CONTACT:  
[OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net](mailto:OCMINDMATTERS@ocfl.net)  
[www.ocfl.net/OCMINDMATTERS](http://www.ocfl.net/OCMINDMATTERS)



# YOU MATTER!