



## What is Mental Health Awareness Month?

May marks **Mental Health Awareness Month**, a time to raise awareness about the importance of mental health in the lives of all Americans. Mental health is crucially important for overall health and well-being. 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, make healthy choices, and relate to others. Now more than ever, is the time to focus on healing, reaching out, and connecting in safe ways by acknowledging that it's okay to not be okay.

## How can I cope with feelings of stress?

It's natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during challenging times. Feeling strong emotions or being stressed can have negative effects on your health. Learning to cope with stress is essential to become more resilient, and you can help yourself, others, and your community manage stress in the following ways:

- » **Take care of your body** with healthy meals, exercise, and by using deep breathing techniques.
- » **Take time to unwind** and do activities you enjoy.
- » **Take breaks from the news**, including on social media.
- » **Connect with your loved ones** and build a strong support system.
- » **Connect with your community-based organizations**. If you are unable to take part in group activities right now, try connecting by phone or email, online, or through social media.

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## What self-care strategies can I use to take care of my mental health and well-being?

- » **Maintain a healthy lifestyle**, including appropriate sleep, exercise, and diet.
- » **Don't use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs** to cope with feelings of sadness or anxiety.
- » **Finding joy, connecting with/helping others, getting out in nature, learning something new, and finding spiritual connections** on a daily basis can help us flourish.
- » **Use coping mechanisms** that have helped you in the past during difficult situations and remember that everyone experiences and manages stress in different ways.
- » **Know that you are not alone**. You can find more ideas on what can help you or others with stress, anxiety, and grief at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's How Right Now resource website](#).

As a State of Maine employee, you have access to a number of helpful mental health resources through your [Living Resources Program \(EAP\)](#). These resources include:

**Confidential, Short-Term Counseling Services** - These no-cost counseling services can help with issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, grief, etc. This service is available to anyone in your household.

**Resources and Education Materials** - The Living Resources Program also offers a plethora of resources that you may find helpful.