

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



INTRODUCTION

Since 1949, May has been recognized as mental health awareness month in an effort to reduce the stigma, share resources, and offer hope that help is available and treatment can save lives. In the past year in the U.S., it's estimated that 1 in 5 adults (43.8 million) experienced mental illness. 17% of youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime. Mental illness is prevalent across all groups regardless of gender, race, age, or social class. Approximately 64% of those with severe mental illness seek or receive treatment.

Approximately 31.9% of teens aged 13-18 have experienced an anxiety disorder. Of these teens, females report anxiety more frequently than males on average and 8% are diagnosed with severe anxiety.



For those aged 10-34, suicide is the second leading cause of death. The rate of suicide has increased by 31% over the last 20 years. If you or someone you know is thinking or talking about suicide, contact the National Suicide Hotline 24/7 by calling 1-800-273-TALK, texting TALK to 741741, or calling 911. Talking about suicide can be a first step to get support. Help is available, and you are not alone! The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention offers guidance and resources specifically related to the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://afsp.org/mental-health-and-covid-19>.

SELF-CARE

During the COVID-19 outbreak, it is common to experience heightened anxiety, excess stress, and/or other overwhelming emotions. Self-care involves making time to be kind to ourselves and engage in something healthy that we enjoy. This may include physical exercise such as taking a walk, getting fresh air, stretching, writing in a journal, drawing, listening to music, meditating, or scheduling time to talk with a friend over the phone, to name a few. Self-care also may involve limiting the consumption of news stories or being mindful to only read those articles produced by reputable sources. Mayo Clinic offers strategies for managing anxiety during the pandemic with mindfulness: <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/covid-19-tips-for-mindfulness-coping-with-anxiety/>



TALKING TO KIDS

For parents, it's critical that children are given the opportunity to share their feelings, ask questions, and be encouraged to find positive ways to express their emotions. Some common suggestions to support children during these uncertain times include:

1. Remain calm and remember that kids will be attentive to verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. Remind kids that it's the job of adults to keep them safe and healthy, which is the reason some changes are taking place. "Adults are working hard to keep you safe." Continue with a regular schedule and routines as much as possible (within the latest state guidelines).
3. Avoid discussing virus fears in spaces where younger kids might observe or overhear adult conversations.
4. Be honest. Share age appropriate facts with kids about the virus if they ask. Remind them that sometimes rumors may spread untrue information.
5. Provide regular reminders for good hygiene for good health.
6. Provide time for kids to talk and have time for quiet, calming activities where possible. Allow kids to ask questions and express their concerns, reminding them about caring adults who are available to talk with them as needed.



MANAGING STRESS & ANXIETY

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*Social Distancing doesn't
mean we can't connect!*



Identify positive supports in your life such as trusted friends and family members. Schedule time to connect with them regularly.

HOW TO

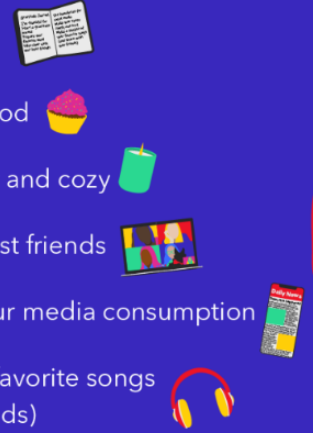
Set Boundaries For Media

- Set **intentional time** for media consumption, limit scrolling
- Filter feeds to **positive content**, limiting posts that may cause stress
- Read stories from **trusted sources** and be cautious of misinformation on social
- Avoid the news right **before bedtime**
- **Turn off notifications** and avoid reading comments as needed



Self-Care Strategies for Resilience

- Start a gratitude journal
- Prepare your favorite food
- Make your space comfy and cozy
- Video chat with your best friends
- Set boundaries with your media consumption
- Make a playlist of your favorite songs (and share with your friends)



FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Even though there are many things outside of individual control during the COVID-19 outbreak, it's important to identify things we can control and do our best to focus on those. Setting and following a daily schedule can be one important step that often offers significant mental health benefits. Part of a daily schedule may even include simple, daily tasks to offer a set routine that might include showering, making the bed, following regular meal times with healthy foods, drinking plenty of water, planning for consistent bed and wake times, getting dressed (i.e., not wearing pajamas all day), and making a list of items to complete that day. With the significant impact many families are experiencing from the change in usual routines as parents may shift to working from home and students engage in distance learning, new organizational methods or approaches to planning may be needed.



DISTANCE LEARNING SCHEDULE

Some families may find it helpful to create a daily schedule organized around subjects, due dates, and any meetings a teacher may schedule. In addition to a daily schedule, it may be beneficial to make daily lists of tasks, add priority numbers to the items on the lists, and keep an ongoing log of assignment due dates and class meeting times. Below are some example schedules that could be modified to fit family wake times, student classes, and more.

AT HOME LEARNING					WEEK OF: Type here
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
• Type here	• Type here	• Type here	• Type here	• Type here	
REMINDERS:					
• Type here					

TO-DO LIST

Name: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

Due Date: _____

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This and other resources are downloadable at <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Digital-Weekly-Agenda-Slides-Editable-Distance-Learning-5379454> <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Editable-Homeschool-Schedule-5329341>

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Remember, you are not alone. Help is available. The Beal City Public Schools Counseling Department has a list of resources available for students and families that is updated regularly here: <https://www.bealcityschools.net/vnews/display.v/ART/5e78c285c88c6>.

The school counselors check their emails regularly, but this method of communication should not be used for emergencies or crisis situations. You may contact the counselors to request a meeting time.

For more information about the Beal City Schools Counseling Department, visit the Counselor's Corner: <https://www.bealcityschools.net/vnews/display.v/ART/5da8642ed8fae>. Stay safe and take care!



Sources

- <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder.shtml>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/happiness-is-state-mind/201805/may-is-mental-health-month-4mind4body>
- <https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI-Mental-Health-Care-Matters-FINAL.pdf>
- <https://nami.org/mhstatshhttps://www.nami.org/getattachment/Press-Media/Press-Releases/2020/COVID-19-and-Mental-Illness-NAMI-Releases-Importan/COVID-19-Updated-Guide-1.pdf?lang=en-US>



Sara Millerov
smillerov@bealcityschools.net



Leigha Compson
lcompson@bealcityschools.net