

What is mental health?

Mental health is something we all share. It shows up in how we sleep, how we handle a tough week at work, how patient we are with the people we love, and how we feel at the end of a long day. Good mental health does not mean life is always easy. It means we have the tools and support to navigate it, whatever it brings.

Mental health shapes how we think, feel, and act every day. Research consistently shows that tending to it, even in small ways, leads to real improvements in how we feel and function over time.

This May, we are taking a moment to talk about it, because every one of us deserves to feel supported, informed, and well. This newsletter is for every one of our members. Take what is useful, share what resonates, and know that your well-being matters here.

May is Mental Health Month

May marks the start of *Mental Health Month*, but Mental health is not a once-a-year conversation. It is a 365-day practice! Just like physical health, it requires consistent attention and care.

The great news is that small, everyday choices (sometimes less than 30 seconds to apply), can support our everyday well-being. Mental Health Awareness Month is a reminder to start, or to keep going, and to know that every effort counts.

Fun Fact About Mental Health Month

The color green is the official symbol of Mental Health Awareness Month. It represents hope, strength, and emotional support for those living with mental illness. Wearing green in May is a simple way to show solidarity and spark conversation. Source: Mental Health America, [mentalhealthamerica.net](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) (<https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net>)

5 Tips for Everyday Mental Wellness: Practical steps, grounded in research, that you can start today.

Good mental health does not require a big overhaul. Small, consistent habits practiced regularly make a real difference. These five tips come from peer-reviewed research and clinical practice. Start with one that feels right for you.

Tip 1: Try slowing your breathing down.

When stress builds, the body responds automatically. Breathing quickens, muscles tighten, and the mind races. Deliberately slowing your breathing signals to the nervous system that things are okay, activating the body's natural calming response.

Try breathing in for 4 seconds, holding for 4, and exhaling slowly for 6. A few minutes of this, practiced regularly, can offer both immediate and lasting relief.

The 4-4-6 Breathing Method has foundations in both Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

Tip 2: Practice gratitude (even for the small things).

People who regularly reflect on what they are grateful for report feeling better than those who skip this practice. Gratitude does not have to be big or profound. You might be grateful for a good cup of coffee this morning, a coworker who held the door, or a moment of quiet on the commute home. It all counts.

Try writing down two or three things you are grateful for at the end of each day, or simply pause at some point during the day and name one thing that went well.

Over time, this habit shifts how you experience everyday life. UCLA Health explores the health benefits of gratitude [here](#).

Tip 3: Show kindness to yourself

Kindness is one of the most accessible wellness tools we have, and it benefits the giver just as much as the receiver.

We are often our own harshest critics. We notice every mistake, every misstep, every moment we feel we could have done better. Self-kindness is the practice of responding to yourself the way you would respond to someone you care about.

When something goes wrong, try pausing and asking yourself what you would say to a close friend in the same situation. Chances are, you would offer understanding, not criticism.

Research shows that treating yourself with that same warmth and patience improves mood, builds resilience, and makes it easier to keep going when things are hard. Self-kindness is not about lowering your standards. It is about being a fair and caring witness to your own experience.

Tip 4: Ground yourself by noticing what is around you.

When the mind is racing or a moment feels overwhelming, grounding is one of the fastest ways to find your footing again. It works by pulling your attention out of your thoughts and into your senses.

Try this wherever you are: look around and name five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. That is it.

This simple practice interrupts the stress response and brings you back to the present moment, which is almost always more manageable than wherever the mind has wandered.

[Calm](#) explores more deeply how the 5-4-3-2-1 Method helps with anxiety and grounding.

Tip 5: Find a peaceful place

You do not need to go anywhere to give your mind a rest. Research shows that visualization, picturing a place or experience that feels calm and safe, can actually trigger the body's relaxation response.

Think of a place that brings you peace: a spot in nature, a room in a home you loved, somewhere you have always wanted to go. Sit quietly for a few minutes and imagine it in as much detail as you can. What do you see? What do you hear? What does the air feel like?

The more you practice this, the more easily your mind will be able to find its way there when you need it.

Disclaimer:

The information shared in this newsletter is intended for general wellness and educational purposes only. Local 342's Mental Wellness Program does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Nothing published here should be considered a replacement for the guidance of a qualified health or mental health professional. If you have questions or concerns about your mental health, we always encourage you to reach out to a licensed professional who can support you. Your well-being matters, and the right help is out there.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline open 24/7