

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOOLKIT

ABOUT THIS PILLAR

The Mental Health and Wellness pillar focuses on how both individual alumni and local YouthBuild programs can access resources, tools, and partnerships that can best provide them with support in this area. We hope to engage our alumni in thoughtful discussions regarding the state of mental health in their communities, strategies and techniques for self-care and self-awareness, tips about how to navigate mental health systems, and how to receive resources they can use both personally and share with programs and alumni clubs.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS TOOLKIT

What should you know about Mental Health
Grief and Loss
Substance Abuse
Self-care and Mindfulness
Healthy Living
Trauma and Stress
COVID-19



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health America created this list of key messages around mental health and ways to check in with yourself to take action when needed:

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.
- There are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency, regardless of the situations they are dealing with.
- It's important to accept the situations in life that we cannot change, actively work to process the mental struggles associated with big changes, manage anger and frustration, recognize when trauma may be affecting your mental health, challenge negative thinking patterns, and make time to take care of yourself.
- Knowing when to turn to friends, family, and co-workers when you are struggling with life's challenges can help improve your mental health.
- One way to check in with yourself is to take a mental health screen at [MHAscreening.org](https://www.mhascreening.org). It's a quick, free, and private way for someone to assess their mental health and recognize signs of mental health problems.
- Living a healthy lifestyle and incorporating mental health tools to thrive may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Seeking professional help when self-help efforts to improve your mental health aren't working is a sign of strength, not weakness.

RESOURCES

[Take a Mental Health Test](#)

[Warning signs and symptoms](#)

[Get Ready For Back To School](#)

[BIPOC Mental Health](#)

[Emergency numbers to know if you need help!](#)

[The Depression Project](#)

[One-stop access to U.S. government mental health guides, education, and information](#)

[National Alliance for Mental Illness](#)

[The Emotional PPE Project](#)

If you have any questions or need additional resources, guidance, or alumni suggested resources, please reach out to alumni@youthbuild.org

Provided by:

MANAGING GRIEF AND LOSS

With life comes loss. COVID-19 has shown our world just how fragile life and our systems can be. As our country, communities, and people aim to rebuild, we at YouthBuild USA have developed a brief resource guide on how to best approach and manage what comes with loss.

This guide is informed by YouthBuild alumni voice, program feedback, decades of clinical social work experience and evidence-based research. Please take what fits your current needs, based on where you are in the process.

That is the most important part, recognizing that it is natural to go through a grieving process.

Loss is pervasive, we all go through it. Acknowledging that is the first step, getting to a place where you are okay with that is the journey.

It is our hope that the websites, books, infographic, and documentary suggested can be the tools you use to navigate the non-linear stages of grief. These include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.



RESOURCES

Mental Health of America: Finding Positive After a Loss Infographic

<https://www.mhanational.org/finding-positive-after-loss>

Program Integration Opportunity:

Host a movie night discussion and show the Speaking Grief Documentary. Review and plan to use one of the many resources provided:

<https://speakinggrief.org/>

A FEW WEBSITES TO EXPLORE!

What's Your Grief

Modern Loss

The Dougy Center

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE

What is substance abuse?

According to John Hopkins Medicine, substance abuse is described as a pattern of using a substance (drug) that causes significant problems or distress. This may be missing work or school, or using the substance in dangerous situations, such as driving a car. It may lead to substance-related legal problems, or continued substance use that interferes with friendships, family relationships, or both. Substance abuse, as a recognized medical brain disorder, refers to the abuse of illegal substances, such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine, or it may be the abuse of legal substances, such as alcohol, nicotine, or prescription medicines. Alcohol is the most common legal drug of abuse.

Commonly Used Drugs

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Opioids/Pills (Oxycontin, Hydrocodone, Fentanyl, Vicodin, Percocet, Adderall, etc.)
- Cocaine
- Hallucinogens (LSD, Ketamine, Cough syrup, etc.)
- Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth)
- Heroin
- Club Drugs (Ecstasy, Mollys, Special K, etc.)
- Other (K-2, SPICE, Inhalants, etc.)

Prevention & Intervention

Prevention is something that strengthens a person's life in a positive and healthy way and improves one's well-being. Intervention is a deepened focus on providing steps to increase one's safety and to intervene risky behaviors and prevent further risk factors and/or long-term harmful effects of risk.

If you have a YouthBuild program you would like to share this with check out, [Screening Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment \(SBIRT\) and Prevention and Intervention Program](#).

***The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides up-to-date information on tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, mental health and other health-related issues in the United States.**

RESOURCES

[SAMHSA National Helpline](#)
Confidential free help, from public health agencies, for substance use treatment and information.
Hotline 1-800-662-4357

[What is drug addiction?](#)

[Addiction Center](#)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/>

[National Prevention Resources](#)

[Get Help for Substance Abuse](#)

[10 Types of Therapy Used in Addiction Treatment and Recovery](#)

[Alcohol's Effects on Health](#)

[Smoking & Tobacco Use](#)

[What is substance abuse?](#)

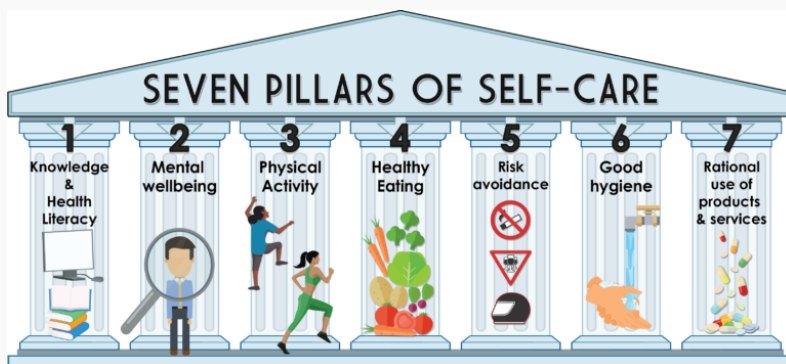
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SELF-CARE AND MINDFULNESS

What is self-care?

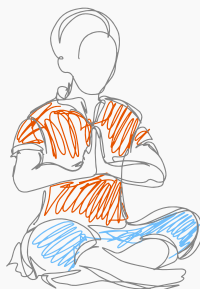
The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) defines self-care as “the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider”.



What is mindfulness?

[Mindfulness.org](#) defines mindfulness as the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, it's not something you have to conjure up, you just have to learn how to access it.



RESOURCES

[Headspace](#)

[Betterhelp](#)

[Local and National Resources](#)

[Worksheet Prioritizing Self-Care](#)

[What is Mindfulness?](#)

[Adolescent and young adult health](#)

[Breathing Practice for Stress](#)

[The Seven Pillars of Self-care](#)

[What do we mean by self-care?](#)

[How Do I Start Therapy?](#)

[The Foundation of Art and Healing](#)

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HEALTHY LIVING

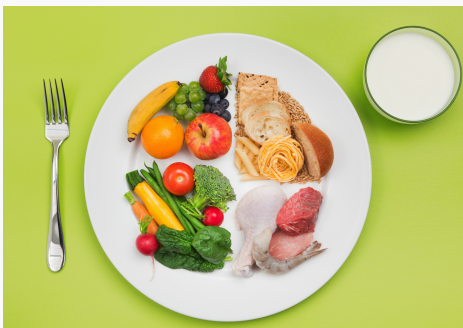
What is healthy living?

To live a healthier lifestyle, you should focus on making small changes to improve things that can affect your physical and mental health, like the foods you eat, how much water you drink, moving your body, and sleeping well. You can make small changes to build good habits that will last over time; do not try to change everything at once. The best changes are the ones that you stick with, no matter how small they may seem.

Food and Nutrition

The foods you eat play an important role in how you feel. Certain foods can make you feel tired or sluggish.

- Eat whole foods full of important nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fiber. This includes; meat and fish (skinless chicken, turkey, and pork, salmon, white fish, lean beef); fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, and canned); dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese); whole grains (oats, whole wheat bread, brown rice, quinoa); nuts and nut butter (peanuts, almonds, cashews); and beans and legumes (dry beans like black and pinto beans, lentils, peanuts). For a balanced diet, eat a variety of foods from all groups with fruits and vegetables of many different colors. To learn more about these food groups, visit MyPlate.gov.
- Limit eating processed and sugary foods. This includes chips, cookies, microwave dinners, desserts, candy, and sugar-sweetened drinks (soda, sports drinks).



***If you have special health conditions or concerns, you should always talk to your doctor before making any lifestyle changes.**

RESOURCES

[Printable Materials on Food](#)

[Healthy Living according to the American Heart Association](#)

[Healthy for Good Infographics](#)

[Explore reliable resources on food, nutrition, physical activity, and food safety to help you build healthy habits.](#)

[Free workouts](#)

[Explore the MyPlate Food Groups](#)

[Mayo Clinic - Healthy Lifestyle](#)

[10 facts on ageing and health](#)

[Find thousands of hiking, biking, and running trails around USA](#)

[Healthy diet](#)

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HEALTHY LIVING

Water Intake



Your body needs water to survive and if you don't get enough, it can make you feel tired and drain your energy. Aim for 8 cups (64 ounces total) a day to start – some people will need more, and some people will need less. In hot and humid weather, or during/after exercise, make sure to drink extra water to make up for the fluids lost through sweat.

Physical Activity



This can include anything from walking and running to yoga and lifting weights—it can even include activities like gardening or working on a construction site. Physical activity is not only great for your heart health, but it can also help you in several other ways: It may increase your energy levels and decrease feelings of depression and anxiety, help you manage stress, and help you sleep better, among other benefits. Try to build up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, to see how it makes you feel. Even small amounts of physical activity like walking to and from the bus stop or car can add up and count toward this goal.

Sleep



Sleep is so important to your mental and physical health, yet it is often overlooked. Think about the many decisions you make each day – isn't it easier to make good decisions when you feel well-rested? Not getting enough sleep can negatively impact your mood, ability to focus, and your decision-making skills, not to mention lead to serious health conditions. To feel your best, make sure to get at least 7 hours of quality sleep every night.

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TRAUMA AND STRESS

What is stress?

According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), stress is how the brain and body respond to any demand. Any type of challenge—such as performance at work or school, a significant life change, or a traumatic event—can be stressful. It is important to pay attention to how you deal with minor and major stressors, so you know when to seek help.



What you should know about stress...

1. Stress affects everyone
2. Not all stress is bad
3. Long-term stress can harm your health
4. There are ways to manage stress
5. If you feel overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional

What is trauma?

[Mental Health America](#) says emotional and psychological [trauma](#) is an emotional response to a distressing event or situation that breaks your sense of security. Traumatic experiences often involve a direct threat to life or safety, but anything that leaves you feeling overwhelmed or isolated can result in trauma. While it's common for most people to deal with fear and anxiety during and immediately after a traumatic event, [everyone's emotional response is unique](#). While some people will naturally recover with time, others may continue to experience trauma and stress-related symptoms.

Common Emotional Symptoms

Shock/disbelief
Fear
Sadness/grief
Helplessness
Guilt
Anger
Shame

Common Physical Symptoms

Dizziness, faintness, shakiness
Rapid breathing and/or heart rate
Racing thoughts
Changes in sleeping patterns
Physical pain (especially stomach and headache)
Loss or increase in appetite
Increased substance use/dependence

RESOURCES

[Understanding Trauma And PTSD](#)

[5 Things You Should Know About Stress](#)

[Adapting to Trauma and Stress](#)

[Dealing with Anger and Frustration](#)

[Is it stress or anxiety?](#)

[Stress Screener](#)

[Books on Trauma written by Alumnus,
Faron Brinkley](#)

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COVID-19

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on the mental health of people of all ages, and now more than ever it is critical to reduce the stigma around mental health struggles that commonly prevents individuals from seeking help." (Mental Health America)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention shared the below information on COVID-19, how to stop the spread, what to do if you are sick, and symptoms you should look for.

Important Ways to Slow the Spread

- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth to help protect yourself and others.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others who don't live with you.
- Get a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

What to Do If You're Sick

- Stay home except to get medical care. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider and get tested.
- Isolate yourself from others, including those living in your household, to prevent spread to them and the people that they may have contact with, like grandparents.
- Call 911 if you are having emergency warning signs, like trouble breathing, pain or pressure in chest.

What Symptoms to Watch For

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Fever | • Loss of taste or smell |
| • Cough | • Sore throat |
| • Headaches | • Nausea |
| • Fatigue | • Diarrhea |
| • Muscle or body aches | |

Other symptoms are signs of serious illness. If someone has trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure, or difficulty staying awake, get medical care immediately.

RESOURCES

[Vaccines for COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 Testing Overview](#)

[Viral Test for Covid-19 video](#)

[COVID-19 Resources for YouthBuild Programs](#)

[YouthBuild Student and Staff Well-Being](#)

[Grief and COVID-19](#)

[Grief and Loss](#)

[People with Certain Medical Conditions](#)

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