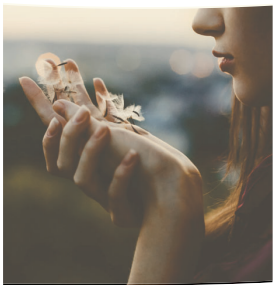


# Help &

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MONTCALM & IONIA COUNTIES



## 2025 MENTAL HEALTH

# Resource Guide

**DAILY NEWS**

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# It's Life, Not Dirty Laundry

I've heard the saying many times in my career – the idea that seeking help for mental health conditions is like “airing your dirty laundry.” As though struggling with grief, anxiety or depression is a permanent stain on your person. From my own experience, I know this is not true. Mental health challenges don't define us, they're simply a part of life.



**Tammy Warner**  
Executive Director  
Montcalm Care Network

Unfortunately, the stigma of mental health is so widespread and so powerful, it stops us in our tracks, preventing us from doing something as simple as confiding in a friend or seeking out help. So long as we allow stigma to remain, our families, friends, neighbors and communities will silently struggle.

In order to breakdown stigma, we need to understand what stigma represents:

## 1. Fear of Judgment

Some people worry that sharing our mental health struggles will make others see us as weak, flawed, or broken. We often see mental health issues portrayed in a negative light, making it seem like something to be ashamed of rather than a normal part of life. This fear of judgment can make us reluctant to open up or seek support.

## 2. Misunderstanding of Mental Health

There remains a widespread lack of understanding about mental health, which leads to misconceptions. People might equate seeking therapy or support with being “crazy” or having an inherently “bad” or “dirty” problem that we should

keep hidden. This is often fueled in the media with portrayals that tend to exaggerate or misrepresent mental illness.

## 3. Perceived Lack of Control

Some people feel that asking for help is admitting we can't handle our own problems or that we are losing control. This can feel as though it is a personal failure or something to be ashamed of, rather than an empowering step toward healing.

## 4. Fear of Being Defined by Our Struggles

Some people worry that by admitting to having mental health struggles, others may only see us through the lens of that issue. We might fear being labeled or treated differently for having mental health challenges, which makes us hesitant to seek help.

The more we talk about mental health, the more we eliminate the stigma, and the closer we come to accepting the importance and necessity of caring for our mental health and wellbeing. We can do this by educating others, sharing our personal stories, and showing compassion to those who are struggling.

Wishing you all the best,



**montcalm**  
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If you are experiencing mental health struggles, you can reach out to Montcalm Care Network for help in connecting with a mental health provider in your area and that accepts your insurance. If you don't have health insurance, Montcalm Care Network can help with that too. Please call 989-831-7520, toll free 800-377-0974, or online at [www.montcalmcare.net](http://www.montcalmcare.net). For residents of Ionia County, please contact The Right Door at 888-527-1790 or online at [www.rightdoor.org](http://www.rightdoor.org).



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**DAILY**  
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A MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MONTCALM CARE NETWORK AND THE DAILY NEWS

# Navigating and Reducing Anxiety in an Uncertain World

In today's world, it's easy to feel anxious with all the news about politics, the economy, and global problems. The changes happening in our country and around the world can make us feel nervous or unsure about what is coming next. While we cannot control everything that happening around us, we can take steps to manage how we respond to these challenges and reduce anxiety.

## 1. Focus on What You Can Control

A great way to feel less anxious is to focus on what you can control. While big events around the world might seem scary, try to focus on small things you can do. For example, you can help in your community, vote, or support causes that are important to you. Talking with others in a respectful way, especially when you disagree, can help you feel less helpless during times of division. When we focus on things we can influence, it helps us feel more in charge.

## 2. Limit Exposure to News and Social Media

The constant news about crises and challenges can make anxiety worse. News stories and social media often focus on the most extreme or scary parts of what's happening. It can be helpful to limit how much news you watch or how much time you spend on social media. Try looking for balanced news sources that focus on solutions and positive stories. Giving your mind a break from negative news can help you feel more at ease.

## 3. Practice Mindfulness and Self-Care

Anxiety often comes from overthinking or imagining the worst possible outcome. Practicing mindfulness like doing deep breathing exercises, meditation, or simply paying attention to what's happening right now, can help you feel calmer. Regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating healthy foods are

also important for feeling strong and able to handle stress. These habits help us stay resilient and better cope with outside pressures.

## 4. Connect with Others

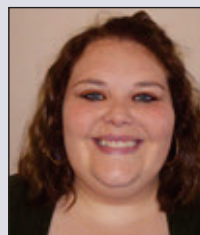
When we feel anxious, it can be easy to feel alone, but talking to friends, family, or others who can understand help us feel better. Sharing your feelings with someone you trust can make you feel heard and less isolated. Sometimes, joining together with others to help in your community, volunteer, or support a cause can give you a sense of hope and purpose. Being part of a group can help reduce the feeling of helplessness that often comes with uncertainty.

## 5. Take Action for the Future

Even when the world feels unpredictable, remember that small actions add up over time. Learning about the things that matter to you and taking action whether its voting, helping in your community, or supporting a cause can bring a sense of control. Knowing that your efforts, no matter how small, can make a difference gives you hope for the future.

## Conclusion

In a world that's always changing, its important to take care of ourselves and find ways to stay calm and hopeful. By managing anxiety and focusing on what we can control, we can face challenges and even make the world a better place. While the future may seem uncertain, we can find peace withing ourselves and work together to create a kinder, more connected world.



**Audrey Fleming,**  
*MCN Prevention Outreach Specialist*

To learn more about mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing, and being present in the moment through grounding use these QR codes below:

### WHY MINDFULNESS IS A SUPERPOWER



### 5-MINUTE MEDITATION



### A GROUNDING EXERCISE



### MINDFUL BREATHING EXERCISE



## — Who to Call —

There are several mental health providers in the area, but it can be intimidating to find the right one.

Here are some tips:

Check with your primary care provider. They may have mental health services available.

If you're comfortable, ask your friends and family for their recommendations. Perhaps they have had experience with a particular practice.

Call your insurance company. They can explain your benefits to you and give you a list of providers that accept your insurance.

Contact your local community mental health agency. As the Community Mental Health provider for Montcalm County, Montcalm Care Network is available to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis intervention and connects people to providers to meet their mental health needs. Call 989- 831-7520 or 1-800-377-0974 for assistance.

Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Hotline to connect to a trained crisis counselor.

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# 3 Ways People Can **Boost** Their **Mental Health** Every Day

**M**ental health issues have garnered considerable attention in recent years, but the scope of the global mental health crisis may be even greater than people realize. A recent study co-led by researchers at Harvard Medical School and the University of Queensland that was published in The Lancet Psychiatry in fall 2023 concluded that one out of every two people in the world will develop a mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime. That makes mental health disorders a more common problem than cancer, heart disease and other physical ailments that tend to garner more attention than mental health issues.

Anyone experiencing mental health issues is

urged to speak with a medical professional who specializes in such areas. Mental health issues may not manifest with symptoms like broken bones that common sense suggests require the assistance of a licensed medical professional, but that does not mean issues affecting the mind or a person's outlook do not require the help of someone trained to deal with them. Much like people can heal from a broken bone after seeing a medical professional, individuals confronting mental health issues have much to gain from working with a mental health specialist.

A 2021 study from the United Kingdom-based Mental Health Foundation published in the American Journal of Health Promotion found

29 strategies people can employ to protect their mental health. The study considered mental health research and the views of mental health experts, but also input from the general public regarding ways they confront mental health issues. It's important that anyone dealing with mental health issues not conflate these strategies with treatment. Though they can help protect mental health, they should be seen as a supplement to treatment overseen by a licensed mental health professional. A rundown of the 29 strategies can be found at [mentalhealth.org.uk](http://mentalhealth.org.uk), but the following are three recommendations that anyone can apply in their daily lives.

**1 Spend more time in nature.**

The calming effects of nature have been noted for centuries, if not longer. The American Psychological Association notes that spending time in nature benefits both physical and psychological well-being in humans. Perhaps that's one reason why participants in the MHF study reported walks in nature was their preferred way to cope with stress stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The Japanese practice of forest bathing has been noted for its positive effects on mental health, but even those without ready access to wooded areas should know that simply spending more time outdoors each day can positively affect mental health.

**2 Avoid using drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism.**

The MHF notes that any relief offered by drugs and alcohol is temporary and can even exacerbate existing mental health issues. The American Addiction Centers reports that coping mechanisms are compulsions or habits formed over time that serve to help people manage particular situations or issues, including stress. However, the AAC also notes that not all coping mechanisms are beneficial and some, including drug and alcohol use, are maladaptive and destructive. After a particularly stressful day, or during times when people are experiencing anxiety and/or depression, avoid looking at drugs or alcohol as means to coping.

**3 Get enough sleep.**

The MHF notes that adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. Some may see seven hours or more per night as a luxury, but it's important that such an outlook changes. The Columbia University Department of Psychiatry notes that there is now robust evidence to support a link between sleep and mental health. Insufficient or even poor sleep has been found to increase negative emotional responses to stressors. Perhaps even more noteworthy is that poor or insufficient sleep decreases positive emotions. So it's vital to recognize the important role that adequate, good-quality sleep has on mental health.

These are just a handful of approaches individuals can take to boost their mental health each day.



*Spending time in nature has been found to be beneficial to psychological well-being.*

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# What Parents Should Know About Mental Health Issues and Children

**M**ental health issues were once stigmatized to such an extent that many people dealing with problems like anxiety and depression felt uncomfortable speaking about them or even seeking help. Though some may still find it difficult to acknowledge their mental health issues, society has made great strides in regard to destigmatizing mental health conditions and recognizing how common such problems are.

Parents may be surprised to learn that many mental health issues begin in childhood. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders, depression and other mood disorders can start to develop long before children leave for college. Recognition of that reality may compel parents to learn more about children and mental health, including signs of potential issues and how to determine if certain behaviors are indicative of a burgeoning issue or a part of normal development.

## Identifying mental health issues in children

The NIMH notes the difficulty in distinguishing between behaviors that are a normal part of a child's development and those that suggest a potential mental health problem. Parents know that children's behaviors and emotions can be challenging to deal with, but that's often a normal part of a child's development that youngsters outgrow with age. The NIMH notes that time is a potential indicator of a mental health problem, and encourages parents to seek help if a child's challenging behavior or emotions persist for weeks or longer. Kids will not outgrow negative behaviors overnight, but persistent problems that extend for weeks or months could be indicative of something beyond normal developmental hurdles.

Behaviors and emotions that cause distress for a child or the child's family are another potential indicator of a mental health issue. In addition, behaviors or emotions that interfere with a child's ability to function, be it at school or at home or among friends, may indicate the presence of a mental health issue.

## Is an evaluation really necessary?

The aforementioned stigma associated with mental health issues may make even the most well-intentioned parents hesitant to seek an evaluation. But evaluations can set children on a path to improved mental health, and it's worth reminding parents that issues like anxiety and depression are quite common and nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, a large-scale 2023 study published in the journal *The Lancet Psychiatry* found that one out of every two people in the world will develop a mental health disorder in their lifetime. Evaluation is one of the initial steps toward overcoming mental health issues, and children may exhibit different signs that an evaluation is necessary based on their age. For example, the NIMH notes that young children who often seem fearful or worried and those who have frequent tantrums or are irritable much of the time may benefit from a mental health evaluation. Older children who engage in self-harm behaviors or those who diet or exercise excessively can benefit from an evaluation. Additional age-based indicators that an evaluation may be necessary can be found at [nimh.nih.gov](http://nimh.nih.gov).

## What if signs suggestive of mental health issues are present?

The NIMH advises parents to be proactive if they notice signs of mental health issues in their children. Parents can begin by contacting their child's teacher and asking how the child behaves in school, both in the classroom and on the playground. A child's pediatrician also can be a valuable resource. Share the particular behavior(s) or emotion(s) that are causing concern with the child's pediatrician. The pediatrician may note if the behavior is part of normal development or may recommend a mental health professional to further address the issue.



Many mental health issues begin in childhood. Parents can keep an eye out for indicators of mental health issues and work with their children's health care providers to determine the best course of action.

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# The Impact of Loneliness on Mental Health and the Importance of Connections

In this interconnected digital world, many people are surprisingly feeling more isolated than ever. Research shows that loneliness—the feeling of being disconnected from others—can significantly affect psychological and physical well-being. Humans are social creatures who thrive in nurturing relationships, and it is important to understand the role of social connections in mental wellness.

## — The Mental Health Effects of Loneliness —

Loneliness is more than just a feeling—it can take a heavy toll on mental health. Lengthy periods of loneliness are linked to numerous psychological issues, including:

**Depression:** Loneliness can worsen feelings of sadness and hopelessness, making it difficult to cope with life's challenges.

**Anxiety:** Chronic loneliness can increase anxiety, particularly social anxiety, which makes it harder to form new relationships.

**Increased Stress:** Social isolation can increase stress levels,

leading to the release of cortisol, a stress hormone; which can contribute to mood disorders.

**Cognitive Decline:** Lack of social interaction has been linked to difficulties with concentration, memory, and decision-making, especially in older adults, increasing the risk of conditions like dementia.

**Low Self-esteem:** Loneliness can wear down self-worth and worsen negative feelings about oneself, making individuals feel unlovable and disconnected from others.

## — The Power of Connection —

The benefits of strong social connections extend beyond just reducing loneliness; they can support resilience and mental health in significant ways. Healthy connections can:

**Provide Emotional Support:** Talking to others helps manage stress and improves emotional resilience.

**Foster a Sense of Belonging:** Feeling part of a community provides a sense of purpose and security, which are essential for mental well-being.

**Improve Mood:** Social interaction releases neurotransmitters like dopamine and oxytocin, which regulate emotions and increase positive feelings.

**Relieve Stress:** Engaging in relationships offsets life's stressors and helps build long-term resilience.

**Boost Self-worth:** Positive social interactions improve self-esteem, helping individuals feel seen and valued.

## — Overcoming Loneliness: Building Connections —

Overcoming loneliness requires effort. Here are some simple steps to build meaningful connections:

**Reach Out:** Initiate contact with family, friends, or coworkers. Small gestures like texting or scheduling regular check-ins can help against isolation.

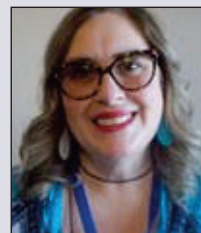
**Join Groups:** Engage in activities that go along with personal

interests, such as hobbies or volunteer work, to meet like-minded people.

**Seek Professional Help:** Therapy can help navigate persistent loneliness and improve social skills.

**Practice Self-compassion:** Building a positive relationship with oneself improves the ability to connect with others.

When feelings of loneliness create uneasiness, it is important to remember there is power in meaningful connections. Social relationships serve as a protective factor, providing emotional support, boosting self-esteem, and offering opportunities for growth and resilience. By seeking connection, individuals can lessen the effects of loneliness and gain resilience, leading to healthier and more fulfilling lives.



**Wendi L. Brownson, MA, LLPC**  
Outpatient Therapist,  
Montcalm Care Network



# Self-care Strategies to Protect Long-term Mental Health

**M**ental health has always been important, but the need for people to prioritize their emotional, psychological and social well-being gained greater attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing restrictions designed to reduce cases of COVID-19 contributed to feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety in millions of individuals across the globe, sparking a heightened sense of curiosity about what people can do to safeguard their mental health in the short-term but also over the course of their lives.

Pandemic-related restrictions have long since been lifted throughout much of the world. But the need to prioritize mental health remains. The National Institute of Mental Health notes that self-care can play a vital role in maintaining mental health. With that in mind, individuals can consider these strategies as they look to safeguard their mental health over the long haul.

- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise benefits the body in myriad ways, and those benefits extend to mental health. The NIMH reports that a 30-minute daily walk can boost mood. In addition, the United Kingdom-based Mental Health Foundation reports that regular physical activity positively affects self-esteem and can even lead to a reduction in stress and anxiety. That's important to note, as the online medical resource Healthline reports

that chronic anxiety can adversely affect the body's nervous, cardiovascular, digestive, immune, and respiratory systems.

- **Maintain social connections.** The NIMH also touts the benefits of maintaining social connections, including relying on friends and family for emotional support and practical help. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that people who are socially connected and maintain stable and supportive relationships are more likely to have better mental health outcomes than those who don't.

- **Eat a nutritious, balanced diet.** The American Society for Nutrition notes that diet can be an important ally for people looking to improve and preserve their mental health. Numerous studies have examined the relationship between diet and mental health, and the ASN notes a growing body of research suggests a strong connection between a healthy diet and mental health. A 2019 review published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that increased consumption of fruits and vegetables positively affects psychological health. That same review also indicated daily

vegetable consumption provides a therapeutic effect that can help to reduce symptoms among people with clinical depression.

- **Resolve to read more.** Much like exercise, reading has been linked to a host of positive health outcomes, including mental health benefits. A 2009 study from researchers at the University of Sussex found that reading can reduce stress by as much as 68 percent. Escapism is another potentially potent benefit of reading, as a recent report in Psychology Today noted that researchers believe narrative absorption, which refers to the experience of being immersed or engaged while reading a story, provides an escape or opportunity for mental reflection.

Self-care can go a long way toward promoting long-term mental health. Various strategies and activities fall under the umbrella of self-care, and each can have a profound and lasting effect on mental health.

**"SELF-CARE CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD PROMOTING LONG-TERM MENTAL HEALTH."**



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# Did You Know?

Data from the United States Department of Health and Human Services indicates nearly one in two adolescents has had a mental health disorder at some point in their lives. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, one in five Canadian children and youth will experience mental illness. The World Health Organization reports that anxiety disorders, which can involve panic or excessive worry, are the most prevalent mental health issues among adolescents. In fact, data from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation indicates about 4 percent of the world's 10- to 14-year-olds and 5.5 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds across the globe will experience an anxiety disorder.



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# — FAMILY LIVING —

## Helping Children Develop Healthy Device and Media Habits

(STATEPOINT)

**W**hat are TikTok's privacy settings? Can parents control what advertising their children see on Facebook? How do parents limit the amount of time their children spend on Instagram?

A new parent tool, the Glossary of Digital Media Platforms, offers the answers and will be handy for parents of children trying out new phones or other tech-related holiday gifts. The American Academy of Pediatrics Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health developed the free resource, which contains detailed information on popular digital platforms, including Apple, Discord, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok and X, with more to come.

"Parenting around media can be so challenging," said Jenny Radesky, MD, FAAP, co-medical director of the Center of Excellence. "Figuring out what apps and settings are best for your family is an important part of the

conversation. At the center, we created the Glossary of Digital Media Platforms to make it a little easier for parents to learn about each app and figure out what settings and tools exist to keep their kid safe while connecting online."

Users click on a platform to learn about its default and customizable safety settings; messaging and friending controls; screen-time management settings; parental controls and more.

Parents aren't the only ones looking for assistance when it comes to the online world. Pediatric providers, teachers and others who work with children and teens can introduce the glossary briefly during clinic visits, back-to-school nights, in newsletters, or other communications and encourage families to have conversations about safe and balanced relationships with social media. The tool can also facilitate conversations on concepts like private versus public accounts, time limits and how to block or filter upsetting content.

parent to approve purchases.

- If social media and notifications are distracting teens at night, families can use the glossary to look up apps and how to silence notifications or activate other nighttime settings.
- For teens who are stressed out by negative content on social media feeds, the glossary contains information on tools to curate feeds and block and filter content.
- If a child's school has a phone policy, families can look up device or app settings to silence distracting apps during school hours.

The glossary joins a roster of resources available at Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health, which includes conversation starters for parents concerned about how their children are using social media. The center's activity cards can help young children build healthy relationships with media and their devices before they grow into teens and young adults.

Here are some examples of how the glossary can be used:

- If children have iPhones, parents can learn more about the Family Sharing feature, which includes settings to limit who a child can contact, downtime/do-not-disturb settings and the Ask To Buy option that requires a

Megan Moreno MD, MSEd, MPH, FAAP, co-medical director of the Center of Excellence, urges parents and other adults to avoid taking a doom-and-gloom approach when talking about the sometimes-dangerous social media landscape with kids.

"We can give ourselves grace for these initial reactions of worry and fear, but we have a choice to make on what we want our reaction to be going forward," Dr. Moreno said. "We can choose open-mindedness. We can choose curiosity. We can choose evidence over hype, and we can stay centered on our children and families."

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# What to Know About Bipolar Disorder

The World Health Organization reports that tens of millions of individuals across the globe are living with bipolar disorder. Despite that prevalence, many people still have misconceptions about bipolar disorder, including the notable but false notion that the condition and schizophrenia are one and the same. A greater understanding of bipolar disorder can help the millions of people who have it and may compel others to seek treatment that can be highly effective.

## What is bipolar disorder?

The WHO notes bipolar disorder is a mental health condition in which mood swings from one extreme to another are the primary characteristic. Bipolar episodes may be manic or depressive, and each has its own unique characteristics. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health reports that a person with bipolar disorder may experience “mixed” episodes, which include symptoms of both manic and depressive episodes. When a person is having an episode, the symptoms last a week or two, or even longer, and are present every day for most of the day.

## What is a manic episode?

A manic episode is characterized by a person experiencing an extremely high mood. The NIMH notes that symptoms of a manic episode may include:

- Feeling very up, high, elated, or extremely irritable or touchy
- Feeling wired and more active than usual
- Racing thoughts
- Feeling a decreased need for sleep
- Speaking rapidly about various subjects, which the NIMH notes can be characterized as “flight of ideas”
- Excessive appetite for food, drinking, sex, or other pleasurable activities
- A feeling that one can do many things at once without growing tired
- Feeling unusually important, talented or powerful



## What is a depressive episode?

The WHO notes that a depressive episode is contrary to a manic episode and marked by a depressed mood that makes people feel sad, irritable and/or empty. People experiencing a depressive episode may lack interest in or get little pleasure from activities they previously enjoyed. According to the NIMH, additional symptoms of a depressive episode include:

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Changes in sleep patterns, including difficulty falling asleep, waking up too early, or sleeping too much
- Speaking slowly, feeling unable to find anything to say, or frequent bouts of forgetfulness
- Inability to perform even simple tasks
- Feeling hopeless or worthless or thinking about death or suicide

## Are symptoms the same for everyone?

The NIMH notes that symptoms of bipolar disorder may be milder for some than others. That’s an important distinction, particularly for people with a family history of bipolar disorder. The NIMH notes that the exact cause of bipolar disorder is unknown, but research has shown that people with certain genes are more likely to develop the condition than others. But just because a relative exhibited symptoms in a certain way does not mean an individual will show signs in the same way.

## How is bipolar disorder diagnosed?

A health care provider will consider the severity, length and frequency of an individual’s symptoms and experiences after conducting a physical exam to rule out other illnesses. A referral to a mental health professional also is standard before a diagnosis of bipolar disorder is made.

Bipolar disorder affects tens of millions of people across the globe. Treatment for the condition is highly effective, and individuals exhibiting symptoms of bipolar disorder are urged to speak with a health care professional.

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**LIFELINE**

PEP23-23-08-03-002

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## Tips to Foster Positive Attitudes in Kids

**G**reat parents provide children with tools to help them grow and develop into successful adults. These tools often include healthy meals on the table, opportunities to hang out and socialize with friends, a good education, a feeling of safety and security, and much more. Yet some parents may overlook another key resource that could lead to a happier and more successful life: positivity.

According to Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership, a positive attitude is an important attribute for children to develop and maintain. A positive mindset can help kids feel more confident and capable. A positive attitude also may assist kids when they're faced with adversity and stressful situations. Some people are naturally glass-half-full types, while others may need a little reassurance to embrace a positive attitude. A positive attitude is marked by optimism, enthusiasm and a sense of possibility.

A child does not need to brim with positivity all of the time. Sadness, shame and guilt can help individuals process difficult times and show they are human. A pressure to think positively all of the time and be constantly cheerful can turn happiness into a burden, according to Danish psychologist and researcher Svend Brinkmann. Rather, parents can teach kids to accept all emotions and process them in healthy ways while encouraging positive thinking. Here are some ideas for getting started.

- **Help others.** Helping others through volunteerism can help children learn to associate doing positive things with feeling good about oneself. It is hard for children to be in a bad mood when they see the smiles on the faces of people on the receiving end of their compassion and support.

**“PARENTS CAN TEACH KIDS TO ACCEPT ALL EMOTIONS AND PROCESS THEM IN HEALTHY WAYS WHILE ENCOURAGING POSITIVE THINKING.”**

- **Be a good role model.** Children learn many behaviors from watching and listening to their parents. Children who see Mom and Dad bouncing back from setbacks and exhibiting a willingness to give things another try are more likely to do the same.

- **Brainstorm other options.** Children tend to see things in black and white. The adults in their lives can help them

see ways around obstacles rather than just throwing in the towel. One option is to set small goals that are achievable so they can celebrate small successes rather than aiming entirely for the end goal.

- **Surround oneself with positive messaging.** Listening to music, reading books or watching movies with positive messages can reinforce positive affirmations and thoughts. It's easier to maintain a positive attitude when that's all you know.

- **Practice affirmations as a family.** Life throws challenges at everyone, but some supportive words along the way can make all the difference. Big Life Journal, which offers tools for parents, teachers and counselors to help kids grow up confident, says affirmations like “I am enough” or “I am kind” can change attitudes. And everyone should remember failing is not always a negative. Failure can be the first step toward learning an important lesson.

Fostering a positive mindset in children may take a little time, but it can be achieved and ultimately pay numerous dividends.

# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS FOR YOUTH

You Are Not Alone



## It's time to take action if you notice these signs in family or friends:

- 1 Talking about or making plans for suicide.
- 2 Expressing hopelessness about the future.
- 3 Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress.
- 4 Showing worrisome changes in behavior, particularly in combination with the warning signs above, including significant:
  - Withdrawal from or changing social connections/situations.
  - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased).
  - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context.
  - Recent increased agitation or irritability.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available.

Text or call 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org), or reach out to a mental health professional.

**988** | SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE

PEP24-988-017

# SAFETY PLANS WORK

There is Hope.



**1** Write 3 warning signs that a crisis may be developing.

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**2** Write 3 internal coping strategies that can take your mind off your problems.

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**3** Who/What are 3 people or places that provide distraction?  
(Write name/place and phone numbers)

_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____

**4** Who can you ask for help? (Write name/place and phone numbers)

_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____

**5** Professionals or agencies you can contact during a crisis:

Clinician \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Local Urgent Care or Emergency Department:

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Text or call 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)**

**6** Write out a plan to make your environment safer.  
(Write 2 things)

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**988**  
SUICIDAL & CRISIS  
LIFELINE

Modified from Stanley & Brown (2021)

PEP24-08-03-007



## Los planes de seguridad funcionan

Hay esperanza.



- 1. Escribe 3 señales de alerta que indiquen que una crisis de salud mental puede estar desarrollándose.**

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- 2. Escribe 3 estrategias internas que te ayuden a enfrentar y a dejar de pensar en tus problemas.**

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- 3. Escribe el nombre de 3 personas o lugares que te proporcionen distracción.** (Escribe el nombre de la persona o del lugar y los números de teléfono)

\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. ¿A quién le puedes pedir ayuda?** (Escribe los nombres y los números de teléfono)

\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Profesionales o agencias que puedes contactar durante una crisis de salud mental:**

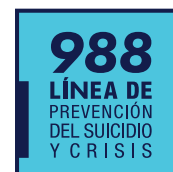
Médico: \_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
Centro local de atención de urgencias o emergencias:  
Dirección \_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono \_\_\_\_\_  
Llama o textea al 988 o chatea en 988lineadevida.org

- 6. Escribe un plan para que tu alrededor (social y físico) sea más seguro** (Escribe 2 cosas)

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Modificado de Stanley y Brown (2021)



PEP23-08-03-006

# WIC Offers an Array of Services

Contact the Ionia County Health Department to learn if you qualify

TIM MCALLISTER

tmcallister@thedailynews.cc

**I**ONIA — WIC (Women, Infants & Children) is a U.S. government-funded program that allows local agencies to prevent malnutrition in low-income mothers and their kids under five.

The WIC program provides free supplemental food to pregnant women and mothers of young children, including cereal, milk, cheese, eggs, whole grains, peanut butter, beans, fruits, vegetables and juice.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are generally eligible for WIC, as well as women who recently had a baby or who have children younger than 5 years of age.

“A lot of people think of WIC and they think of infant formula, but we provide supplemental nutrition to children up to their fifth birthday,” explained Ionia County Health Department Personal Health Director Aimee Feehan, who runs the local WIC program. “That is very beneficial for their growth and development.

The human brain does its most growing between birth and age three. Some people get, like, five gallons of milk a month, which can be great for them, because milk’s not cheap.”

WIC was created in 1972 and made permanent in 1975. It’s part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and serves an estimated 53% of all newborns in the country. (fns.usda.gov/wic/partner/about)

“It’s not Medicaid-dependent, but if the infant or child is on Medicaid, they automatically qualify for WIC,” Feehan said. “If a person is not on Medicaid, then we look at income, because it’s income-based.”

To apply for WIC, call the Ionia County Health Department at (616) 527-5337 or the statewide agency at 1-800-26-BIRTH.

“Our income guidelines are looser than Medicaid,” Feehan noted. “A lot of times, people think they can’t qualify for WIC because they’ve been denied Medicaid, but our income guidelines are different.”

The WIC clinic is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of each month to accommodate different work schedules. It is otherwise open from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The clinic is located at the Health Department at 175 E. Adams St. in Ionia.

During an appointment, the mother’s iron level is tested and her height and weight taken down. She then meets with a registered dietitian to go over her specific nutritional requirements and answer any questions. Common topics include nutrition during pregnancy, infant feeding, nutrition during childhood and wise food shopping.

“Our registered dietitian can do consultations or visits with a high-risk mom, baby or child that has some nutrition



**A WIC shopper uses WIC EBT card for purchase from a vendor at a farmers market in Michigan. — Submitted photo | USDA**

problems,” Feehan said. “We have some kids who need specialized formulas or other special needs, maybe some eating disorders or failure to thrive. The registered dietitian can meet with them and work out nutritional plans and help them along.”

The children are tested for lead, and they can also receive immunizations.

The WIC program is equipped to make referrals based on health screenings that take place at their clinic. These referrals may be for Medicaid, MI-Child, food stamps, immunizations, general health screening, family planning, Project Fresh and so forth.

WIC offers professional nutrition education, including information about breastfeeding from an internationally board-certified lactation consultant on staff.

“When a pregnant woman comes through her visits here, it’s required that they meet with the breastfeeding counselor and have breastfeeding education,” Feehan said. “Not everybody chooses it or is able to do it, and that’s fine. We take them on whatever path they want to be on, but we also want to encourage breastfeeding as much as possible.”

They even have breast pump rentals available to make breastfeeding easier and more convenient.

For more information about WIC or other health department programs, visit [ioniacounty.org/health/wic](http://ioniacounty.org/health/wic) or call (616) 527-5337.

“We are very easy to get ahold of,” Feehan said. “That number goes right to the WIC staff, and it’s very easy to get an appointment scheduled. We’re not very far out. In fact, you could call today and probably get an appointment tomorrow or the next day.”

## Ionia County Health Department

We provide an array of important services, from food safety inspections to substance abuse prevention to Immunizations, to the citizens of Ionia County.

We also provide:

- ◆ Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- ◆ Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention
- ◆ Well & Septic Permits
- ◆ Food Licensing
- ◆ Children’s Special Healthcare & Maternal Infant Health Program
- ◆ STI/HIV & Immunization Clinic
- ◆ Emergency Preparedness

Our focus is squarely on preventing disease, protecting public health and promoting healthy lifestyle choices.



[www.facebook.com/IoniaCountyHD](http://www.facebook.com/IoniaCountyHD)

175 E. Adams Street  
Ionia, MI 48846  
WIC Office: (616) 527-5337  
(616) 527-5341



# Did You Know?

Women should pay careful attention to their physical health, but it's worth noting the importance of tending to one's mental well-being as well. Data concerning women and mental health highlights some eye-opening disparities between women and men. The American Psychiatric Association says each year one in five women in the United States experiences a mental health problem. Twice as many women as men experience depression. In addition, compared with men, women are twice as likely to experience post traumatic stress disorder or anxiety (both generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder). Women also are more likely to attempt suicide than men, but men are four times more likely to die by suicide. Women exhibit higher rates of various mental health disorders than men (rates of impulse control disorders and substance abuse disorders are higher among men than women). It is important to note that many mental health issues can be successfully treated and women should seek the assistance of a mental health professional if they need help.



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# Strategies to Manage and Tame Stress

**S**tress is a part of life. In small doses, stress can have a positive effect. But when stress is chronic, it can take its toll on the body and mind.

Stress can make people irritable and cause them to lash out at others. Stress also can contribute to high blood pressure and adversely affect sleep. When confronting chronic stress, individuals may have to take action to find relief. These stress-busting strategies can help.

- **Engage in physical activity.** The Mayo Clinic says any form of exercise can help relieve stress. Physical activity boosts chemicals in the brain and endorphins that help a person feel good. Exercise also can refocus attention so a person is not preoccupied with a stressful thought or situation.

- **Listen to music.** Music can be calming and serve as a distraction from stressful feelings. Simply listening to music can be a

quick fix for a stressful situation and a bad mood.

- **Review your lifestyle.** It's easy to take on too much, but doing so can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, says the Mental Health Foundation. Prioritizing some things over others and delegating when possible can tame stress.

- **Practice mindfulness.** Breathing and mindfulness exercises can be practiced anywhere. Research has shown that mindfulness can reduce the effects of stress and anxiety. Deep breathing and being in a quiet moment when stress peaks may help to reduce stress.

- **Step away for a few minutes.** If possible, step away from a stressful situation, whether it is a difficult project at work or a loud room with a lot of activity going on. Many people find commuting stressful. Changing the route to one that avoids busy roads, even if it takes



a bit longer to get from point A to point B, might help.

- **Talk it out.** Sometimes connecting with others and sharing experiences can help to relieve stress. Keeping feelings in and fixating on a situation may exacerbate feelings of stress. Social situations that encourage talking and laughing can lighten a person's mental load, says the Mayo Clinic.

- **Don't turn to substances.** Alcohol and drugs may temporarily relieve stress, but this approach can lead to addiction and even worsen the physical and mental toll stress takes on the body.

Stress is a part of life, but finding ways to manage chronic stress is vital to long-term health.

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# Suicide Warning Signs for Adults

Be a Lifeline

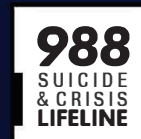


**Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased,  
and if it seems related to a painful  
event, loss, or change.**

- Talking about or making plans for suicide.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

**If you or someone you know is struggling  
or in crisis, help is available.**

**Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org),  
or reach out to a mental health professional.**



PEP23-08-03-001  
3/18/24

# Adults Can Take Action to Prevent Bullying

**M**illions of children wake up every day in fear of harassment. Bullying is an epidemic that can result in humiliation, poor grades, low spirits, and even suicide. In years past, bullying may have ended after kids left the classroom or school grounds, but technology has enabled bullying to follow children home through their devices.

Studies indicate bullying is getting worse. The National Center of Safe Supportive Learning Environments says that, despite a number of school programs designed to decrease bullying, one in five students between the ages of 12 and 18 are bullied every year in the United States. According to 3rd Millennium Classrooms, which offers schools courses on topics like bullying, the most common type of bullying is verbal harassment, followed by social harassment. Cyberbullying now accounts for 25 percent of all bullying.

Bystander intervention, when someone steps in to help, can help to reduce bullying incidents. Intervening in bullying can be a multifaceted process that requires adults know what to do as they seek to safeguard youngsters.

• **Be observant.** Bullying generally happens in areas away from crowds, such as in the bathroom, school buses or via cell phones and computers. Adults need to be vigilant in recognizing that bullying may be taking place. Warning signs of bullying include being afraid to go to school; using excuses to stay home or return home from school; having nightmares; becoming withdrawn; or a decline in academic performance.

• **Be an authoritative parent.** According to Diana Divecha, a developmental psychologist who has counseled families on bullying, an authoritative style of parenting may help. This style offers a high degree of warmth, love and closeness, but also provides clear limits and high expectations with the support necessary to meet those expectations. Children raised in this environment have better mental health and stronger relationship skills.

• **Create a zero-tolerance policy.** Schools can implement strong policies against bullying where students should be able to speak to someone confidentially, and bullies will be investigated and dealt with promptly and effectively.

• **Encourage participation in activities.** Children should be encouraged to do what they enjoy and try out various activities in and out of school. These activities give kids a chance to have fun, let off steam and meet others with similar interests. A strong circle of friends can boost kids' confidence and serve as another defense against bullying.

• **Keep lines of communication open.** When children feel comfortable speaking with their parents, an older sibling or another trusted adult about their feelings, they can express their concerns and seek advice regarding how to address them. This can go a long way toward making children feel better.

• **Cultivate a strong parent-school relationship.** Children benefit the most when there is a strong partnership between schools and families. Schools should foster strong pathways of communication with parents.

Adults can do their part to prevent bullying by embracing various strategies designed to keep youngsters safe and happy.



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