

Vermont Department of Mental Health

MENTAL HEALTH

AWARENESS MONTH

Week Two

May 2020

What is Mental Health Wellness?

Wellness includes any steps we take to stay healthy physically, mentally and emotionally. Taking care of our wellness doesn't mean we will never be sick or depressed. But when we do get sick, we will be stronger and bounce back faster. Wellness comes from positive steps we take today for a better tomorrow.

It is important our children know about wellness, too. We can talk with our children about the effects of substance use, for example. We can also talk about healthy food choices, and why regular exercise is important. We can also make sure our children know that being kind and generous to others is part of health and wellness.

The Umatter Circle of Wellness helps parents promote wellness for their children.

Examples:

Physical health- We can manage diabetes with medication, or we can prevent diabetes with a lifestyle of healthy eating and exercise. That's wellness.

Mental health- We can live with the stress of a bully at school or work, or we can build our ability to cope by practicing mindfulness, learning to be assertive, and getting help. That's wellness.



Knowing Self

A big part of parenting is teaching children to know themselves. Some questions we can talk about with our children are: What makes me angry? How do I handle setbacks? When am I happiest?

Children who can answer questions like these are better able to get help when they need it. They can figure out what they need in the moment and choose how to respond.

Caring for Self

Children need positive strategies for self-care. They might be physically hurt or get sick. They might get angry with a friend, or family member, or feel rejected by a friend. Talking with you or another adult about what they can do to feel better, can help a child cope well. You might ask the child

- What have you done in the past to get through a hard time?
- Who are the adults you trust?
- Do you know where you can get help?
- What helps you?

When children can answer these questions, they are building wellness resources for their future ability to cope and bounce back. This is also known as resilience.

Building a Community of Wellness

The sense of connection that grows through caring for friends strengthens everyone. We all have greater wellness as we build more connections with others. Whether your community is your town, neighborhood, street, or just your family, the health of others in that community affects the wellness of everyone.

As children learn the Circle of Wellness, they begin to see how they can make a difference in the Big Picture for others. Knowing our role as a helper in our community gives us hope for the future.

As an adult in the life of a child, you matter. You can teach that we all matter. And that is a part of wellness.

Caring for My Friends

A good way to care for ourselves is to care for others. The sense of meaning and wellbeing we derive from helping friends, family, and neighbors boosts our own wellness. Children who have learned to share, to understand others' feelings or to ask about the health of others, build their own wellness. When children teach other children, or care for a pet, they build their own wellness. Parents can model and encourage this behavior.

Resources:



**You
Are
Not
Alone**

Available 24/7 – If you need help, text VT to 741741

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
is available 24/7 at 800-273-8255

Dial 2-1-1 to find mental health services in your area

Vermont Peer Support Line – open 24/7
Call or text 833-888-2557



Caring During COVID

It can be challenging enough to be able to care for yourself and others during regular times, let alone during a worldwide pandemic. To help, experts at the Vermont Center for Children, Youth, and Families have compiled some tips and exercises you can try. Remember, physical distancing doesn't have to mean cutting yourself off from others, it just requires new strategies and methods. During this time, people you care about may be especially eager to connect with you. Consider reaching out to them.

http://med.uvm.edu/vccyf/resources_group/resources_for_families