

# MAY 2026 WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

## SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Taking the first step toward getting help with a mental health challenge is often the toughest one to take. This month's theme is about striving, or supporting others, to take that first step. Your mental health affects how you think and feel, handle stress, relate to others, make health choices, and much more. Remember, you don't have to face mental and emotional challenges alone!



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "**Roughly 1 in 5 adults experience a mental health condition each year in the U.S.**" That means millions of people are navigating the same decision to get help.

### MAY FEATURED ARTICLES

#### KEEPING AN EYE ON MENTAL HEALTH

DO I NEED HELP?

ANXIETY REMEDIES

SUICIDE PREVENTION

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

**MONTHLY VIDEO**



# 988

## SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

### ELEVATE YOUR EVERYDAY: ONE HABIT AT A TIME

#### Get Familiar with Your EAP

Most employers offer an employee assistance program designed to help you with both personal and work problems. Make time to learn what your EAP offers.

#### Just Breathe

Try a 2-minute grounding exercise when you need to reset. For longer meditative experiences check out Blue Cross Virtual Well-Being<sup>SM</sup>

### BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT: ACCESS

#### Virtual Mental Health Care

Blue Cross VT members have 24/7 access to virtual mental health care. Click "learn more" below to learn how you can meet virtually with a counselor.

**LEARN MORE**

### BEWELL@WORK WORKSHOP

Join us for "Balanced Thinking: Managing Negative Self-Talk" on May 19th at 11am.



Check out Blue Cross VT Mountain Days to learn more about a free event on May 9th for all Vermonters



# Keeping an eye on mental health

We all have good days and bad days. We all have moments where we feel down or cannot tap into the joy or happiness we once had. But what happens when these days grow into weeks or months? Do you suspect that you or a loved one might be suffering from a mental health issue?



## SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

- Excessive worry or fear
- Feeling excessively sad
- Confused thinking or concentration
- Extreme mood changes
- Prolonged feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding social activities
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Overuse of substances, such as alcohol or drugs
- Thoughts or mentions of suicide
- Intense fear of weight gain or changes in appearance



## WHERE TO GET HELP

Although there is no medical test that can diagnose mental illness, a professional can assess any symptoms and provide the help you or a loved one needs. Using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a professional can identify whether a mental health condition exists. They follow a set list of criteria, including feelings and behaviors and time limits, to make the determination.



## TREATMENT OPTIONS

Every person is different and may not respond to the same treatments as someone else. But a professional may use one or a combination of things to help the person recover. This may include:

- Medication
- Therapy (counseling)
- Lifestyle changes

If you believe someone may need help, call the National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline at 800-950-NAMI (800-950-6264). Or in a crisis, text “NAMI” to 741741.



Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

# My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



## Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



## If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Eating healthy
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.



## Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



## Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies

For help finding treatment, visit [nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](https://nimh.nih.gov/findhelp).

[HOME](#)

If you are in crisis, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org), or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741).



National Institute  
of Mental Health



# 5 things about natural anxiety remedies

Nearly everyone has anxiety at times. Stressful situations and important events can make you feel edgy or anxious.

Sometimes, however, anxiety becomes a health problem. It happens frequently and it interferes with your life. This is called an anxiety disorder. If this happens to you, see your doctor. Treatments can help, including therapy and medications. Don't try natural remedies for an anxiety disorder unless your doctor recommends it.

People who have mild anxiety or occasional stress may look for "natural" or complementary health remedies.



**1. Acupuncture** is a popular natural anxiety treatment. It involves placing thin needles into the top layer of skin in certain points on the body. If you decide to try acupuncture, see a licensed practitioner who uses sterile, single-use needles.

**2. Massage therapy** can be relaxing and can feel good on tight, tense muscles. It may help some people with mild stress or occasional anxiety.



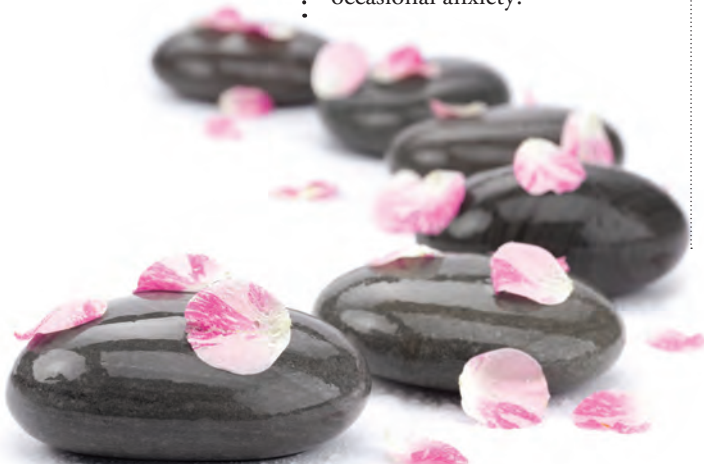
**3. Mindfulness meditation** is a practice of focusing on the present moment. It involves breathing, guided imagery and other methods. It may benefit people who have occasional stress or anxious feelings.

**4. Relaxation techniques** like deep breathing or relaxing music can lower anxiety before stressful events like medical procedures.

**5. Don't try herbs or dietary supplements** without talking to your doctor first. Most of them haven't been proven to help with stress or anxiety. And some can cause health problems or have dangerous interactions with medications.



If you have anxiety or stress, talk with your health care provider. Together, you can find treatments or options that will help you live a healthy life.





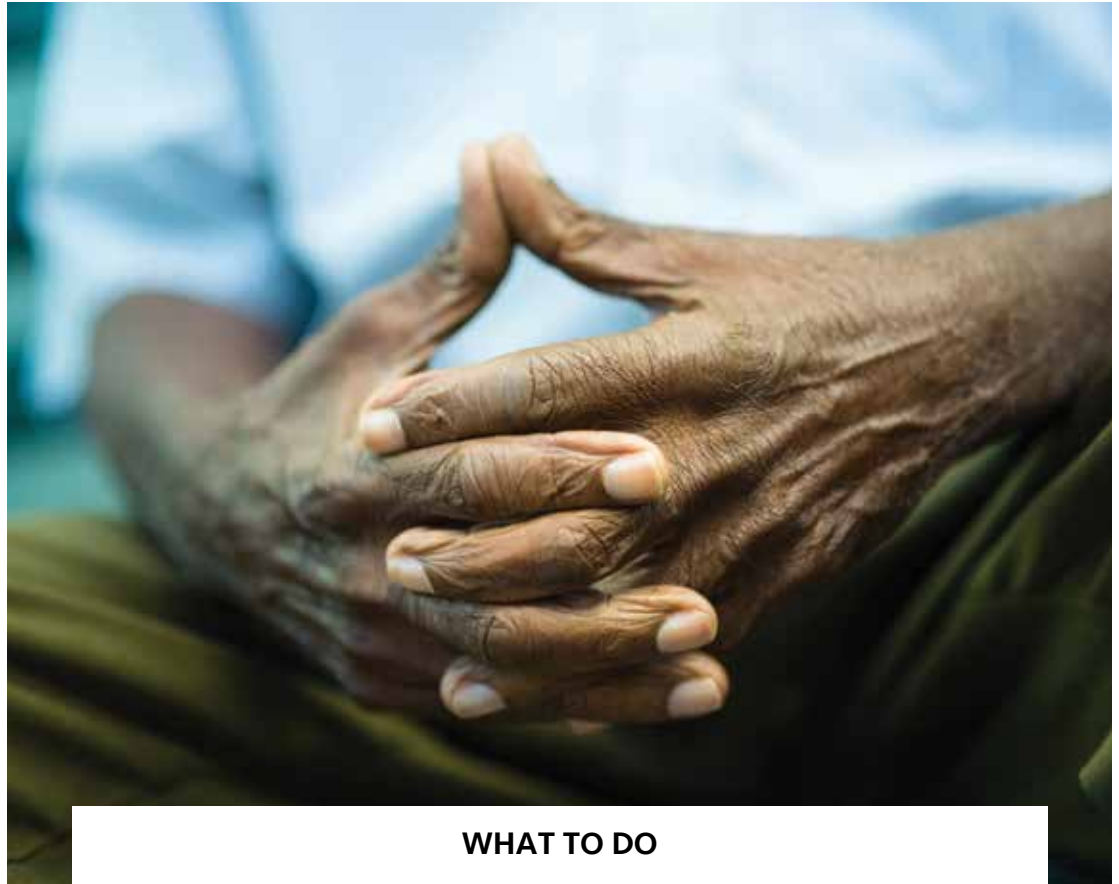
# Suicide: *Signs & getting help*

Everyone can help prevent suicide by knowing the warning signs and how to help.

A person thinking about suicide may have a sudden change in behavior or start saying things they don't normally say. Sometimes, these things happen after a painful event, a loss or a major life change. It also can be due to a brain chemical imbalance. Watch for these possible signs:

- Talk about wanting to die or looking for ways to kill themselves
- Search online about suicide
- Say they feel empty, trapped or hopeless
- Think they are a burden to others
- Avoid family and friends
- Start sleeping too much or not enough
- Eat more or less than usual, have appetite changes
- Talk about death often
- Have major mood swings such as anger, rage, anxiety, shame or sudden relief
- Give away some of their things

If you see even one of these signs, try to help the person or get them help.



## WHAT TO DO

If you think someone might be thinking about suicide:

- **Ask them if they are thinking of suicide or harming themselves.** Studies show that asking this question does not “put thoughts in their head.”
- **Listen.** Let them talk about how they are feeling.

- **Try to get them away from things that could harm them.** If possible, get them away from weapons, substances or other things that could be used to commit suicide.
- **Connect them with helpful people.** Maybe a family member, friend, spiritual advisor or mental health professional can help.

- **Get expert help.** Have the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number in your phone: 988. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For deaf/hard of hearing TYY users, use your preferred relay service or call 711 then 1-800-273-8255.
- **Keep in touch with them.** If the person receives treatment, follow up with them afterward.

**If the person is actively trying to commit suicide or has already tried, call 9-1-1 immediately.**



## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

### WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

On average,  
**130**  
people die by  
suicide every day.

Source: American Foundation  
for Suicide Prevention

From 1999 to 2019,  
**841,000**  
people died from  
drug overdoses.

Source: Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

Nearly  
**1 IN 5**  
in the U.S. lives  
with a mental illness.

Source: National Institute  
of Mental Health

### WHO NEEDS TO KNOW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- Employers.
- Police officers.
- Hospital staff.
- First responders.
- Caring individuals.

### WHAT IT COVERS

- Common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- How to interact with a person in crisis.
- How to connect a person with help.
- Expanded content on trauma, substance use and self-care.

### THREE WAYS TO LEARN

- **In-person** – Learners will receive their training as an 8-hour, Instructor-led, in-person course.
- **Blended** – Learners complete a 2-hour, self-paced online course, and participate in a 4.5- to 5.5-hour, Instructor-led training. This Instructor-led Training can be:
  - » A video conference.
  - » An in-person class.

### Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L**isten nonjudgmentally.
- G**ive reassurance and information.
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help.
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.

#### Sources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (n.d.). *Suicide statistics*.  
<https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.) *Drug overdose deaths*.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (n.d.). *Mental illness*.  
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

**HOME**