

# Mental Health Awareness Month: Let's Focus on Youth



How can young people take charge of their mental health **physically**?

- **Getting enough sleep.** The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has recommended that children ages 6–12 yrs sleep 9–12 hrs/night and teenagers ages 13–18 yrs should sleep 8–10 hrs/night.
- **Mental wellness is greatly impacted by physical activity.** Get regular exercise, go for a walk and get fresh air. Engage in a sport, game or activity that involves movement.
- **Healthy hygiene.** Look good, smell good, and feel good. Bathe routinely, try a new soap, or discover a new hair style. Good hygiene also prevents illness, so wash hands often.
- **Healthy eating.** Avoid carbs and sugars which may lead to feeling sluggish and slow you down. For more energy, eat light healthy foods with lots of fruits, vegetables and protein.

How can young people take charge of their mental health **mentally**?

- **Strengthen your mental health by being prepared.** Make a “Go To” list of things that help you feel less stressed when the unexpected happens, then use it! Deep breathing, listening to music, going for a walk or talking to a Mentor are quick and easy stress reducers when the moment hits.
- **Allow yourself to feel.** It's ok not to be ok. Recognize your feelings and if you are sad, mad, or negative, set a time limit so you can move on!
- **Be open to help from others.** People need one another and there is always someone to talk to - reach out.
- **Read, exercise your brain.** Reading positive messages, books, literature or stories sharpens the mind and reduces stress.

How can young people take charge of their mental health **socially**?

- **Create a positive community of people to surround yourself with.** Good friends and family that can support you and listen when you need them.
- **Volunteer to help others.** Giving to others is often the best gift we can give ourselves. It helps you focus on something outside of yourself.
- **Take a break from Social Media.** Focus on you, not the outside world which is often outside of your control.

How can young people take charge of their mental health **spiritually**?

- **Take a moment of silence each day to focus on what is truly important to you.**
- **Explore and self-reflect** what are your true values, morals and beliefs. Then ask yourself if your actions and behaviors are in line with those values, morals and beliefs.
- **Consider connecting with a Faith Organization.** Research shows those involved in some form of spirituality, experience lower levels of depression and anxiety; display signs of better health, and generally feel **healthier**.

**Above insight provided by Ellen McElderry - Manager, Community Counseling Program,**  
[www.bestcare.org/ccp](http://www.bestcare.org/ccp).

If you feel your child is having difficulty coping and could use some help, counselors are just a phone call away. Give Best Care EAP a call at **402-354-8000** or **800-801-4182** or email [eap@bestcareeap.org](mailto:eap@bestcareeap.org).