

#StayConnectedMN

MENTAL WELL-BEING AND COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

1/15/2021

Mental health and well-being has always been important to overall health. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Minnesotans take time to focus on our mental well-being, as we experience changing stress and challenges in our daily lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges and uncertainties for Minnesotans. Many are adjusting to changes that impact their work environments, home routines, children's school schedules, and access to mental health supports.

This toolkit provides information, messaging, and resources for people to use in their lives, with their loved ones, and anywhere in the community. Connection is one of the most important things for our mental well-being, and staying connected is one of the greatest challenges from COVID-19. These messages focus on the importance of staying connected to our neighbors, loved ones, and the environment around us, and provide some tips on how to help.

Each week has a theme:

Week 1: Connect with yourself

Week 2: Connect with others

Week 3: Create a healthy environment

Week 4: Know how to find help and support

How to use the #StayConnectedMN Toolkit

The goal of this series is to share information about the importance of staying connected for our health and includes tips on how to do this.

- Introduce the weekly theme in an email to all staff or group members. We recommend adding images and graphics that tie into the theme. We have provided email language you can use, but feel free to edit and add your own ideas and resources.
- The key messages provide background about why staying connected is an important aspect of mental health. Use these as talking points, and share resources found within them.

- Share the quick posts each week. Some ideas include sharing on social media and/or on an employee intranet or message board, adding to a newsletter, or displaying in a shared space, such as a break room.
- Create flyers with the #StayConnectedMN messages and display them in shared spaces.
- Share the resources available in the toolkit during meetings or other points of connection with staff and coworkers.

Plan as much as your group needs or wants. Please share your ideas on social media using the #StayConnectedMN hashtag, so others can learn from your creativity and we can all stay connected.

Social media kick-off

Please edit and adapt the communications message to fit your needs. Make sure to use the hashtag, #StayConnectedMN, along with your social media posts to join in on the conversation.

The initial launch of this campaign is in February 2021, but you can use the messages whenever it works best for your organization.

Week 1 theme: Connect with yourself

Key messages for the week

- **Prioritize your mental health and well-being.** Your mental health and well-being are important. Find healthy ways to start, renew, or maintain habits that promote taking care of yourself and your mental well-being.
- **Create your own well-being plan.** Taking care of yourself is not selfish. It helps us to be a better friend, parent, worker, and partner. Think about your needs and ask yourself if you are meeting them. Consider making a daily checklist of things you like to do that help you feel well. Your list is for you, and can include anything from calling a friend and eating balanced meals, to dancing to your favorite song.
- **Take note of your daily habits.** If you notice changes in your drinking, smoking, eating, or media use, reach out for help.
- **Give yourself some grace.** Parenting during COVID-19 may be challenging. Even though the pandemic has been going on for a while, you may find yourself struggling. Some ideas to support your well-being as a parent include:
 - Give yourself grace. You are doing the best you can with the tools you have. Recognize that there will be good days and bad days.
 - Balance your needs while caring for your children.
 - Anticipate situations and be prepared as best you can.
 - Reach out for support if and when you need it.

Weekly email

Connecting with yourself can help you understand your personal needs for strong mental well-being.

This week, take a moment to check in with yourself without distractions from work, family, technology, or other demands. Think about your needs and ask yourself if you are meeting them.

Make a daily checklist of things you like to do that help you feel well. Use the [wellness guide \(PDF\)](#) for ideas. Your list is for you, and can include anything from calling a friend and eating balanced meals, to dancing to your favorite song. Keep your checklist in a visible spot, and check it daily to see if you are meeting your needs.

Parents can visit [Tips and Resources for Children and Parents During COVID-19](#) for practical ideas and tips to support yourself and your children.

Lastly, keep track of your daily habits and how they are changing. Monitor your alcohol, tobacco, drug, and media use. If you notice changes, seek help from a health care professional. Find more information and resources on [coping and stress](#), including alcohol and substance use.

Quick post

Life can get hectic with work, family needs, and quality and not so quality time together. It is easy to ignore the body indicators of stress – a tense neck, poor sleep, and feeling irritable to name a few. Take time to focus on the way your body feels. If you are noticing physical signs of stress, try to find healthy ways to start, renew, or maintain habits that help you take care of yourself. Remember, caring for yourself is not selfish – it can help you handle life stressors, support your relationships, and maintain your mental well-being.

The COVID-19 Wellness Pocket Guide provides tips and ideas for taking care of yourself and your family. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/mhpocket.pdf>

Quick post

Parenting during COVID-19 is challenging. Many parents have had to make adjustments to their lives, and change can be difficult. Some ideas to support your well-being as a parent:

1. Give yourself grace. You are doing the best you can. Everyone has good days and bad days.
2. Balance your needs while caring for your children.
3. Anticipate situations and be prepared as best you can.
4. Reach out for support from a friend when you need it.

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<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/children.html>

Quick post

Keep track of your daily habits and how they are changing. Monitor your alcohol, tobacco, drug, and media use. If you notice changes, seek help from a health care professional. Find more information and resources on coping and stress, including alcohol and substance use. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/stress-coping/>

Week 2 theme: Connect with others

Key messages for the week

- **Talk about your mental health and your challenges with others, and ask others to do the same.** This can help you feel connected and supported by your community.
- **Take time to recognize those in your life.** A little recognition can go a long way. Make a special effort to connect with anyone in your workplace or community who may need extra help. Talking about hardships can be uncomfortable, but acknowledging that someone is struggling, or sharing your own struggles, truly does help.
- **Make an effort to maintain connections.** Connecting with others can help us all feel heard, acknowledged, and loved. Friendship is an action. We are social beings and social connection is essential for our survival. COVID-19 has challenged our regular ways of connecting with friends, family, and community.
- **Find ways to connect with your community.** Volunteer to call people for support, send care packages, participate in faith services remotely, or find some other creative solution to build your connections. We all need a range of connections, including close friends, social companions, and connection to a community of people who share similar values and purpose.

Weekly email

Connecting with others is one of the most important things we can do for our well-being. We are social creatures; connecting with others is essential for our survival.

Social connection lowers anxiety and depression, helps us regulate our emotions, and improves our self-esteem and empathy.

Connecting in a pandemic is hard, especially when we are told to stay physically apart. Take a moment today to think about the connections that are most important to you. Jot down ideas on how you can connect with friends regularly, or schedule a regular call, video chat, or virtual game night with those you want to connect with. Share pictures of how you connect with a friend on social media using the hashtag #StayConnectedMN.

For some ideas, check out these resources:

- [Supporting Senior Mental Well-Being in Congregate Living](#), Minnesota Department of Health.

- [Kind Action](#), SELspace.
- [Random Acts of Kindness Ideas](#), Random Acts of Kindness Foundation.

When connecting with those close to you, remember, it is OK to talk about how you are feeling. In fact, we should talk about our feelings. Especially during this pandemic, it is OK to not be OK. Reach out to a friend, family, neighbor, warm line, or crisis line if you want to talk. No concern is too small. Help is available and hope is possible.

- Minnesota WarmLine Peer Support Connection: call or text 844-739-6369 (5 p.m. to 9 a.m.)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

“To make a difference in someone’s life, you don’t have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect. You just have to care.” – Mandy Hale, author and blogger

Quick post

Staying connected to others is more important than ever. Reach out by phone, text, email, or video chat to let your friends, family, and loved ones know you are there for them. Invite them to talk openly about how they are feeling and the day-to-day challenges they are experiencing. Likewise, share your experiences with them, too. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/support.html>

Quick post

COVID-19 has made it challenging for many seniors and people in residential living to stay connected to loved ones. You can help your loved ones feel connected while staying physically apart. Check out these tips on supporting senior mental well-being in residential living during COVID-19. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/covidsupportseniors.pdf>

Quick post

Family traditions help us feel connected and part of something important, which can help our mental well-being. Traditions do not have to be elaborate to be meaningful. COVID-19 has made it hard to celebrate many of our traditions, but it may offer some opportunities for new traditions. Having breakfast for dinner while dressed in your pajamas, family game night, and video chat bedtime stories from grandparents are a few ideas.

What new traditions has your family started? Share with us. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/parenting-and-culture/202012/starting-or-maintaining-family-traditions-in-times-covid>

Week 3 theme: Create a healthy environment

Key messages for the week

- The physical environment around us can have a major impact on our well-being. The world around us can influence our mood, energy, and stress levels.
- Nature can have a positive impact on our well-being. Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress, and increases pleasant feelings. Exposure to nature not only makes us feel better emotionally, it also improves our physical well-being by reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones.
- A comfortable and healing home environment that works for you can help you feel energized and calm. Your home environment can impact your emotions and mood. Consider reducing clutter and visual noise, improving lighting conditions, adding plants or other glimpses of nature, and reducing background noise.

Weekly email

The environment around us can have a major impact on our mental and physical well-being.

Improve your personal environment

Your home and work environment can influence your mood and motivation and create or reduce stress.

Creating a comfortable and healing environment that works for you can help you feel energized and calm. Consider reducing clutter and visual noise, improving lighting conditions, adding plants or other glimpses of nature, and reducing background noise.

Take a moment to connect with your home environment, and create a space that works for you. Check out the websites below for information and tips:

- [How does your personal environment impact your wellbeing?](#), the University of Minnesota.
- [The Connection between Your Home and Your Sense of Well-being](#), the University of Wisconsin.

Nature heals

Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress, and increases pleasant feelings.

Take some time this week to get outside. Concentrate on the scene around you. Even a quick step outside can feel rejuvenating and help balance our moods. Consider taking a short walk around your neighborhood, driving along a scenic route, or even grabbing a quick moment in an outdoor space near you.

If going outside is not an option, try to bring nature indoors. Houseplants, aquariums, or even posters of nature scenes can all help bring an element of nature into your home.

Check out these websites for ideas on how to get out and enjoy Minnesota outdoors:

- [10 Nature Activities to Help Get your Family Through COVID](#), Children and Nature.
- [Recreation activities in every season](#), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Quick post

Take some time this week to get outside. Concentrate on the scene around you. Even a quick step outside can feel rejuvenating and help balance your mood. Consider taking a short walk around your neighborhood, driving along a scenic route, or even a quick moment in an outdoor space near you. Can't get outside? Think about adding a houseplant, an aquarium, or nature scenes to bring an element of nature indoors. Get more ideas on how to enjoy Minnesota winters from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/recreation/index.html>

Quick post

Creating a comfortable and healing environment that works for you can help you feel energized and calm. Consider reducing clutter and visual noise, improving lighting conditions, adding plants or other glimpses of nature, and reducing background noise.

Take a moment to connect with your home environment, and create a space that works for you. Check out these tips from UW Health on creating a space to support well-being. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.uwhealth.org/health-wellness/the-connection-between-your-home-and-your-sense-of-well-being/52003>

Week 4 theme: Know how to find support and help

Key messages for the week

- Supports look different as we all respond to COVID-19. Maintain your well-being by connecting to your support system in any way that you can. Some supports have shifted to virtual formats. It is important to find the resources that work for you. But also know that this is temporary. Some supports, even if they are imperfect, are better than no supports.
- If you are concerned someone may be having thoughts of suicide, ask them openly and directly if they are having thoughts of suicide. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) to learn about resources available to you and your loved one.
- Warm lines and peer support can be valuable for those who are managing stressful situations, or who are managing mental health or substance use experiences. Warm lines provide support to callers who need it, but may not be in crisis. You do not need to be in crisis to call the warm line – anyone seeking support can access these resources.

- It can be intimidating to find a therapist, or difficult to know where to start. Use your employee assistance program, if you have one. You can contact your primary care provider, health insurance company, or check out the [Fast Tracker \(https://www.fasttrackermn.org/\)](https://www.fasttrackermn.org/) to mental health and substance use disorder resources in Minnesota. Other people find personal referrals helpful. You might be surprised what you find out when you start asking around.

Weekly email

Know where to find support and resources if you or a loved one need help. Give yourself grace now more than ever. Take time to recognize those in your life - whether it is you, coworkers, loved ones, or others in your life - who are working, trying to parent, and trying to educate their children, likely all at the same time. A little recognition can go a long ways. Make a special effort to connect with anyone in your workplace or community who may be particularly vulnerable. Talking about hardships can be uncomfortable, but just acknowledging that someone is struggling truly does help.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or need someone to talk to about a family situation, please reach out to connect with one of the resources below or with the mental health crisis numbers.

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/): 800-273-8255.
- [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.com/): Text “MN” to 741741.
- [Minnesota local mobile crisis response](https://www.mn.gov/): Find the phone number for your county’s mobile crisis response unit.
- Minnesota WarmLine Peer Support Connection: Call or text 844-739-6369 (5 p.m. to 9 a.m.).
- [Minnesota Day One](https://www.mn.gov/) hotline for domestic or sexual violence: 866-223-1111.
- [National Parent Helpline](https://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/): 855-427-2736, operated by [Parents Anonymous](https://www.parentsanonymous.org/).
- [Postpartum Support International Helpline](https://www.postpartuminternational.com/): 800-944-4773.
- Mother-Baby HopeLine - Redleaf Center for Family Healing: 612-873-4673. Free mental health phone support is provided for pregnant and postpartum parents and families with children from birth to 5 years old. This is not a crisis line. The HopeLine is available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Quick post

Staying connected to your support system is especially important for those in recovery, and support may look a little different as we all try to stay physically apart. Reach out to your support system and brainstorm ways to help you stay connected. Some ideas include regular video chatting or virtual support groups, and requesting telehealth services. It’s important to find the system that works for you.

It is OK to seek help. Reach out to a friend, family, neighbor, or crisis line; there is help, there is hope.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 855-273-8255 or text MN to 741741

#StayConnectedMN

Quick post

It can be intimidating to find a therapist, or even difficult to know where to start. Use your employee assistance program, if you have one. You can contact a health care provider, your health insurance company, or check out the Fast Tracker link to mental health and substance use disorder resources in Minnesota. Other people find personal referrals helpful. You may be surprised what you find out when you start asking around. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.fasttrackermn.org/>

Quick post

Warm lines and peer support can be valuable for those who are managing stressful situations, or who are managing mental health or substance use experiences. You do not need to be in immediate crisis to call the warm line – anyone seeking support can call the Minnesota WarmLine for Peer Support connection at 844-739-0369. If you want something more interactive, check out the Virtual Peer Support Network every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It offers online activities every hour. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.mnwitw.org/>

Quick post

Check in on your friends and family. If you notice a friend behaving differently or seeming distressed, do not be afraid to ask your friend or loved one if they are thinking about hurting themselves or thinking about suicide. Asking about suicidal thoughts does not make suicide more likely. In fact, talking openly about mental health and suicide can help create an honest conversation and connection. Take a moment to learn what to signs to look for.

For more advice and resources, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 855-273-8255, or text “MN” to 741 741 to get help with any crisis. #StayConnectedMN

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/basics/index.html>



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.