

2024 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The Mindful Minute: Daily Mental Health Learnings

Week 1: Healthy coping strategies

Week 2: Accessing care and resources

Week 3: Supportive communication

Week 4: Supportive communities / relationships



Healthy Coping Strategies



Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

How you cope matters.

But *why* does it matter? If how you cope makes you feel better, isn't that good enough?

Not necessarily. It's all about how coping supports your well-being in the long-run.

- **Healthy coping strategies** promote long-term well-being and resilience, often address the root cause of your emotions, and help you manage your emotions effectively.
- **Unhealthy coping strategies** may provide temporary relief but can have negative long-term consequences and could even worsen your symptoms.

What is a healthy coping strategy that works for you or that you'd like to try? Take some time to reflect on this today.

Cope to Help You Sleep and Sleep to Help You Cope

Sleep is an important coping strategy for stress, anxiety, and depression.

You might be thinking: *How can I use sleep to cope when my stress/anxiety/depression is keeping me from sleeping?*

Fair question.

If a busy mind is keeping you from sleep, consider ways to help clear your mind and regulate your emotions before bed. This could include meditation, listening to sleep stories, deep breathing practices, or journaling. Also consider interrupting your thoughts with statements like, “This can wait until tomorrow.” You can even say it out loud.

Try to avoid visual media as the blue light from devices can interfere with your sleep quality—solving one problem only to create another.

Engage Resources to Practice Coping Strategies

Trying new coping strategies and figuring out where to start can sometimes be overwhelming to the point where it's easier to just not bother. This is a great example of when engaging resources can help.

In Virgin Pulse, you have access to healthy habit trackers and Journeys. You can choose from a variety of habits that you can practice to help you cope with feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression if you want to focus on one thing at a time.

If you want more information about how something works or how to integrate it into your life, exploring Journeys in Virgin Pulse could be the right step for you.

Habits and Journeys can be found on your Virgin Pulse home page. [Click here](#) for instructions to sign up for Virgin Pulse.

Explore Life with Less Alcohol

Alcohol is a common way many people deal with stress, anxiety, and depression. As a depressant itself, alcohol can actually be counterproductive for coping.

If this is a go-to coping strategy for you, the idea of cutting back might seem daunting. However, it doesn't have to be all or nothing, especially not at first. To explore this further, check out the [Explore Life with Less Alcohol Journey on Virgin Pulse](#). You'll also find Journeys to help you quit smoking if that's another route you want to explore. (For info to help you get started with Virgin Pulse, [click here](#).)

For additional resources, check out the ["Rethinking Drinking" site from the National Institute of Health](#). Consider what information or resources might be relevant for you. Resources are also available to you through [Health Advocate](#), [our employee assistance program \(EAP\)](#) and [addiction recovery support through Teladoc](#).

Managing Symptoms vs. Addressing the Cause

During Wednesday's webinar screening for "[Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout: Moving Toward Hope and Health](#)", one of the things shared was that burnout is not caused by a single event—it's the result of mismanaged stress. ([Log into Health Advocate](#) by searching "PacificSource" to view the webinar.)

One tweak to that explanation is that burnout is the result of out-of-control stress. "Mismanaged" implies blame, like you're not trying hard enough or you're doing it wrong. In reality, sometimes burnout happens in spite of your best efforts.

If your coping strategies are spot-on and you still feel like you're just barely getting by, it's probably time to start looking at the causes of stress to see what you can do to take charge and improve your situation.

Working with a mental health provider can help. [The mental health resources page](#) has all the details you need to get started.

To wrap up this focus on coping with stress, anxiety, and depression, think about your coping strategies and how they're helping you prevent burnout. Maybe take a few mindful minutes to journal about it or talk to a trusted friend or loved one.

Accessing Care and Resources



Be Proactive About Accessing Mental Healthcare

Given the challenges we're facing with access to mental healthcare providers, one of the best things you can do is get prepared before you have a critical mental health need. Be curious and explore a variety of tools that can help your future self.

Take a few minutes to do the following:

Register for Teladoc. So far, this is the fastest way for employees on our health plan to talk with a mental healthcare provider. Plus, employees pay \$0 co-pay for Teladoc mental healthcare visits. So even if you don't need to talk to a mental healthcare provider *today*, setting up your account today can help you in the future.

Bookmark your resources:

- [Mental health resources on the PS Web](#)
- [InTouch](#) (for accessing [Teladoc](#) and reviewing your benefits)
- [Provider directory](#)
- [Health Advocate](#), our employee assistance program (search PacificSource to access benefits)
- [Psychology Today, Find a Therapist tool](#)
- [NAMI](#)

Choosing a Mental Healthcare Provider

Have you ever worked with a counselor or therapist only to find that they either weren't helpful or you just didn't click? What did you do after that experience?

When choosing a mental healthcare provider, it's OK to try different providers until you find one you're comfortable with and who understands your needs. You're not "stuck" with the first counselor you work with. It can take time to find the right therapist for you, but it's worth it.

Here are a couple steps you can take to identify a mental healthcare provider who can help you with your needs:

1. Search Psychology Today for therapists in your area and read their bios. Providers will often list specific conditions or needs they treat, particular audiences/patients they're passionate about working with, or types of therapies they specialize in.
2. Make a list of potential providers you'd like to work with and search the PacificSource provider directory to ensure they're in-network.

Alternatively, if you use Teladoc, in the "Reason for visit" drop-down menu, you can specifically identify what you're looking for, helping you connect with a therapist who can help you. Check out this video to see what it looks like to schedule a Teladoc mental health visit.

Explore Low-cost and Community Resources

While therapy is a great way to support your mental health and help you manage feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression, it's not the be-all-end-all—there are other ways to care for your mental health.

Get curious and research local nonprofits, support groups, and mental health centers for resources. Accessing other resources can help you find some stability and connection, especially if you're on a wait list for therapy.

Here are some options to help you start your search:

- [Check out 211](#) to search for resources in your community.
- Call Health Advocate, our employee assistance program (EAP), at 866-799-2485 to get connected with support groups.
- Visit the [NAMI location finder](#) to find support groups in your area.
- Explore resource group information from [Mental Health America](#), including the [mental health support group and community](#).
- Reach out to a [Member Support Specialist](#) for assistance.

Explore 211 for Mental Healthcare in Your Community

What is 211 and how can it help you?

211 is a hub to help connect people with programs, resources, and services in their community. You can search [211.org](https://www.211.org) for your state's 211 resources, or click the links below:

- [Oregon](https://www.211info.org) (211info.org)
- [Idaho](https://www.211.idaho.gov) (211.idaho.gov)
- [Montana](https://www.Montana211.org) (Montana211.org)
- [Washington](https://www.wa211.org) (wa211.org)

Regardless of which state you're in, you can call 2-1-1 to get support finding resources in your community.

Get curious and explore your state's 211 website so that you can familiarize yourself with the tool so you can access the mental health services you need. You'll also find a variety of other community services to help you live well, including food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and more.





Learn How SAMHSA Can Help You Find Help

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a variety of tools to help you explore mental healthcare options. Check out the [Find Help](#) and [Find Support](#) pages to learn more about the different kinds of resources available to you.

One example is the treatment locator tool ([FindTreatment.gov](#)) to help you identify mental healthcare and substance use disorder resources in your area. While this doesn't ensure that these resources are accepting new patients or that they're in-network on our employee health plan, it's a helpful way to explore options and understand what's available in your community.

In addition to providing a treatment locator, this resource also provides more information to help you [understand what to expect](#) when accessing treatment.

What To Expect

	Treatment Options Learn about finding quality treatment , the different types of treatment, and what to expect when starting treatment.		Paying for Treatment Learn more about the cost of treatment and payment options .
	Understanding Addiction Addiction is a chronic disease that changes the brain and alters decision-making.		Understanding Mental Health About half of people with a substance use disorder also experience serious mental illness .

Supportive Communication



Communication Skills for Supporting Mental Health

Take a mindful minute to consider your workplace stressors. How often are those stressors associated with communication challenges?

The pro-tip for this topic is to **focus on you and your own communication habits**—you can't control how other people communicate. You can only control how you communicate and how you respond to others. Practice self-awareness and get curious about assumptions you might be making when communicating with others.

This week's InsideSource article breaks this topic into three sections:

- What supportive communication looks like
- How different communication styles can create conflict
- Strategies for practicing supportive communication

This week, connect with your team and discuss: What is your preferred communication style?

Take notes and consider how you can find balance with your coworkers in a way that respects their preferences while allowing you to communicate in a way that's comfortable for you.

About That Passive Aggressive Email...

You know the kind I'm talking about.

In our virtual work environment, a lot of communication is lost in the absence of tone and body language.

While sometimes communication is passive aggressive, rude, or otherwise unpleasant, that's not always the intention. Sometimes, it's on us for making an assumption about someone else's attitude and creating conflict where there wasn't any.

So, what can you do to prevent this?

If you feel activated in a negative way when reading a message or email, take a few mindful minutes to walk away, breathe, or otherwise calm yourself. Then, re-read the message with a news reporter voice.

The idea is that you read it (out loud, ideally) in a neutral tone. If it still doesn't sound great, consider asking the person for clarification about how they're feeling rather than assuming you know their intent. It might feel awkward, but if it can avoid a conflict or resolve a conflict quickly, it'll be worth it.

Advocate For Your Communication Needs and Preferences

Do you like talking on the phone? Do IM and email pop-ups interrupt your flow? Do you prefer written communication so you have time to think through what's being discussed before responding?

Take a moment to reflect on your communication preferences and how you learn, think, and connect best with others. What does that look like? More importantly, do people know and understand your communication needs and preferences? Do you know and understand theirs?

Advocating for your communication preferences and providing context for people can improve your communication and connection with others. It can help you find a mutual understanding for what works best for both of you and where compromises are needed.

Keep in mind that it's not fair to expect everyone to accommodate your communication needs and preferences all the time. It's a give and take, so be willing to learn as much as you are willing to share.

Conscious Communication Resources on Burnalong

Mark Alexander and Phoebe Schiff from Burnalong hosted two live webinars to facilitate a discussion about conscious communications. If you missed it, you'll find a link to the recording on the mental health resources page.

In the meantime, when you sign into Burnalong, you have access to a Conscious Communications playlist with a variety of videos so you can continue to learn about supportive communications and how it can help support your mental health and well-being.

Two key things they discussed during the webinar were active listening and being mindful of your nonverbal communication.

Part of active listening is hearing what someone is saying without formulating a response. This is an easy way to show respect and reduce miscommunication.

Nonverbal communication—body language, facial expressions, etc.—play a big role as well, and is often lost in our virtual environment.

This week, practice active listening and self-awareness around your nonverbal communication. Does your body language and tone reflect what you're saying?

Lead By Example

When it comes to supportive communications—at home or in the workplace—one of the best things you can do is lead by example. Model what supportive communication looks like and do it *consistently*. Practicing supportive communication is a behavior, it's not a one-and-done action.

Here are a few key things you can do to practice supportive communication:

- Listen to people without thinking about your response.
- Validate other people's feelings and experiences.
- Offer encouragement and highlight strengths.
- Remember to say: “Thank you” and/or “I appreciate you” – we often don't hear it enough!

Practicing supportive communication is one of the lowest-risk/highest-reward behaviors you can do to help reduce stress and mitigate emotionally charged situations and conflict.

Also, if you notice others behaving in a way that leaves you feeling positive, supported, and engaged, pay attention to what they're doing/saying and consider how you can adopt those behaviors.



Supportive Communities

Loneliness and Isolation

One of the biggest contributors to mental health and living well with stress, anxiety, and depression is supportive communities and relationships. [The InsideSource article](#) for this topic goes into more depth about loneliness, isolation, and strategies to get connected.

To really understand the value of a supportive community and positive relationships, it's helpful to understand the difference between loneliness and isolation:

- **Loneliness** is a subjective feeling or experience resulting from perceived isolation or lack of meaningful connections.
- **Isolation** is objectively having few social relationships or roles and infrequent social interaction.

Having a supportive social network is a big part of helping us manage our emotions and work through stressful situations.

When people struggle with loneliness and/or isolation, they might not have a buffer against stress and adversity. This can result in reduced resilience and coping skills, essentially compounding mental health and emotional well-being challenges.

The Benefits of Support Groups

Sometimes, even if we have amazing, supportive people in our lives, we really want to talk with people who know first-hand what we're going through. We want to talk with people who will help us feel supported and less alone. There's a lot of relief that can come from talking with people with shared experiences.

This is where support groups can be a great resource for your mental health. (Especially if you're on a wait list for therapy services.)

There are lots of ways to get connected with support groups. Here are a few options to get you started:

- Call Health Advocate at 866-799-2485 to get connected with a support group.
- Learn more about [NAMI Connection](#) or search for a local support group (NAMI [Oregon](#), [Idaho](#), [Montana](#), [Washington](#)).
- [Check out this article from Mental Health America](#), which includes links to support group locators.
- [Click here](#) to learn more about support groups and specialized support group resources from Mental Health America or [click here](#) for additional information and resources from SAMHSA.

Boost the Relationships You Have

When you think about building your social support network or creating a supportive community, consider the people you already have in your life. You don't have to start from scratch. (Though expanding your social network is great, too!)

Identify a few people who you enjoy spending time with or feel safe with and who you maybe haven't seen in a while or don't talk to very often. Take a few mindful minutes today to:

- Send a text or call to see how the person is doing.
- Set up a coffee date or a walk.
- Express appreciation for how the person has shown up for you before.

Small, consistent efforts to strengthen relationships and build your community can go a long way.

What is one of your favorite—simple—ways to connect or reconnect with people?

Mental Health First Aid

One of the best ways that you can establish and maintain strong, supportive communities and relationships is to support others.

You've most likely heard of CPR and First Aid. But have you heard about Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is a training that teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. It gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem.

Anyone can get Mental Health First Aid training, and there are low- and no-cost opportunities to participate. [Click here to learn more about Mental Health First Aid and explore opportunities.](#)

Have you heard about Mental Health First Aid before? What value do you see in this training?

Mental Health Resources



Mental Health Resources

- **Mental health crisis line: call 9-8-8**
- [Mental Health Resources](#) on the PS Web Healthy Life site
- [InTouch](#) (for accessing [Teladoc](#) and reviewing your benefits)
- [Teladoc](#) for behavioral health
- [Health Advocate](#), our employee assistance program (search PacificSource)
- [Provider directory](#)
- [Psychology Today, Find a Therapist tool](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness community](#) on Microsoft Teams
- [Mental healthcare access guidance](#) from Member Support Specialists
- [211 for community resources](#)
- [NAMI](#)