***#MHAM2026 #MoreGoodDaysTogether #SeeThePerson #SupportMatters***

Everyone has mental health—and some days are harder than others. If you or someone you care about has been feeling stressed, anxious, down, or overwhelmed, you're not alone and help is available. This May, Mental Health Awareness Month is a reminder to check in, stay connected, and take one small step toward support. The ideas below can help you build more "good days" through simple actions, kinder conversations, and knowing when to reach out.

**Awareness Leads to Compassion**

- Mental health affects our thoughts, feelings, and connections.
- Mental illnesses are medical conditions that change mood, appetite, thinking, or behavior, impacting daily life.
- Serious mental illness can disrupt work, school, relationships, and self-care.
- Factors like economic instability, housing insecurity, unemployment, and limited healthcare access raise stress and worsens mental health.
- Early support improves long-term stability and well-being.
- Understanding mental illness fosters empathy and compassion.

**Working Together for More Good Days**

- Staying connected supports your well-being; you don't have to face tough days alone.
- Connecting with others can ease stress and anxiety.
- Check in on people around you and offer support.
- Communities do better when mental health is a priority, expanding access to care and connection for all.

**Week 1 (May 1 – 8): Understanding Mental Illness**

Mental health conditions can affect how you feel, think, and act—and they can make everyday things (sleep, work, school, relationships, self-care) feel harder. Stress from money, housing, or getting care can make symptoms worse, but support can help you feel steadier.

**Try this:** Pick one small support step this week—talk with someone you trust, schedule an appointment, join a support group, or write down 2–3 things that make a "good day" for you.

**Reach out if:** You've had changes in sleep, appetite, mood, or motivation for 2+ weeks—or if you're worried about your safety. Help is available.

**Week 2 (May 11 – 15): Early Support for Children and Youth**

Kids and teens have tough days too. Changes in mood, sleep, appetite, school performance, or behavior can be signs they need extra support. The earlier a young person gets help, the better the chance of feeling better and staying on track.

**Try this:** If you're a parent/caregiver, check in with one open question (e.g., "What felt hard this week?"). If you're a teen/young adult, choose one trusted adult to talk to (family member, teacher, coach, counselor).

**Reach out if:** There are big behavior changes, talk of self-harm, frequent panic, substance use, or the child/teen is struggling at home or school. You don't have to figure this out alone.

**Week 3 (May 18 – 22): The Impact of Language**

The words we use matter. Respectful language can reduce shame and make it easier to ask for help. It's okay to say, "I'm having a hard time," "I'm feeling anxious," or "I need support."

**Try this:** Practice one supportive phrase: "How can I help?" "Do you want advice or do you want me to listen?" Or "I'm here with you."

**Reach out if:** You feel judged, misunderstood, or stuck—ask for an advocate, a care manager, or a support person to join a visit or help you find resources.

**Week 4 (May 25 – 29): Supporting Loved Ones**

Supporting a loved one can be hard—and you don't have to do it perfectly. Showing up, listening, and staying calm can make a big difference. It's also okay to set boundaries and take care of your own health.

**Try this:** Offer one specific kind of help (ride to an appointment, a meal, a walk, childcare, help making a call). Ask what feels most helpful to them.

**Reach out if:** You're worried about your loved one's safety, they're missing work/school, or symptoms are getting worse. If you're burned out, support for you matters too.

**Resources:**

- NAMI Maryland – Support for Mental Health
- SAMHSA: Managing Life with Serious Mental Illness
- SAMHSA Mental Health Awareness Month
- Mental Health America - Defining Good Days
- Mental Health America - Caring for your whole self: Mind and Body
- Carelon Behavioral Health-Your Behavioral Health Benefits Portal