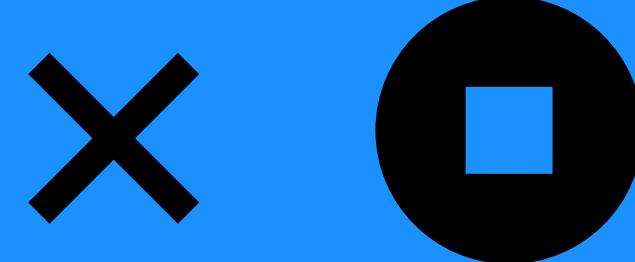


WOMEN'S GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

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We could all use more attention on our mental health and wellbeing. This guide will help you get more familiar with mental health, how it connects to wellbeing, and what resources are out there to support you. This is all covered with a particular eye on the needs of women and individuals from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, women in the workplace, caregivers, and young women and girls.

**MENTAL HEALTH CAN FEEL
LIKE AN OVERWHELMING
TOPIC, ESPECIALLY
WITHOUT CLEAR LANGUAGE
TO UNDERSTAND IT.**

Here we outline what mental health is and how it differs from mental illness, mental wellbeing, and mental fitness. Getting to know these concepts can help make the topic more approachable. →

What is mental health?

Mental health is your general sense of emotional, psychological, and cognitive wellbeing. Everyone has mental health every day, but it's often ignored unless something is going seriously wrong. The best way to prevent that is to pay attention to your mental health even when you're feeling ok or even good.

What is the difference between mental **health**, **mental illness**, **mental wellbeing**, & **mental fitness**?

The language around mental health is constantly evolving, and understanding these terms can help you understand your own experiences and have meaningful conversations about these topics.

MENTAL HEALTH

An umbrella term

Captures everything from your daily mood to severe mental distress

Exists on a continuum that's always in flux

100% of people have mental health every day

MENTAL ILLNESS

A clinical term that describes a specific condition

Impacts mood, thinking, and behavior so that it's difficult to feel emotionally and cognitively well

Can be acute or chronic

50% of people will experience mental illness at some point

MENTAL WELLBEING

A strengths-based term

Describes a sense of emotional and cognitive wellness

Can exist at the same time as mental illness

Is fueled by a sense of belonging, connection, and meaning in one's life

MENTAL FITNESS

A newer, evolving term

The purposeful practice of taking care of your mental health

Can include mindfulness, physical exercise, and self-care practices

Is important during times of wellness and illness

Each of these can look different depending on who you are. Read on to learn more about these topics as they relate to women's mental health.

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Gender touches so many parts of our daily lives, and mental health is one of those. By focusing on women's mental health, we can address the health of all people who identify as women, which can include but is certainly not limited to individuals who identify as transgender, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and cisgender. Whether you would like to learn more to support your own wellbeing or that of someone you care about, read on to learn more.

What is women's mental health?

Although mental health among women-identified individuals looks similar to mental health in general, there are some unique considerations that are important to recognize. While we know that women possess many strengths that support wellbeing, we also know that women are impacted by the realities of sexism and misogyny, which can impact self-esteem, mood, work, and relationships. Many women also experience racism, classism, ableism, transphobia, heterosexism, and/or xenophobia. Each of these can add to the effects of sexism.

More info from: [Active Minds](#), [CMI](#), [MHA](#),
[The Trevor Project](#)

Fortunately, there are clear ways to manage the impact that these can have on mental health. Below you will find useful information on how mental health can take a hit under the pressures that women-identified individuals face, as well as resources for fostering mental wellbeing and strength.

Aspects of daily life that are particularly relevant for women's wellbeing

Here are some common aspects of daily life that can be particularly stressful for women. Take a look and consider which of these impact you.

Awareness comes before action and growth.

More information from: [MHA](#), [NCBH](#), [The Steve Fund](#), [WBT](#)

Each of these can cause not just daily stress but clinical mental health concerns. Since we know that some conditions like depression, eating/weight disorders, postpartum mood disorders, and PTSD impact women more than others, it's important to pay attention to how these nuisances affect you on a daily basis. That way you can be proactive about fostering your mental wellbeing.

More information from: [ADAAa](#), [ADAAb](#), [ADAAc](#), [AEDA](#), [DBSA](#), [NAMIa](#), [NAMIb](#)

THE DAILY NUISANCE

Double Standards

Ever feel like your male counterparts are given more leeway or freedoms around certain activities? Those are double standards and can leave you feeling confused, not valued, and boxed in.

Toxic Positivity

Some women feel like they are supposed to constantly smile and be positive. This can wear you down, get in the way of sharing your authentic feelings, and even prevent meaningful connections with others.

Toxic Guilt & Shoulds

Because there are so many “shoulds” that women live with, guilt can arise when you feel like you’re not doing what you are “supposed” to. If you’ve ever noticed that you feel bad when: you do what you want to do, take care of yourself, or say no to others – that is the all-too-common guilt that can leave many women stuck in situations they’re not comfortable with.

Impossible Expectations of Others

A cousin of the “shoulds” that women experience is impossible expectations of others. Have you ever felt like people or society expects you to be completely selfless or to never complain? Those are impossible expectations that only set you up for self-disappointment. These can be especially strong among women of color, as expectations can be even higher.

Role strain and the superwoman syndrome

Women, because of the way we are socialized, are often tasked with holding down too many roles at once. That “role strain” can be exhausting to say the least. And then there’s the “superwoman syndrome,” which is the internalized version of this and happens when you neglect yourself in order to take care of everyone else while “doing it all.”

Negative self-appraisals

You know that little voice in your head that sounds awfully like a bully towards yourself and doesn’t seem to ever be quiet? Those are negative self-appraisals and not only cause self-doubt but can lead to serious mental health concerns, like those outlined below.

THE ISSUE

THE ANTIDOTE

Next time you notice a double standard, remind yourself that it’s not personal and that you don’t deserve it. Find a friend or an ally who gets it so you can share your reactions.

Practice letting your cracks show. The more you open up about what’s difficult for you, the closer you’ll feel to others and vice versa.

Notice what shoulds and guilt do to your body. For example, if they create tension or restlessness, practice relaxation techniques to release it, while reminding yourself that the guilt and shoulds will only hold you back.

Consider how you can begin challenging these expectations in a way that feels right for you. Sometimes a “no” is enough, and other times a compromise is important.

If you find yourself in a role that you’re unsatisfied with, create an exit plan or a way to share the workload with someone else. Then, make space and time to care for yourself.

Start paying attention to the messages you send yourself. When they are hurtful, flip the script and say something compassionate to yourself. Notice how much better this feels.

RESOURCES TO FOSTER MENTAL WELLBEING

Here is a compilation of some top-notch resources that support wellbeing within specific communities. Take note of what you might need, or which you would like to share with a friend or loved one. Learning and talking more about mental health so that it becomes part of our daily lives can make a big difference on so many levels. →

BIPOC COMMUNITIES:

AAKOMA Project

Helping diverse teens & their families achieve optimal mental health via dialogue, learning, and understanding that everyone deserves care and support.

Asian American Health Initiative

Improving health and wellness of Asian American communities.

Asian Mental Health Collective

Raising awareness of the importance of mental health care, promoting emotional well-being, and challenging the stigma concerning mental health among Asian communities globally.

Black Girls Smile

Dedicated to encouraging positive mental health education, resources, and support geared toward young Black women.

Center for Native American Youth

Improving the health, safety, and overall wellbeing of Indigenous/Native American youth via inspiration, advocacy, a national resource exchange, and by building a Native youth-driven narrative.

The Focus on You

An inspirational blog run by a Latina therapist with information on self-care and mental health.

The Loveland Foundation

Committed to showing up for communities of color in unique and powerful ways, with a particular focus on Black women and girls.

MANA, A National Latina Organization

Representing the interests of Latinx women, youth and families on issues that impact these communities.

National Alliance for Hispanic Health

Improving the health and wellbeing of Latinx individuals via quality and availability of care. The National Hispanic Family Health Helpline provides free and confidential health info

in Spanish and English. To reach the helpline, call 1-866-783-2645.

Pretty Brown Girls

Dedicated to educating and empowering Black and Brown girls by encouraging self-acceptance while cultivating social, emotional & intellectual wellbeing.

Silence the Shame

Empowering & educating communities on mental health and wellness.

South Asian Mental Health Alliance

Engaging, educating and mobilizing the South Asian

community around issues related to mental health.

Therapy for Black Girls

An online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellbeing of Black women and girls.

Therapy for Latinx

Providing resources for Latinx community to heal, thrive, and become advocates for their own mental health.

WeRNATIVE

Providing comprehensive health resources for and by Native youth, including content and stories about the topics that matter most to this community.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES:

Black Transwomen Inc

Established to address the urgent concerns facing African American transwomen in marginalized communities.

GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality

A national organization committed to ensuring health equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and all sexual and gender nonconforming individuals.

The LGBT National Help Center

Serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning community by providing free & confidential peer support and local resources. The LGBT National Hotline provides a safe space that is anonymous and confidential. Call them at 1- 888-843-4564 if you need support.

National Queer and Trans People of Color Network

A healing justice organization committed to transforming mental health for queer and trans people of color.

The Okra Project

A collective that seeks to address the global crisis faced by Black Trans people by bringing home cooked, healthy, and culturally specific meals and resources to Black Trans individuals wherever they are.

PFLAG

The first and largest organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people, their parents and families, and allies.

SAGE Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders

A national advocacy and services organization that has been looking out for LGBT elders since 1978. Call the SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline if you need support at 877-360-5428.

Trans Lifeline

Connecting trans people to the community, support, and resources they need to survive and thrive.

The Trevor Project

The world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people. If you are in crisis or need a safe and judgment-free place to talk, call The Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386.

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS, MOTHERS, AND/OR IN THE WORKPLACE:

Family Caregiver Alliance

Offers support for family caregivers and those who receive care. Resources are available in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and more.

The National Alliance for Caregiving

Conducts research, policy analysis, develops national best-practice programs, and works to increase public awareness of family caregiving issues.

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance (MMHLA)

Promotes the mental health of childbearing women in the U.S. by advocating for education, screening, referral, and treatment of postpartum depression and related maternal mental health conditions.

The Motherhood Center

Provides supportive mental health services, resources, and online workshops for new and expecting mothers.

The Seleni Institute

Provides psychotherapy for women, men, and families experiencing maternal mental health and family-building challenges.

Dress for Success

Empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

Fairygodboss

Offers a women's career community, expert career advice, job openings, and company reviews to help you advance your career.

Thrive Global

Helps the world's leading enterprises and their people build healthy habits through inspirational storytelling and actionable microsteps to help navigate this challenging time with less stress and greater resilience.

WOMEN, YOUNG WOMEN, & GIRLS

Wellseek

Works with practitioners, advocates, and organizations to create social impact from the intersection of gender equality & community care to shift the paradigm of women's mental health.

A Window Between Worlds

Leads trauma-informed transformative healing arts programs and supports hundreds of direct service organizations to train staff to facilitate trauma-informed hands-on workshops.

Center for Young Women's Health

Committed to providing teen girls and young women with carefully researched health information, educational programs, and conferences.

Girls Inc.

Focuses on the development of the whole girl through the combination of long-lasting mentoring relationships, a pro-girl environment, and evidence-based programming.

Gurls Talk

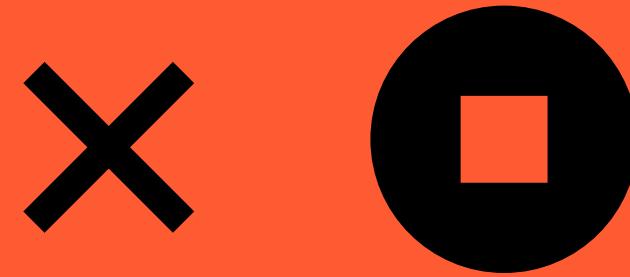
Provides resources and a safe space for young women and girls to discuss mental health.

ScarleTeen

An independent, feminist, grassroots sexuality and relationships education media and support organization.

**REMEMBER THAT THIS IS JUST A
STARTING POINT, AND IT'S
PERFECTLY OK IF YOU STILL
HAVE MANY QUESTIONS.**

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Just by reading this guide, you've become more resourceful and aware of what's possible for your mental health. If you would like to learn more, be sure to also check out the Mental Health Coalition's [Resource Library](#) for additional tools and information.