

November, 2021



# #LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

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## How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to [aahuber@fcps.edu](mailto:aahuber@fcps.edu).

## Stigma in Mental Health

By: Angie Huber, School Social Worker Liberty MS

It is thought that more than half of people with mental illness do not receive help for their disorders. Sadly, according to Mental Health America (2020 Access to Care Data), Virginia is ranked as 37<sup>th</sup> when compared to the other states in offering access to insurance and mental health treatment. It is thought that stigma, limitations in access, prejudices and discrimination against people with mental illness tends to impact people receiving care and pursuing help. Stigma tends to develop from a lack of understanding or fear. People have noted concerns about being judged, losing their job or being harmed in some way. Inaccurate or misleading information of mental illness contribute to these concerns. Stigma concerns involve public stigma (negative or discriminatory attitudes), self-stigma (internalized shame, negative thinking) and institutional stigma (when opportunities are limited to people with mental illness in organizations).

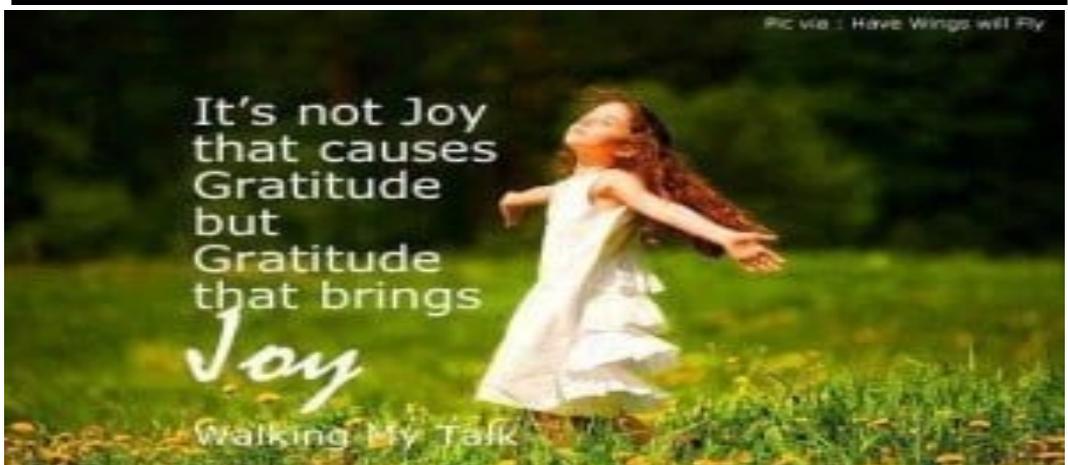
Stigma impacts numerous individuals. The loved ones who support the individuals with mental illnesses are concerned but do not know how to access help without judgement. In addition, cultures have varying beliefs about mental health concerns. Shame can be a huge factor in whether a person will receive help due to it being considered as a sign of weakness. Distrust of the mental health system can also play into whether people decide to seek help.

Self stigma is the one of the biggest concerns. Some who are struggling feel they will be thought of as out of control, dangerous, incompetent or possibly blamed for smething. Lower self esteem can lead to not feeling worthy of trying to get better. Unfortunately, when treatment is not received, it can lead to a loss of hope, more psychiatric problems, relationship struggles and employment concerns.

Movies, television, social media and the internet can give an unfavorable view of workers in the mental health field and people with mental health concerns. People with mental illness have been represented as violent, unreliable, irresponsible and difficult to manage and interact with in relationships. People working in the mental health jobs have been portrayed as abusive, unhelpful, judgmental and having little empathy. The systems can be overwhelmed and difficult to navigate. All of these concerns lead to someone's resistance to seek help and to feel negative toward the process and possibility of being successful with receiving help.

In addition to all of these factors, many systems are overwhelmed especially since the pandemic. Often providers have a waitlist, meet only virtually or are not covered by your insurance.

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Click the picture

## How do we stop stigma? **Conversation**

Try these simple tips for talking.

### DO SAY

- o "Thanks for opening up to me."
- o "Is there anything I can do to help?"
- o "How can I help?"
- o "Thanks for sharing."
- o "I'm sorry to hear that. It must be tough."
- o "I'm here for you when you need me."
- o "I can't imagine what you're going through."
- o "People do get better."
- o "Oh man, that sucks."
- o "Can I drive you to an appointment?"
- o "How are you feeling today?"
- o "I love you."

### DON'T SAY

- o "It could be worse."
- o "Just deal with it."
- o "Snap out of it."
- o "Everyone feels that way sometimes."
- o "You may have brought this on yourself."
- o "We've all been there."
- o "You've got to pull yourself together."
- o "Maybe try thinking happier thoughts."

Source: [MakeltOK.org](http://MakeltOK.org)

Enjoy this coloring page for stress relief!!!



# Suicide Awareness and Prevention

By: Dr. Joanna Wheeler, Liberty School Psychologist

*Adapted from the CDC*

Suicide rates increased 33 percent between 1999 and 2019, with a small decline in 2019. Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States. Suicide affects all ages. It is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 35-44, and the fifth leading cause among people ages 45-54. Some groups have higher suicide rates than others. For example, suicide rates are highest among American Indian/Alaska native and non-Hispanic White populations. Other factors such as being a veteran and living in rural areas also increase the risk of suicide. Overall, there are many risk factors that increase the chance of suicide. Risk factors increase the possibility of suicide, but they may not be direct causes. Below are some, but not all, risk factors associated with increasing risk of suicide.

## Risk Factors

- Previous suicide attempt
- Mental illness, such as depression
- Social isolation
- Financial problems
- Job problems or loss
- Criminal problems
- Substance use disorder
- Family history of suicide
- Relationship problems
- Adverse childhood experiences such as abuse and neglect
- Barriers to healthcare
- Stigma associated with mental illness or seeking help

Suicide attempts affect the health and well-being of friends, loved ones, co-workers, and the community. When people die by suicide their surviving family and friends may experience shock, anger, guilt, symptoms of depression or anxiety, and even experience thoughts of suicide themselves. There are factors that help prevent suicide.

## Preventative Factors

- Social connectedness
- Crisis Intervention
- Treatment for people at risk of suicide
- Strengthening household financial security and housing stabilization
- Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk for suicide
- Community engagement activities
- Awareness of suicide warning signs

## Know the Warning Signs

Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. If you or someone you know exhibits any of these, seek help. Information for seeking help is below.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Extreme mood swings

## Need help? Know someone who does?



Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)  
Use the [online Lifeline Crisis Chat](#)  
Both are free and confidential. You'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.  
For more information, visit the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  
You can also connect 24/7 to a crisis counselor by texting the [Crisis Text Line](#).external icon Text HOME to 741741.

## MINDFUL MOMENT .....

### Practicing Daily Gratitude 10 Ways to Practice Daily Gratitude

As Jon Kabat-Zinn says, “The little things? The little moments? They aren’t little.” Saying thank you, holding the door for someone, these little moments can change the tone of your whole day.

One of the most powerful ways to rewire your brain for more joy and less stress is to focus on gratitude. Here are 10 simple ways to become more grateful:

**1. Keep a Gratitude Journal.** Establish a daily practice in which you re-mind yourself of the gifts, grace, benefits, and good things you enjoy. Recalling moments of gratitude associated with ordinary events, your personal attributes, or valued people in your life gives you the potential to interweave a sustainable theme of gratefulness into your life.

**2. Remember the Bad.** To be grateful in your current state, it is helpful to remember the hard times that you once experienced. When you remember how difficult life used to be and how far you have come, you set up an explicit contrast in your mind, and this contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness.

**3. Ask Yourself Three Questions.** Meditate on your relationships with parents, friends, siblings, work associates, children, and partners using these three questions: “What have I received from \_\_\_?”, “What have I given to \_\_\_?”, and “What troubles and difficulty have I caused?”

**4. Share Your Gratitude with Others.** Research has found that expressing gratitude can strengthen relationships. So the next time your partner, friend or family member does something you appreciate, be sure to let them know.

**5. Come to Your Senses.** Through our senses—the ability to touch, see, smell, taste, and hear—we gain an appreciation of what it means to be human and of what an incredible miracle it is to be alive. Seen through the lens of gratitude, the human body is not only a miraculous construction, but also a gift.

**6. Use Visual Reminders.** Because the two primary obstacles to gratefulness are forgetfulness and a lack of mindful awareness, visual reminders can serve as cues to trigger thoughts of gratitude. Often times, the best visual reminders are other people.

**7. Make a Vow to Practice Gratitude.** Research shows that making an oath to perform a behavior increases the likelihood that the action will be executed. Therefore, write your own gratitude vow, which could be as simple as “I vow to count my blessings each day,” and post it somewhere where you will be reminded of it every day.

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**Your students can check out Ms. Huber’s google office to see many cool things to do, learn about or to use to cope!**



# VIRTUAL ZEN DEN

[Sounds and Music](#)

[Meditation and Grounding Exercises](#)

[Visual Relaxation](#)

[Live Animal Cams](#)

[Yoga](#)

[Something Interesting](#)

[Pixar Short Film: La Luna](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Piper](#)

[PIXAR Shorts: Day and Night](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Partly Cloudy](#)

[Art and Creativity](#)

[Games and Puzzles](#)

## Stigma cont.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers some suggestions about how we can reduce the stigma of mental illness:

- Talk openly about mental health, such as sharing on social media.
- Educate yourself and others – respond to misperceptions or negative comments by sharing facts and experiences.
- Be conscious of language – remind people that words matter.
- Encourage equality between physical and mental illness – draw comparisons to how they would treat someone with cancer or diabetes.
- Show compassion for those with mental illness.
- Be honest about treatment – normalize mental health treatment, just like other health care treatment.
- Let the media know when they are using stigmatizing language presenting stories of mental illness in a stigmatizing way.

Choose empowerment over shame - "I fight stigma by choosing to live an empowered life. to me, that means owning my life and my story and refusing to allow others to dictate how I view myself or how I feel about myself." – Val Fletcher, responding on Facebook to the question, How do you fight stigma?

[www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org)

## Express Gratitude

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thank a favorite teacher       | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank a doctor or nurse         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surprise your mail carrier     | <input type="checkbox"/> Leave a comment of gratitude    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send Thanksgiving cards        | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank your significant other    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave a positive review        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out a comment card         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give a deserving shout out     | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank your garbage collector    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thank your parents             | <input type="checkbox"/> Send Thanksgiving cards         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give back: volunteer or donate | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a Thanksgiving craft       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a gratitude journal       | <input type="checkbox"/> Share daily gratitude at dinner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave a generous tip           | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Friendsgiving              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buy someone coffee or flowers  | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank co-workers or boss        |

## & Give Thanks

## The PARENT RESOURCE CENTER offers numerous webinar opportunities throughout the year.

### Tips to Improve Your Parenting Long Game: A Webinar for Families

Especially as the demands on parents are higher than ever during COVID, many of us can have become very reactive in our approach with our children -- addressing issues as they happen, wondering how to break out of negative cycles.

In this webinar, you'll learn proactive strategies that lead to more positive behavior outcomes AND will help you enjoy your children again.

Presented by Rachel Bailey, M.A., CPDPE., Parenting Specialist

Friday November 19, 2021 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for Tips to Improve Your Parenting Long Game: A Webinar for Families](#)

### Preparing for the Unexpected: Challenges of the Military Family

Did you know military-connected students experience different "seasons" as they navigate their school years?

Using tools from her book, "Seasons of My Military Student," Stacy Allsbrook-Huisman will offer relevant support for the start of the school year.

Highlights include:

- Mental Health of Military-Connected Kids and Teens
- Storms in Any Season- What parents need to know about
- Deployments, Injuries, Separations, and Loss
- Known and little known resources for military families to get you through storms and everyday life

How to Prepare for an Off-Cycle Move

Join Stacy Allsbrook-Huisman for our second of a 4-part series supporting military-connected families.

December 3, 2021 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for Preparing for the Unexpected: Challenges of the Military Family](#)

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### Postsecondary Education Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Join FCPS Career and Transition Services to learn about postsecondary education options available for students with disabilities.

- College: Two-Year and Four-Year
- Career and Technical Education/Trade School
- Gap Year
- Military
- Apprenticeship

Employment

December 9, 2021 10 a.m. - noon

[Register for Postsecondary Education Considerations for Students with Disabilities](#)

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### Try these activities for your student!

⇒ Liberty Middle School Afterschool Program

<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/activities/after-school-program>

⇒ Fairfax County Park Authority Programs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

For more social-emotional resources and lessons please visit the LS Clinical Team's website (see the link below works best in Google Chrome):

<https://sites.google.com/view/liberty-ms-clinical-team/mental-wellness-topics>

\*\*some new videos added\*\*

# Different Ways to Show Gratitude



Give compliments



Make eye contact



Be an active listener



Give a friend a hug



Help a stranger in need



Always say thank you



Smile



Be patient



Pay it forward

**Click on Picture to see if you are eligible for Healthcare Coverage:**



Watchable by fcpschools.net.

## Resources:

If you or someone you care about is in crisis, please call [911](tel:911) or access one of the mental health resources below:

- ⇒ *Reach out to a trusted adult (parent, counselor, teacher, coach, etc.); <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk>*
- ⇒ *Text **NEEDHELP** to 85511 for the [Crisis Link](https://www.needhelp.org/) Hotline at or call them at 703-527-4077*
- ⇒ *Chat online with a specialist at [CrisisChat.org](https://www.crisischat.org/) or [ImAlive.org](https://www.imalive.org/)*
- ⇒ *Call an emergency mental health center at 703 573-5679 (Merrifield Center), 703-536-2000 (Dominion Hospital), or 703-289-7560 (INOVA emergency services)*
- ⇒ *CR2 – 844-627-4747*
- ⇒ *Go to the nearest emergency room at your local hospital*

**Call 911**

# Happy National Gratitude Month



small seeds of  
**GRATITUDE**  
will produce a  
**HARVEST of HOPE**



## **MINDFUL MOMENT** cont.

**8. Watch Your Language.** Grateful people have a particular linguistic style that uses the language of gifts, givers, blessings, blessed, fortune, fortunate, and abundance. In gratitude, you should not focus on how inherently good you are, but rather on the inherently good things that others have done on your behalf.

**9. Go Through the Motions.** Grateful motions include smiling, saying thank you, and writing letters of gratitude. By “going through grateful motions,” you’ll trigger the emotion of gratitude more often.

**10. Think Outside the Box.** If you want to make the most out of opportunities to flex your gratitude muscles, you must look creatively for new situations and circumstances in which to feel grateful. Please share the creative ways you’ve found to help you practice gratitude.

[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

## **Wellness Screenings (SOS)**

We will be finishing up our wellness screenings this month. We have chosen to do these presentations for the entire school due to the depth of the stress on families and students during the last two years and because we were not able to do it last year. We typically do these screenings for 7th graders and not 8th graders.

You may have had some questions about the presentation in the video. The theme of the video is to teach the students how to identify signs of depression and suicide and how to get help. The acronym they were taught in the video is ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell). So, they learned to “Acknowledge” the problem, show the person that they “Care” and encourage the person to “Tell” a trusted adult to find help.

Please let us know if you have any questions about this presentation. Please talk to your child about the presentation and see the link to the [Signs of Suicide](#) Site. Numerous resources are offered on this site, such as the talking point below.

### **TALKING TO YOUR CHILD**

While your child is out of school, take some time to start a conversation about mental health. This can be tough for families as often in our society, mental health isn't discussed openly like physical health. Feelings of depression or anxiety are often hidden because youth are confused, embarrassed, or ashamed. You can help protect your child and their friends by talking to them.

- » Ask open-ended questions. Let your child steer the conversation to what they want to talk about.
- » Don't rush to solve their problems. Instead, ask what they think would help a situation.
- » Be available and make sure your child knows it. “I'm around if you want to talk later” may help.
- » Try talking on a walk. The relaxed atmosphere makes it easier for some kids to open up.

Counseling is often a good approach to help people to work through struggles that they are having in their life. Many feel comfortable with the idea of counseling and many do not feel comfortable. One of the benefits of counseling is that it can help you to find solutions or to problem solve more quickly than without it. However, some still may not be comfortable and to add to the challenges of becoming comfortable with the idea of counseling, during COVID, it is difficult to find counselors who are meeting in person and some do not feel comfortable with meeting virtually. A good alternative is to use journaling. Here are some journal prompts for November.



## JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR NOVEMBER

# Gratitude Journal Prompts

1. What was the best thing that happened today?
2. Who makes you feel loved and why?
3. Name something that makes you happy.
4. What is your favorite outdoor activity?
5. Name someone that helps you.
6. Name someone that is nice to you.
7. What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?
8. Name something that you are grateful to have.
9. What do you like to do with your family and why?
10. Where is your favorite place to go?
11. Name someone that makes you smile.
12. Who is your best friend and why?
13. What do you like most about your school or job?
14. What do you like most about your favorite subject?
15. Who was the last person to give you something?
16. What is the best gift that you have ever received?
17. Name the best thing that has ever happened to you.
18. What is your favorite game or sport and why?
19. Where is your favorite place to play or relax?
20. What do you like most about your family?
21. Name an animal that you feel thankful for.
22. What is your favorite thing to do at home?
23. Name a person that you love and why?
24. What is your favorite hobby and why?
25. Who do you like to spend time with?
26. Name someone that your feel grateful for.

[rhythmsofplay.com](http://rhythmsofplay.com)

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