

# Healthy Hearts & Minds

CCYSB YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

JUNE 2026



## Pride Month:

### Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth and Fostering Belonging

June is Pride Month, a time to celebrate the diversity, resilience, and contributions of LGBTQIA+ individuals. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the importance of creating environments where all young people feel safe, accepted, and valued.

Research consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ youth experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts compared to their peers. However, one of the strongest protective factors is not complicated—it is feeling accepted and supported by the important people in their lives.

#### *What Does Support Look Like?*

Supporting LGBTQIA+ youth does not require having all the answers. Small actions can have a significant impact:

- Listen with openness and curiosity.
- Use the names and pronouns a young person requests.
- Avoid making assumptions about identity or experiences.
- Celebrate strengths, interests, and accomplishments beyond identity.
- Create space for honest conversations without judgment.

#### *The Importance of Belonging*

Belonging is a basic human need. When young people feel accepted for who they are, they are more likely to experience positive mental health, stronger self-esteem, and healthier relationships.

Belonging can be fostered through:

- Supportive family relationships
- Affirming friendships
- Inclusive schools and communities
- Safe spaces where youth can express themselves authentically

#### For Parents and Caregivers

If your child shares something about their identity, remember that your response matters. Even if you are still learning, communicating love, support, and willingness to listen can strengthen your relationship and help your child feel secure.

Helpful phrases include:

- "Thank you for trusting me."
- "I love you."
- "I'm here to support you."
- "Help me understand your experience."

#### *This Pride Month*

Whether you identify as LGBTQIA+ or know someone who does, Pride Month reminds us of the value of authenticity, acceptance, and connection. Every young person deserves to feel seen, respected, and supported as they grow into who they are. Creating belonging doesn't require perfection. It starts with compassion, curiosity, and a commitment to helping young people know they matter.

## What's Inside:

Pride Month: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth and Fostering Belonging

Self-Esteem and Body Image During Summer Months

Sources of Strength



**UNEARTH  
A STORY™**  
SUMMER READING 2026



This program, for all ages, is an excellent way to engage the whole family in fun learning activities over the summer.



This program is designed for students in grades 1 through 9. It gives an opportunity to see sites around Carroll County and learn about rich local history. Celebrating America Carroll County is an inclusive collaboration of county government, local municipalities, private and non-profit organizations, businesses, individuals, and other interested parties who garner participation, broaden understanding, welcome visitors, and encourage residents to learn more about Carroll County's role in American History.

## Register here:

[carr.beanstack.org/reader365](http://carr.beanstack.org/reader365)

## Self-Esteem and Body Image During Summer Months

As temperatures rise and summer activities begin, many young people become more aware of their appearance. Swimsuits, shorts, social media posts, and increased opportunities for comparison can make this season particularly challenging for self-esteem and body image.

Body image refers to how we think and feel about our bodies. While it is normal to have occasional insecurities, persistent negative thoughts about appearance can affect mood, confidence, relationships, and overall well-being.

### Why Summer Can Be Difficult

During the summer, youth may experience:

- Increased comparison to peers and influencers online
- Pressure to look a certain way in summer clothing
- Anxiety about attending pools, beaches, or social events
- Negative self-talk related to weight, shape, or appearance

Social media can amplify these concerns by presenting carefully edited or filtered images that do not reflect real life.

### Building a Healthier Relationship with Your Body

A positive body image does not mean loving every aspect of your appearance all the time. Instead, it involves treating yourself with respect and recognizing that your worth is not determined by how you look.

Helpful strategies include:

- Challenging negative self-talk
- Following social media accounts that promote diversity and authenticity
- Focusing on what your body can do rather than how it looks
- Participating in activities that bring joy, confidence, and connection
- Practicing self-compassion during moments of insecurity

### For Parents and Caregivers

Adults play an important role in shaping how young people view themselves.

Consider:

- Avoiding negative comments about your own body or others' bodies
- Praising qualities such as kindness, effort, creativity, and resilience
- Encouraging healthy habits without focusing on weight or appearance
- Creating opportunities for open conversations about media influences and self-esteem

### Remember: You Are More Than Your Appearance

Confidence grows when we recognize our strengths, values, relationships, and interests. Appearance is only one small part of who we are. This summer, challenge yourself to notice what makes you unique beyond the mirror.

Every young person deserves to feel comfortable taking up space, enjoying experiences, and participating fully in life, regardless of how they look. Self-worth is not something that must be earned through appearance; it already exists within you.

## Sources of Strength: Building Connection, Hope, and Resilience

Sources of Strength is a strengths-based, evidence-informed program designed to promote mental health, resilience, and help-seeking among youth. Rather than focusing only on risks or challenges, the program helps students identify and strengthen the protective factors already present in their lives that support them through stress and difficult experiences.

Students are encouraged to explore their “sources of strength,” which may include trusted adults, supportive friendships, positive peer relationships, healthy coping skills, and personal strengths such as perseverance, creativity, humor, or spirituality. The goal is to help youth recognize that they are not alone and already have supports they can rely on when things feel overwhelming.

A key part of the program is peer leadership. Students are trained to share messages of hope, help, and connection within their schools, creating a culture where reaching out for support is normalized and seen as a strength. This peer-to-peer model helps reduce stigma around mental health and encourages students to seek help earlier rather than waiting until they are in crisis.

In Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS), Sources of Strength is implemented in middle and high schools as part of broader efforts to support student well-being and positive school climate. Students engage in lessons and activities that help them identify supports in their lives, build coping skills, and strengthen connections with trusted adults and peers within their school community. The program is used alongside other CCPS student services and school counseling supports to promote resilience and early help-seeking across grade levels.

### Why it matters

Adolescence is a time of major emotional, social, and developmental change, and it is common for young people to experience stress, anxiety, or feelings of disconnection. What makes a meaningful difference is not eliminating all challenges, but ensuring youth have strong, reliable supports in place. Research shows that connection to caring adults, positive peer relationships, and effective coping skills are key protective factors that support mental health and reduce risk. Sources of Strength helps intentionally build these protective factors across school communities so students feel more supported and less alone.

### How parents and caregivers can help

Families play a powerful role in strengthening a young person's sources of strength. Parents and caregivers can support this work by being emotionally available and present, listening without immediately trying to fix or judge, and encouraging open conversations about stress and coping. Asking questions like “Who are your go-to people when things are hard?” or “What helps you get through stressful times?” can help youth reflect on their supports. It also helps to normalize help-seeking, including talking with school counselors or other trusted adults, and to model healthy coping strategies in everyday life. Small, consistent moments of connection, such as check-ins during car rides, meals, or before bed, can significantly strengthen a young person's sense of belonging and support.



## SUMMER CONFIDENCE CHALLENGE

1
Name three things you appreciate about yourself that have nothing to do with appearance.
🧡

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2
Try an activity that helps you feel strong, capable, or accomplished.
★

**EXAMPLES:**

Go for a walk, bike ride, or try a workout

Create something—art, music, or writing

Learn something new

Take photos, explore nature, or try something you enjoy

Help someone, volunteer, or spend time on a passion project

🧡 Celebrate your effort, growth, and progress—big or small! 🧡

## Safety Plans Work

There is hope.



1. Write 3 warning signs that a crisis may be developing.

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2. Write 3 internal coping strategies that can take your mind off your problems.

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3. Who/What are 3 people or places that provide distraction?  
(Write name/place and phone numbers)

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| _____ | Phone _____ |
| _____ | Phone _____ |
| _____ | Phone _____ |

4. Who can you ask for help? (Write names and phone numbers)

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| _____ | Phone _____ |
| _____ | Phone _____ |
| _____ | Phone _____ |

5. Professionals or agencies you can contact during a crisis:

Clinician: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Local Urgent Care or Emergency Department:  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

6. Write out a plan to make your environment safer.  
(Write 2 things)

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Modified from Stanley & Brown (2021)

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## Crisis Resources

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

9-8-8 (Call or Text)

Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>

The Trevor Project  
[thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)

1-866-488-7386

text 678-678

Carroll County Mobile Crisis:  
410-952-9552

To access assessment and treatment  
services at CCYSB call  
410-848-2500 x 1

or

Walk-in Assessment Hours:

Tuesday: 8:30am-11 am & 2-5pm

Wednesday: 11:30am-2pm

(We have a limited number of assessment slots  
available each day. See our website for arrival and  
check-in details)



CARROLL COUNTY  
YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU

"It Starts With the Heart."

## Happy Pride Month Sending Love to Those Who...



Feel like they  
don't belong



Are struggling with  
their mental health



Don't have a  
support system



Are celebrating  
for the first time



Are concerned  
for their safety



Are finding  
themselves



Came out  
later in life



Have lost relationships  
after coming out



Are out  
and proud

WE ALL  
NEED  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
SUPPORT.



TEXT



MDYoungMinds  
to 898-211

Teens, get supportive  
text messages.



Scan to learn more



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## YTA FRIDAYS

Youth Together & Allies



### A Safe Space for LGBTQIA+ Youth and Their Allies

All school-age youth are welcome! YTA Fridays provides a fun, welcoming, and affirming environment where young people can connect, build friendships, and be themselves.

#### *Monthly Meetings*

##### **Middle School (Grades 6–8)**

3rd Friday of each month • 6:30–9:30 PM

##### **High School (Grades 9–12)**

1st Friday of each month • 6:30–9:30 PM

#### *What to Expect*

- Video games, ping pong, foosball, and air hockey
- Crafts and creative activities
- Books and quiet spaces
- Free pizza, snacks, and soft drinks
- A supportive, inclusive community

#### *A Place Where You Belong*

Participation is always voluntary. No one is expected to discuss personal topics unless they choose to. The focus is on connection, community, and having fun.

#### *Location*

##### **PFLAG Unity Center**

Downstairs at St. Paul's UCC  
17 Bond Street, Westminster, MD 21157

Although the Unity Center is located within St. Paul's church, YTA Fridays is not a religious event. Religion is not discussed during meetings.

#### *Learn More*

PFLAG Westminster-Carroll County  
410-599-4610  
[www.pflagwcc.org](http://www.pflagwcc.org)

**YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.**  
**Come as you are. Bring a friend. Find your community.**