

Healthy Hearts & Minds

CCYSB YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

MAY 2026

MAY IS
MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS
MONTH

May Is Mental Health Awareness Month: Supporting Youth & Teens

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. It's a time to bring attention to emotional well-being and reduce stigma around getting help. For children and teens, this is especially important. Many young people are navigating academic pressure, social stress, identity development, and big emotions, all while still learning how to understand and express what they're feeling.

So what does meaningful support actually look like? It often starts small and consistent.

1. Make mental health part of everyday conversation

You don't need a "perfect" script. Simple, open-ended check-ins like *"What felt stressful today?"* or *"What's been on your mind lately?"* can go a long way. The goal isn't to fix it's to create space.

2. Normalize emotions (even the uncomfortable ones)

Teens are more likely to open up when they feel understood, not judged. Let them know that anxiety, sadness, frustration, and overwhelm are all part of being human, not something to hide or "get over."

3. Watch for changes, not just red flags

Withdrawal, irritability, changes in sleep, loss of interest, or increased sensitivity can all be signs a teen is struggling. These don't always mean something severe, but they are signals worth paying attention to.

4. Focus on connection as protection

Feeling seen, valued, and supported is one of the strongest protective factors against suicide. Even small moments of connection like shared meals, car rides, inside jokes matter more than they might seem.

5. Know when to get extra support

If your child expresses hopelessness, talks about wanting to die, or seems overwhelmed beyond what they can manage, reaching out to a mental health professional is an important step not a failure.

Conversation Starter:

"May is Mental Health Awareness Month—what do you think people your age wish adults understood better about stress or mental health?"

Quick Reminder: If you or someone you know needs immediate support in the U.S., you can call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or chat via 988lifeline.org.

What's Inside:

May Is Mental Health Awareness
Month: Supporting Youth & Teens

Finding Your People (Even If It Feels
Impossible Right Now)

Big Feelings, Fast: What to Do in the
Moment



Sandymount Park
2250 Old Westminster Pike
Finksburg, 21048

May 8, 2026
5:30-7pm

ENJOY THE SOUNDS OF SUMMER
WITH A FREE PARK CONCERT
FEATURING LIVE MUSIC, FOOD TRUCKS,
AND A SPECIAL TREAT -
A FLOWER FOR THE FIRST 50 MOMS!



STOP THE BLEED®

Lifesaving Training

MAY 30
2026
SAT
Eldersburg Large
Meeting Room
Saturday, May 30, 2026
1:00pm-2:00pm



REGISTRATION
REQUIRED.
AGES 14+

This hands-on training demonstrates three quick lifesaving techniques you can use to keep someone from bleeding out in case of injury. Learn how to apply pressure to a wound with your hands, pack a wound to control bleeding, and correctly apply a tourniquet. All participants receive a free personal Stop the Bleed® kit. Presented by R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, University of Maryland Medical Center.

Finding Your People (Even If It Feels Impossible Right Now)

If you've ever felt like you don't really fit anywhere or like everyone else already has their group, you're not the only one. A lot of teens feel this way, even if it doesn't look like it from the outside.

Sometimes it seems like everyone else just clicked into friendships, while you're still trying to figure out where you belong. That can feel lonely, frustrating, and honestly... exhausting.

Here's the truth: finding your people usually isn't instant. It's something that builds over time.

Why It Can Feel So Hard

- You might feel different (your interests, identity, sense of humor, values)
- You've been hurt or left out before, so it's harder to trust
- Social media makes it look like everyone else has perfect friendships
- You're still figuring out who you are, which makes it harder to know who fits

None of this means you won't find your people. It just means you're in the middle of the process.

What "Your People" Actually Means

It's not about being popular or having a huge friend group.

It's about finding even one or two people where:

- You don't feel like you have to pretend
- You can relax a little more
- You feel respected and accepted
- You can be honest (even if it's awkward sometimes)

That kind of connection is way more important than having a lot of surface-level friendships.

How to Start Finding Them (Without Forcing It)

- Follow what you're genuinely into. Clubs, sports, art, gaming, volunteering, whatever feels even a little interesting. Shared interests make connection easier and more natural.
- Look for small moments, not instant best friends. A good conversation. Sitting next to the same person a few times. Laughing about something random. That's how friendships actually start.
- Be a little bit real (when it feels safe). You don't have to share everything, but letting people see small pieces of the real you helps the right people find you.
- Pay attention to how people make you feel. The "right" people aren't perfect, but you should generally feel okay being around them, not constantly judged or drained.
- Give it time. It's normal for friendships to build slowly. If it hasn't happened yet, it doesn't mean it won't.

If You're Feeling Really Alone

Feeling like you don't belong anywhere can get heavy fast. If that's where you are right now:

- Try reaching out to one safe person (friend, family member, counselor, coach)
- Even saying "Hey, I've been feeling kind of alone lately" is enough to start
- You deserve support. You don't have to figure this out by yourself.

If things feel overwhelming or you're struggling with thoughts about hurting yourself, you can call or text 988 (in the U.S.) to reach trained counselors who will listen without judgment.

Try This:

This week, pick one small step:

- Sit near someone new
- Say one extra sentence in a conversation
- Join (or just check out) a club or group
- Message someone you feel kind of comfortable with

It doesn't have to be a big move. Small steps count.

One More Thing

Not fitting in everywhere doesn't mean something is wrong with you.

Sometimes it just means you haven't found the right people yet.

And they're out there.

Big Feelings, Fast: What to Do in the Moment

Sometimes emotions don't build slowly, they hit all at once.

Anger, panic, sadness, shame, it can feel like your brain and body are on overload, and you just want it to stop.

In those moments, it's not about having the perfect solution. It's about getting through the wave safely.

What's Happening Right Now

When emotions spike fast, your brain goes into "alarm mode."

That can look like:

- Racing thoughts
- Tight chest or fast breathing
- Urges to yell, shut down, or do something you might regret
- Feeling out of control

This isn't you being "dramatic," it's your nervous system trying (a little too hard) to protect you.

What Actually Helps in the Moment

You don't need to do all of these. Just pick one and try it.

1. Cool your body down

Strong emotions = your body is overheated.

- Splash cold water on your face
- Hold an ice cube
- Step outside for fresh air

This can help your system slow down faster than trying to "think your way out."

2. Slow your breathing (just a little)

You don't need a fancy technique. Try:

- Inhale for 4
- Exhale for 6

Longer exhales tell your body you're not in danger.

3. Ground yourself in what's real

Look around and name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear

This pulls you out of the spiral and back into the present moment.

4. Move your body—on purpose

Let the energy out safely:

- Walk fast
- Do jumping jacks
- Punch a pillow
- Stretch

Big feelings need somewhere to go.

5. Give your thoughts a little space

Instead of fighting your thoughts, try:

- "I'm having the thought that everything is falling apart"
- "This feeling is really intense, and it will pass"

You're not pretending it's fine, you're just not letting the thoughts take over.

The Most Important Thing to Remember

Feelings peak, and then they pass. Even when it doesn't feel like it, the intensity will come down.

Your job isn't to make it disappear instantly, it's to ride it out without hurting yourself or making things worse.

If You Feel Like You Might Act on an Urge

That's a sign you need extra support right now, not that you've failed.

Try:

- Putting space between you and anything you could use to hurt yourself
 - Reaching out to someone safe (friend, parent, counselor)
 - Texting or calling 988 (in the U.S.) to talk to someone who gets it
- You don't have to handle that moment alone.

Try Out These Skills Before You Need Them

Pick one skill from this list and practice it when you're calm.

It'll be easier to use when things feel intense.

Last Reminder:

Having big feelings doesn't mean you're "too much."

It means your emotions are strong and you're learning how to handle them. It's a skill and it gets easier with practice.

Safety Plans Work

There is hope.



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

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

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)



Modified from Stanley & Brown (2021)

PEP22-08-03-007

Crisis Resources

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

9-8-8 (Call or Text)

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

The Trevor Project
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."

for your Mental Health ♥♥
Remember To



Unplug



Validate
Feelings



Journal



Reach Out



Reframe
Thoughts



Rest

MORE INFO AT
CHELANVALLEYHOPE.ORG/NEWS-UPDATES

**WE ALL
NEED
MENTAL
HEALTH
SUPPORT.**



TEXT

MDYoungMinds
to 898-211

Teens, get supportive
text messages.



Scan to learn more



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MENTAL HEALTH

matters

B I N G O

Enjoy some quiet time & "unplug."	Try something new.	Be Active.	Give yourself permission to take a break.	Make a gratitude list.
Validate your own feelings.	Get 8 hours of sleep.	Cook a healthy & delicious meal.	Drink enough water.	Take a bath or hot shower
Take 10 deep breaths.	Accomplish 1 item on your "to-do" list.	Be Kind to yourself & give yourself a <u>FREE</u> space.	Compliment yourself.	Set a new goal for yourself.
Spend time outdoors.	Ask for help.	Declutter or organize your space.	Listen to music.	Go for a walk.
Allow yourself to rest.	Catch up with a friend.	Laugh.	Be kind to someone.	Read a book.