

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

Mental Health Matters

Jasmine desperately wants to call for help but feels too paralyzed by fear to pick up the phone. What would her friends think? Or her boss? Her family? The weight of her anxiety has become unbearable, but the worry about judgement and disapproval feels just as suffocating. Jasmine's story is not unique. With almost a billion people world-wide living with a mental health condition, it's clear that our mental health needs attention. But sadly, there's an obstacle keeping many of us from having the kind of mental health support that is widely needed - stigma, the belief that mental health struggles are socially unacceptable.



While the widespread efforts to reduce stigma have helped us become less likely to judge other people, it's clear that many of us still worry that others will look down on us if they think we're struggling. This assumption about their judgement is called *self-stigma*. The shame, guilt, and embarrassment that come with the self-stigma can keep us silently suffering.

In celebration of World Mental Health Day on October 10th, we encourage you to consider if self-stigma has prevented you from fully caring for yourself or seeking any support you may have needed. Please know that your mental health is worth prioritizing and consider the following steps to help break the self-stigma.

Steps to Break the (Self) Stigma

Find Time for Self-care – Whether you have 2 minutes or 20, taking time out to practice an act of self-care can increase your resilience and impact your mental health. If you're a busy working parent or simply not as motivated as you'd like to be, try to identify pockets of time available to focus on something that nurtures you. Then, schedule some activities. Maybe it's a walk outside, a 2-minute guided relaxation exercise, or a long soothing shower. Sometimes our actions actually change our thoughts, and these daily choices can increase the belief that our well-being is important, and we can do something about it.

Inspect Your Thoughts – Our thoughts have a powerful influence on our emotions. If you are struggling with thoughts that are leading to shame and embarrassment about your well-being, try examining those thoughts. A proven strategy we teach here at Learn to Live is Thought Inspection, a method for examining the thinking patterns that lead to unhelpful emotions. New thoughts can lead to new emotions.

Build a Support Network – Even if you're not ready to seek professional help for your mental health concerns, research shows that reducing loneliness through positive social communication helps us develop a sense of stability and reduces anxiety. Consider reaching out to a trusted friend and sharing what you're going through, building or re-building connections with family members, or using small talk to engage the neighbor you've been wanting to get to know better. Everyone needs a support system – think about how you might strengthen yours.

Get Started Today

To learn more about the tools above, we encourage you to enroll in our Resilience program, or you can consider other programs by starting with a quick mental health assessment by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and entering access code **MMHG**. Our programs and resources are available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

