

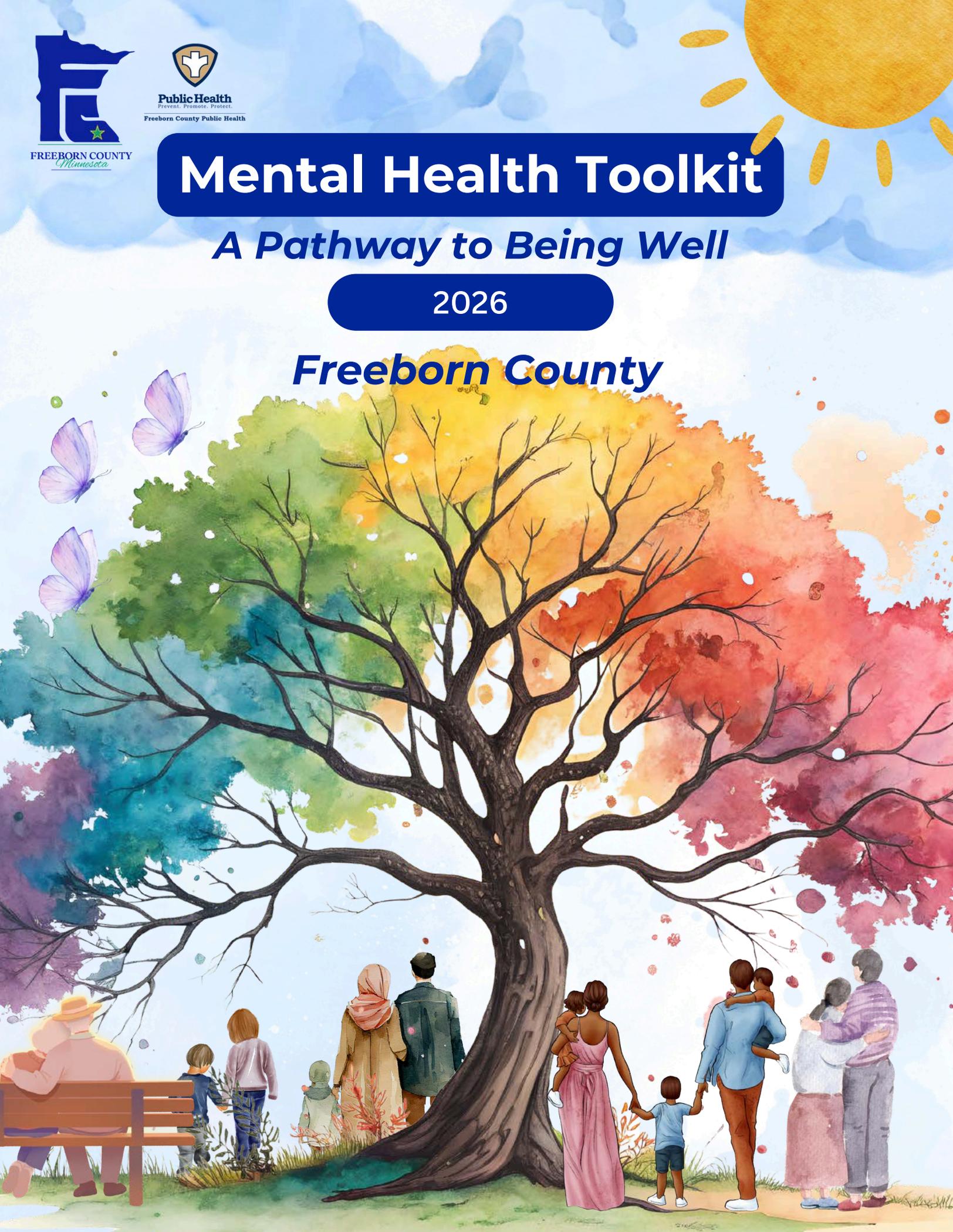


# Mental Health Toolkit

*A Pathway to Being Well*

2026

*Freeborn County*



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# Welcome

NAVIGATING THE PATH TO MENTAL WELL-BEING, ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME.



## What Is Mental Health?

Mental, and physical health are equally important and connected. Mental health shapes how we think, feel, and act. With support and safe environments, everyone can work toward feeling well and thriving.

Mental health includes feeling good about who you are, finding joy and purpose, and building strong relationships. It also means managing life's ups and downs and knowing when to ask for help.

**YOU'RE NOT ALONE. SUPPORT IS HERE.**



# Self-Acceptance



## ✦ Accept Your Feelings

- All feelings are okay, even the hard ones.
- Sharing your feelings can help you feel better.
- Accepting how you feel is the first step to growing.

## ✦ Be Kind to Yourself

- Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a friend.
- Its okay to make mistakes.
- Everyone has things they are learning.

## ✦ Notice What You're Good At

- Think about things you do well.
- Celebrate small wins each day.
- Your strengths make you unique.

# HEALTHY *Sleep*

## ✦ Key Points

- Good sleep keeps your body and mind healthy.
- Sleep needs change with age.
- Talk to a doctor if sleep problems continue.



## ✦ Health Benefits

- Keeps you healthy and strong.
- Reduces stress and boosts your mood.
- Improves focus and helps you stay safe.



## ✦ What To Do

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and relaxing.
- Turn off electronics 30 minutes before bed.



# Healthy

## EATING AND IT'S CHALLENGES

### ✦✦ Eat Foods That Fuel Your Body

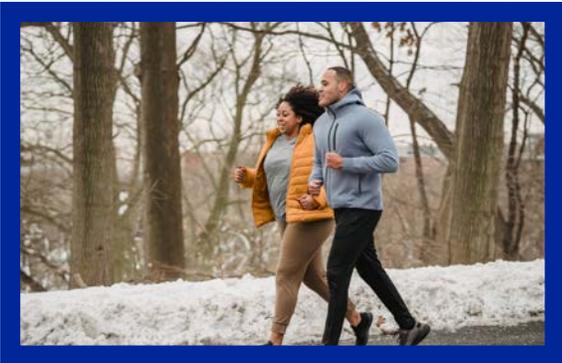
- Eat fruits and veggies every day.
- Pick whole grains like oatmeal or whole-wheat bread.
- Drink low-fat milk or choose other calcium-rich foods.

### ✦✦ Limit Sugar and Salt

- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Eat fewer salty snacks and fast foods.
- Cook with healthy oils.
- These choices boost your mood and energy.



# Physical Activity



## Move To Feel Better & Live Longer

- Move your body often, even in small ways.
- Being active lowers your risk of many diseases.
- It makes your bones and muscles stronger.



## Activity Helps Mind & Body

- Moving often boosts mood and sleep.
- It helps manage health conditions.
- More movement benefits your body and mind.



# Healthy Tech Habits

## ✨ Set Screen Time Limits

- Choose certain times for using devices.
- Try to keep screen time short each day.
- Too much screen time can harm your health.

## ✨ Use Devices Safely

- Keep screens out of your bedroom at night.
- Turn off devices before bed.
- Tell an adult if something online feels wrong.



# Healthy Connections



## Key Points

- Builds a sense of belonging.
- Supports mental and physical health.
- Helps people live longer, healthier lives.



## Why It's Important

- Lowers the risk of major diseases.
- Improves mood and stress control.
- Supports healthy habits and sleep.



## Lack of Connection

- Isolation means being alone.
- Loneliness is feeling alone.
- Both can harm your health.



# Hobbies/Activities



## Try New Activities

- Try hobbies like drawing or music.
- New activities help your brain grow.
- Fun hobbies help you feel calm and happy.

## Stay Active Every Day

- Move your body by walking or playing.
- Activity keeps your muscles strong.
- It boost your mood and sleep.

## Spend Time With Others

- Do hobbies with friends and family.
- Games and crafts can lift your mood.
- Being with others helps you feel supported.

# RELAXATION



## ✦ Take Slow, Deep Breaths

- Breathe in slowly, then breathe out.
- Deep breaths help your body calm down.
- You can do this anywhere, anytime.

## ✦ Give Your Mind A Break

- Sit quietly for a few minutes.
- Think about something peaceful.
- Quiet time helps your brain relax.

## ✦ Do Something That Feels Calm

- Listen to soft music or stretch your body.
- Go for a short walk or rest in a quiet spot.
- Relaxing activities help lower stress.

# Talk About Your Worries



## Tips for Meaningful Conversations

- Be ready to listen.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Show your concern and support.



## Conversation Starters

- How are you feeling?
- How's it going for you these days?
- What are you doing to take care of yourself?



## Listening with Compassion

Instead of.....

- It is what it is.
- Stop worrying so much.
- I know how to fix this.

Try.....

- I'm listening.
- I'm here for you.
- Tell me more.





# Relationship Tension



## Healthy Relationships

- Good relationships give support, comfort, and care.
- Respect and kind communication keep relationships strong.
- Forgiveness helps you heal and move forward.



## Getting Help When Needed

- Honest talks can help solve problems.
- Counseling or therapy can support families.
- If someone is hurting you, talk to a trusted person and get help safely.



# Bullying



## ✦ Bullying and Its Impact

- Bullying can happen in person or online and is a form of violence.
- It causes emotional pain and physical harm.
- It increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and sleep problems.



## ✦ How to Prevent Bullying

- Teach kids what bullying is and how to stand up safely.
- Talk often and listen to kids' concerns.
- Model kindness and respect so kids learn by example.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/youth-violence/about/about-bullying.html>



# Financial CHALLENGES



## 💡 Money Stress and Mental Health

- Money worries can cause stress.
- Stress can make it hard to sleep.
- It can cause headaches or stomach aches.
- People may feel sad or overwhelmed.

## 💡 Coping with Money Stress

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Take calming breaks.
- Track your spending.
- Ask for community help.

# Health Related Worries



## ✦ Coping with Bad News

- It's normal to feel fear, anger, or sadness after bad news.
- Give yourself time to process your feelings.
- Talk with family, friends, or a professional for support.

## ✦ Healthy Habits to Manage Stress

- Eat a variety of healthy foods.
- Get enough rest to manage stress and tiredness.
- Stay active or do fun activities to feel better.

# Language Barriers



## Language-Related Worries

- Using, or understanding language can feel stressful.
- People may feel worried, upset, or scared when communicating.
- Stress can make it harder to speak with confidence.

## How Language Anxiety Feels

- Fast heartbeat or tense muscles.
- Sweating or feeling nervous.
- Feeling unsure in certain situations.

# UNFAIR TREATMENT AND RACISM



## Unfair Treatment's Impacts

- Racial groups reported different levels of discrimination.
- Discrimination increased emotional distress.
- This was true even after other factors were considered.
- The effect was weaker for some minority groups.

## Steps for Coping and Moving Forward

- Explain how the situation made you feel.
- Set boundaries and focus on what you can control.
- Talk to trusted people for support.
- Write down what happened if it's a work or legal issue.

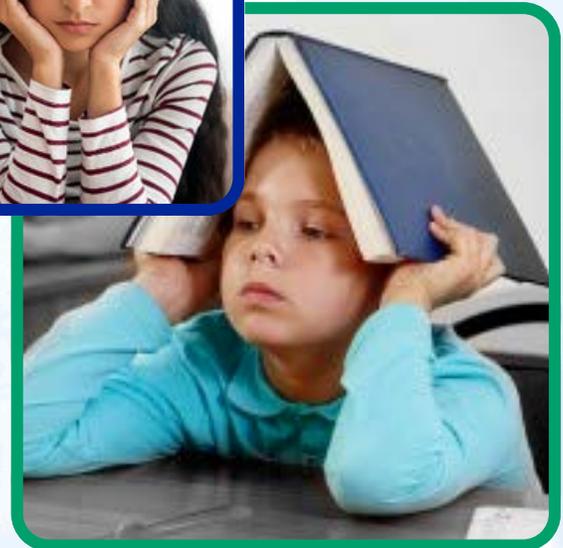
# DEPRESSION: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

## ✦ Depression and Loss of Interest

- Causes lasting sadness and loss of interest.
- Is more than feeling “blue”.
- Often needs care, but treatment helps.

## ✦ Key Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling sad, irritable, or hopeless.
- Changes in sleep, energy, appetite, or focus.
- Thoughts of self-harm need quick help.



# Anxiety

## *Stress and Overwhelmed*



## Understanding Anxiety Disorders

- Anxiety becomes a disorder when worry is strong, lasts a long time, or is hard to control.
- It can disrupt daily life and cause people to avoid places or situations.
- Different types of anxiety exist, and treatment can help.



## Knowing When to Get Support

- Get help if worry affects school, work, sleep, or daily life.
- Talk to a doctor if anxiety happens with depression, substance use, or health problems.
- If you have thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 right away.

# Low Motivation and Self Care



## Why Self-Care Matters ✨

- Poor self-care can lead to illness, mood changes, and fatigue.
- Stress builds when basic needs are ignored.
- Simple habits like breathing, mindfulness, and rest can help.

## Signs of Burnout ✨

- Feeling tired, moody, or getting sick more often.
- Pulling away from others or feeling overwhelmed.
- Struggling with daily tasks or negative self-talk.



# TRAUMA

## ACES

### ✦ What Are ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

- ACES are stressful or harmful events in childhood.
- They can affect health, learning, and well-being later in life.
- ACES are common, and some groups experience them more often.

### ✦ Why Preventing ACES Matters

- Prevention lowers future health problems.
- It reduces chronic disease and mental health challenges.
- It can prevent many cases of heart disease and depression.

# SUBSTANCE USE AND ADDICTION



## ✨ Drugs Can Make Stress Worse

- Using drugs or alcohol can harm mental health.
- They can increase anxiety, sadness, and anger.
- Drugs can affect memory and mood.

## ✨ Healthy Ways to Handle Stress

- Choose hobbies and activities you enjoy.
- Do things that help you relax and feel good.
- Activities like sports, art, reading, or time with pets can help.

# High Risk Behavior



## 🌟 Violence and Mental Health

- Violence increases the risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and self-harm.
- Experiencing abuse or violence in childhood raises mental health risks later in life.
- Substance use, stress, and unsafe environments make violence more likely and harder to recover from.

## 🌟 Alcohol Use and Mental Health

- Alcohol can worsen anxiety, depression, and mood changes.
- Heavy drinking increases the risk of suicide and other substance use disorders.
- Alcohol affects brain function and can make it harder to cope with stress or emotions.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7005a4.htm>



# Self-Harm



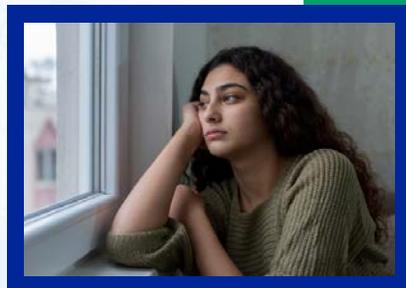
## What Is Self-Injury

- Hurting your body on purpose (such as cutting or burning).
- Used to cope with strong or painful feelings.
- May bring short relief but causes more pain over time.

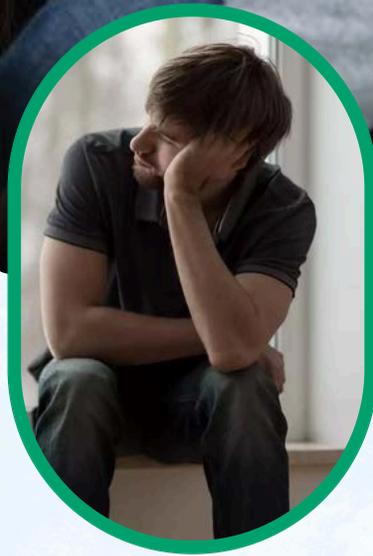


## Signs and Causes

- Visible injuries or trying to hide wounds.
- Trouble handling strong emotions or stress.
- Feeling lonely, rejected, or deeply hurt.



# THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE



## What Makes Suicide Risk Go Up

- Serious illness, money or job problems, or past attempts.
- Bullying, loss, violence, or feeling very alone.
- Lack of care, unsafe communities, or access to harmful tools.



## Protecting People From Suicide

- Strong coping skills and reasons to live.
- Supportive relationships and feeling connected.
- Access to health care and safer communities.

# MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA



## 🌟 Mental Health Stigma

- Stigma means negative beliefs about mental health conditions.
- It can stop people from asking for help or staying in treatment.
- Stigma can lead to discrimination and unfair treatment.

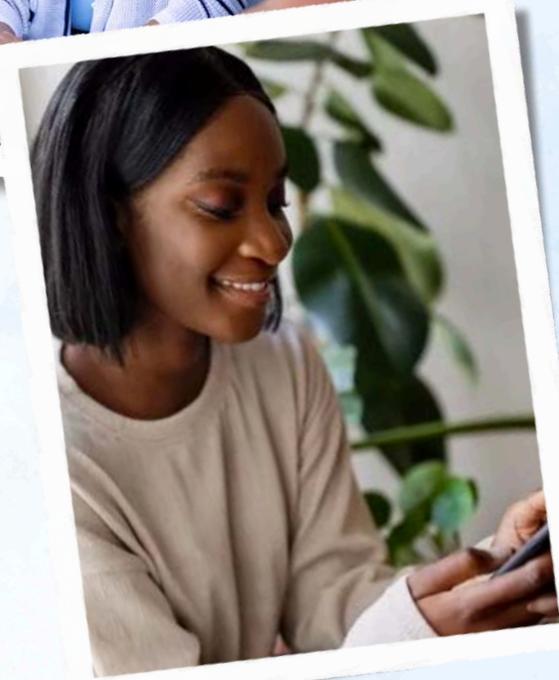
## 🌟 Ways to Reduce Stigma

- Support policies that improve access to care, work, and housing.
- Use respectful language and accurate information.
- Encourage understanding and support for people with mental health conditions.





## THE ONE STOP SHOP FOR MENTAL HEALTH WELLBEING RESOURCES



 **CredibleMind:** is a free, confidential, 24/7 online platform with expert-vetted videos, podcasts, apps, articles, and books—all in one place. Learn new skills, explore mental health topics, take assessments, and access thousands of trusted wellbeing resources.

 **CredibleMind covers over 100 topics, including:**

- Stress
- Time-Management
- Burnout
- Happiness
- Anxiety
- Sleep
- Depression
- Parenting
- Relationships
- Grief and Loss
- Mindfulness
- Flourishing
- Resilience
- Substance Use
- Coping with Medical Diagnosis
- Aging

 **By signing up:** You can track assessment results over time, save favorite resources, and receive handpicked CredibleMind content by email. No matter what you're going through, CredibleMind offers trusted, science-backed support to help.



**VISIT [FREEBORN.CREDIBLEMIND.COM](https://freeborn.crediblemind.com) TO GET STARTED**

# RESOURCES

- **EMERGENCY.....911**
- **SUICIDE HOTLINE..... 988**
- Abigail Goskesn, LICSW.....507-383-6872
- Albert Lea VA Clinic..... 507-379-5532
- Althing Clinic.....507-396-8284
- Arukah Christian Counseling.....507-402-6934
- Behavioral Health Services.....507-377-6406
- Catholic Charities..... 507-377-3664
- Cedar House.....507-377-8506
- Ellie Wiemerslage Essential Psychology.....507-383-2560
- Fernbrook Family Center.....507-446-0431
- Freeborn County Dept. of Human Services.....507-377-5400
- Freeborn County Mental Health Center.....507- 377-5440
- South Central Crisis Line.....877-399-3040
- Independent Management Services.....507-396-4477
- Lutheran Social Services of MN.....800-582-5260
- Mason City Clinic- Psychiatric.....800-622-1411
- Mayo Clinic Health System .....507-377-2384
- Mayo Clinic Social Services.....507-284-2131
- Nexus Gerard Academy.....507-433-1843
- Pathways to Healing.....507-688-4004
- Sandy Anderson Consulting & Coaching.....507-440-2390
- Stacy Brown Wellness Counseling Studio.....507-478-7480
- Stellar Wellness, Tara Jenö.....507- 203-2761
- Tim Lang- Southern MN Psyc. Services.....507-438-3062
- Water Street Psychology.....507-377-1719
- AA Groups in Albert Lea.....507-373-7307
- Circle of Parents.....507-383-8842
- Family Care Givers Network.....507- 377-7433
- Memory Café.....507-373-3938
- Minnesota Warmline.....855-927-6546
- Next Step Club House.....507-373-6938
- Parenting Resource Center
- Parent Warm Line.....888-584-2204
- Spanish.....507-437-8330
- Karen.....1-877-434-9528