EVERY DAY IS MiND DAY

Mental Health Toolkit for Young People

Dear Mental Health Champion,

Thank you for joining UNICEF's **Every Day is Mind Day campaign** to normalise conversations about mental health for young people and caregivers in Thailand.

We need your help in making mental health and well-being part of our daily conversations.

Take the first step and use this toolkit to learn more about your own mental health and things that you can do every day to look after yourself.

When you feel ready, start having conversations with your loved ones about mental health. The more we all talk about it, the less stigma there will be about sharing our feelings and challenges.

You may not be able to solve their problems, but you can be a good listener and direct them to professional help if needed.

Helping others is also good for your own mental well-being. It can make you more aware of how you feel and boost your mood and self-esteem.

Being a Mental Health Champion can be a part of your everyday life with these simple steps.

Thank you for joining us on this journey to make a positive difference in the lives of young people and their families.

UNICEF and Department of Mental Health

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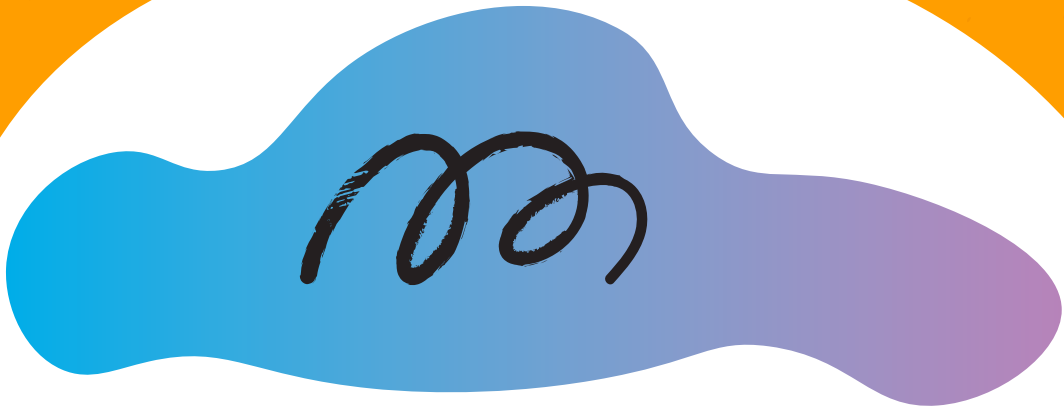
ALL ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH

and taking good care
of yourself and others!

The COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal has had a huge impact on our lives. Many of us are left feeling stressed, overwhelmed and worried about the future. **But you are not alone.**

Now is the time to learn more about mental health, which can often feel like a tricky or taboo topic to talk about.

Mental health is just as important as physical health.

Young people need healthy food and exercise to grow into healthy adults. Good mental well-being is equally as important to help us grow up happy and resilient.

In this toolkit, you will find helpful tips to keep your mental well-being as fit as it can be. You'll also find resources for professional help.
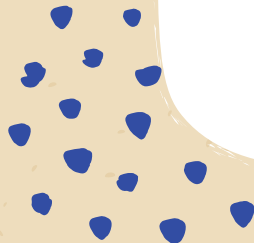
UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Did you know?
Our mental health is always changing.
We can feel strong one day and worried
the next. It's normal to have ups and downs,
especially when you're young.

Mental health is how we feel in our hearts and minds.

Good mental health helps us deal with ordinary life, school and work. It also helps us feel balanced and content.

Mental health challenges are not something to be ashamed of!

Sometimes we feel okay. Sometimes we don't. This is normal for people of all ages.

Mental health challenges are common.

There are different types and some are more severe than others. They can affect your emotions and how you think and act. But there are resources to help us get help when we need it.

Resilience is our ability to overcome challenges and adapt to change.

Just like we need daily fitness to keep our bodies strong against illnesses, we need to practise emotional fitness to help us manage our stress.

Self-care means looking after our own mental health.

For example, getting enough rest, eating healthy foods and exercising.

Social support is how others can help us maintain our mental health.
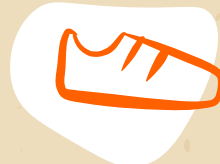
It is also what we can offer others to help them.

**Want someone to talk to?
Call the Department of Mental Health
Hotline 1323 for confidential and
anonymous counselling, 24 hours a day.**

DID YOU KNOW?

Around 20% of the world's children and adolescents have a mental health condition.

Walking for just 30 minutes a day can boost your mood.

Depression is very common and very treatable.

An hour of exercise every day is recommended for good mental health.

Depression and anxiety often go hand in hand.

Drink up! Staying hydrated is important for focus and emotional stability.

Vitamin D from sunlight helps your body produce serotonin, which affects your moods.

Eat well for mental health with bananas, nuts and oily fish like sardines and salmon.

Helping others feel better can help you feel better.

Expressing gratitude can boost your feelings of well-being.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS

Intense emotions

Loved
Feeling appreciated and cared for

Hatred
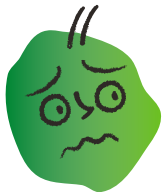Intense dislike

How you view yourself

Proud
Pleased with an achievement

Embarrassed
Ashamed or shy

Connected to thoughts of the future

Scared
Anxious or afraid

Hopeful
Feeling good about the future

Related to outside influences

Happy
Joy or when our experiences meet our expectations

Sad
Feeling down or heartbroken

Disappointed
Let down and defeated

Relieved
Comforted or reassured

Grateful
Thankful and appreciative

Angry
Frustrated or cross

EVERY DAY IS
MIND DAY

Daily reminders for mental well-being

Good mental well-being needs to be worked on daily, just like physical fitness.

Mental health challenges are nothing to be embarrassed about. They are normal.

Self-care is the first step for maintaining and improving mental well-being.

Everyday mental health practices are easy to do and can help you.

ALL ABOUT SELF AWARENESS

What is self-awareness?

Self-awareness is understanding yourself. It means listening to your thoughts and emotions and knowing how you feel and why. It's also understanding that other people may see you differently from how you see yourself.

Why is self-awareness important?

It's a part of getting to know yourself better. The better you know yourself, the stronger you will feel. Understanding your own feelings helps you know your own strengths and weaknesses. And that helps you build on your strengths and learn how to overcome challenges.

How can I develop self-awareness?

- Take quiet time to listen to your emotions and reflect on them. A journal is a good way to get started.

- Pay attention to how you feel throughout the day in different situations. Which situations make you feel happy? Anxious? Overwhelmed?

- Practise how you would tell someone what's on your mind and what you need to feel better.

How to journal

It can help to see your feelings on paper. It can also help you describe how you feel to other people. Start with these sentences and fill in the blanks:
"I feel _____ right now."
"I feel _____ when I _____."

BOOSTING
WELL-BEING

Doing small things every day can have a positive impact on mental well-being. Here are some easy ways to put self-care into each day.

Stick to a routine

with regular sleep and wake-up times to get enough rest. It's also easier to create healthy habits when you have a set routine.

Walk

to lift your mood, clear your head and boost the blood flow to your brain and body.

Keep a journal

and write down your feelings to understand them better. A journal can be a safe place to vent frustrations or fears. Putting thoughts and emotions on paper can also help you better understand them.

Eat nutritious food

Fruits, vegetables and "brain foods" like nuts, oily fish and beans are all healthy options for mental well-being. Energy drinks, sugary foods and drinks and alcohol can all make you feel anxious or irritable.

Meditate

to help control your breathing and heart rate. This will lower your stress. It's also good for improving concentration and boosting self-esteem. Start by sitting in a comfortable position, closing your eyes and calmly inhaling and exhaling. There are also many techniques to try online.

Stretch

or try gentle yoga movements to relax. Exhaling releases feel-good chemicals, or endorphins, in the brain.

Switch off from phones and gadgets

to feel better. Try to limit the free time you spend on your phone or surfing the internet to two hours a day. Social media can be fun, but it has also been linked to feelings of low self-esteem.

Spend time in nature

to help reduce stress. Caring for animals, visiting a park and gardening can all help.

Spend time with friends

They provide social support and make us feel loved and appreciated. Even a quick phone call can make you feel better.

Get enough sleep

It is closely related to mental and physical well-being. Avoid electronics and caffeine before bed and keep a regular sleep schedule to get enough quality rest.

How to feel better in 5 minutes

- Put down your phone.
- Stretch and breathe deeply.
- Take a walk outside.
- Write down how you feel.

Find a safe space to be yourself

Feeling like you need to have your guard up all the time can be emotionally exhausting. Safe spaces, online or offline, can help us freely express ourselves without worrying about what others think.

Identify people who make you feel safe, and find ways to connect. Familiar places can offer us comfort too, for example your home or a friend's home, a favourite cafe or a library. Music can also be used to create a safe and calming space for yourself.

ASKING FOR
HELP

We ask each other for help all the time in our daily lives. We also ask for help when our bodies are sick. We want to know why we are sick and how we can get better.
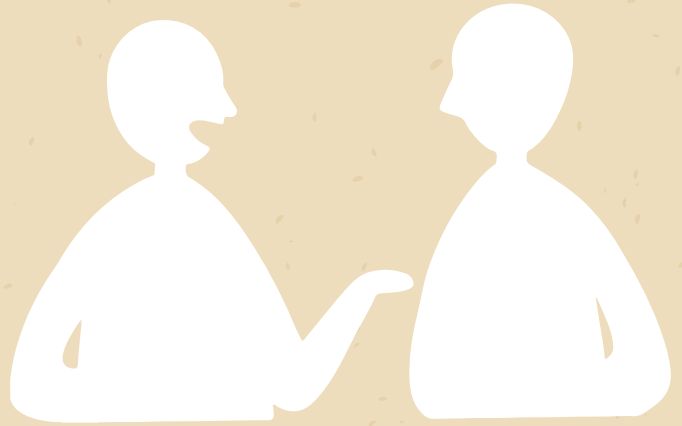
Why don't we ask for help with our mental health?

It's understandable that you might feel nervous because this isn't a topic that many people talk about in our society. But it's important to talk about it. Talking can help us understand our emotions better. It can also help us see things differently. Talking also helps other people to help us.

The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone. What you are experiencing is more common than you think, and talking about your problems with people you trust is the first step to getting help.

Three ways talking can help

It makes you feel seen and less alone. You can feel better just knowing that somebody that you trust is listening to you.

Talking about your problems also gives other people the chance to help you or direct you to others who can help. They may have had a similar experience or maybe they're just a really good listener.

Talking can help show that mental health challenges are real and something we should all help each other with.

Who to talk to

When you feel the time's right, think about who you want to talk to. Think about people you can trust and people who are close to you. A parent, close relative, teacher or maybe a friend. Sometimes, it's easier to talk to people who don't know you like a professional counsellor.

TIPS FOR HOW TO START TALKING ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH

Write your feelings in a journal if talking to someone feels too hard.

Talk to the mirror and practise what you want to tell people.

Record voice notes for yourself.

Try sending a text to a friend first to open the conversation.

Write a letter to someone you trust and read it to them.

A letter can spark a conversation. Here are some prompts to use.

- I have been feeling...
- I am afraid of…
- I am nervous to talk about this because...
- I want to tell you this because…
- Can you please help me?

SUPPORTING
YOUR FRIENDS

Helping others can also help you. Mental well-being starts with talking and having empathy – that means understanding how someone else feels. Here are some tips for talking about mental health with your friends, or anyone else who might need support.

✓ Start the conversation

- Turn off any digital distractions like your phone and the TV.

- Share your own story if it's relevant and may give the other person the confidence to open up to you.

- Be neutral and non-judgemental.

- Understand if they don't feel comfortable sharing with you. Suggest other people they may like to talk to.

✓ Ask how they are feeling

Start simply, and make sure to listen attentively. Be honest with them. It's okay to admit it if you feel uncomfortable talking. It's okay for there to be periods of silence.

✓ Ask twice

People might say they're fine the first time you ask. A second **"How are you feeling?"** tells them you are really ready for them to open up.

Ask open-ended questions

that begin with who, what, where, when, why or how and invite more detailed answers than yes or no questions.
"How are you feeling?"
"What was your favourite or least favourite part of the day?"
"Really? Tell me more..."
"What's your take on that?"

Keep the conversation going

Encourage them to share more by using prompts like **"Tell me more…"** or **"I'm listening…"** Asking questions such as **"And what do you think about that?"** can keep the conversation flowing naturally.

Keep conversations casual

and talk while doing other things to reduce the pressure on everyone. Try starting a conversation when you are walking or cooking together.

Don't try to fix things, and just listen

Listening is an important part of helping. Let them talk and express their feelings without judging or interrupting them.

Help them see they're not alone

Reassure people that you are there to help them. Tell them they have your support and you will try to help them get whatever help they need to feel better.

Be informed about professional support services

It's important to know that you can also get support by accessing the services below.

- **Hotline | 1323**
- **Mental Health Clinics at general hospitals**
- **Empathetic listening service** | www.satiapp.co
- **LoveCare Station**
  Online counselling (16:00-24:00)
  www.lovecarestation.com
  LINE Chat (12:00-20:00) | @lovecarestation
- **Self-assessment tool** | www.วัดใจ.com

What to say

Tell them that you care about them and that they matter to you.

Ask how you can help.

Ask if they want to talk about how they are feeling.

Tell them you understand, but only if you really do.

Remind them that they matter.

Remind them it's okay to feel this way.

What NOT to say

"I know how you feel."
Don't say this if you don't know how they feel; it invalidates or minimises their experience.

"Others have it worse than you."
This can make them feel guilty for how they feel.

"This is your own fault."
Don't blame your loved ones or friends for how they feel. Be understanding and empathetic.

What NOT to do

- ☒ **Avoid** them.
- ☒ **Make fun** of their mental health challenges.
- ☒ **Pressure** them to talk to you. Give them time and space.
- ☒ **Use words** like 'psycho' or 'crazy'.
- ☒ **Interrogate**, moralise or threaten.
- ☒ **Expect an easy cure.** People need time and space to overcome mental challenges.

Remember, Every Day is Mind Day

Let's all be kind to ourselves and support each other. A simple action, like asking how someone is feeling or being a good listener can make a big difference for those with mental health challenges. We are all in this together.

This toolkit was developed by UNICEF in partnership with Thailand's Department of Mental Health. Mental health content provided by Sompop Jamchan, a counselling psychologist.

Find more UNICEF resources on mental health at
Every Day is Mind Day | www.unicef.or.th/mindday
and **On My Mind** | www.unicef.org/mental-health-on-my-mind