



# Become a Mental Health Champion

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A guide for engaging your community, supporting mental wellness, and sharing resources.

# Welcome – Here's How This Toolkit Is Designed to Support You



This toolkit is designed to meet you wherever you are—with practical tools to support someone in your life, and meaningful ways to take action in your community.

It's organized in two simple phases:

## **Phase 1: Be Ready to Support**

You'll find clear, compassionate guidance on how to start conversations about mental health, recognize when immediate help is needed, talk with teens, and build personal and shared safety plans.

## **Phase 2: Be a Champion in Action**

When you're ready, you can choose how you'd like to show up. There's more than one way to be a Mental Health Champion.

Some people begin by learning how to support.

Some begin by showing up in person.

Some begin by using their voice.

Some begin by giving behind the scenes.

Many people move between these roles over time, and every one of them matters.

- **Learn** – Build Skills Through Training
- **Act** – Show Up Through Volunteering & Events
- **Share** – Use Your Voice Through Advocacy & Social Media
- **Sustain** – Fuel the Mission Through Fundraising & Giving

# How EveryMind Strengthens Communities

EveryMind is a nonprofit organization that strengthens communities and empowers individuals to reach optimal mental wellness. Our services span prevention, early intervention, and crisis support—so people can access help before challenges escalate.

## Our Core Programs Include:



**School-Based Mental Health Services**



**Community-Based Counseling Services**



**Homeless & Housing Support Services**



**Veteran & Military Family Support Services**



**Mental Health Literacy**



**24/7 Call, Text, & Chat Services**

Together, these services form a continuum of care—supporting people at every stage of need, from everyday stress to moments of crisis.

## Our 2025 Impact at a Glance:

**67,934**

Community Members Served

**98%**

of hotline Interactions were de-escalated

**95%**

of parents became more engaged in their child's school community

**97%**

of mental health training participants were more likely to seek help for themselves or others

EveryMind's impact is only possible because of people like you—community members, volunteers, and partners who show up for mental health and for one another. Your commitment generates a ripple effect throughout the community.

**[Read our full Impact Report to learn more!](#)**

# Phase 1: Your Resource Guide for Supporting Mental Health

## How this Section is Organized

This section brings together the tools, guidance, and planning resources that help you feel more confident supporting someone else through everyday stress and more serious moments. **Use this map to navigate what's ahead in the packet.**



### KNOW HOW AND WHEN TO USE 988

**When safety is a concern.**  
When to use 988 vs. 911 •  
What to expect • Save 988.



### PREPARE A SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

**Prepare before stress hits.**  
Body • Mind • Emotions •  
Connection • Environment •  
Hard moments



### START THE CONVERSATION



**Reach out. Listen. Stay present.**  
What to say • What helps •  
What to avoid • How to follow up



### TALK TO TEENS WITH CONFIDENCE



**Build trust through real conversation.**  
How to open the door • What builds trust • When to involve support



### HELP BUILD A SAFETY PLAN



**Support through crisis.**  
Warning signs • Coping tools •  
Crisis contacts • Check-ins

# Start the Conversation

## How to Talk to Someone Who May be Struggling

Supporting someone through a difficult moment doesn't require having all the answers. Often, the most meaningful thing you can offer is your presence, your patience, and a willingness to listen. This guide outlines simple ways to open conversations about mental health and connect someone to the support they deserve.

### Start with Care and Curiosity

Reaching out can feel intimidating, but a gentle check-in can make all the difference.

- ✓ Begin with an observation: "I've noticed you've seemed overwhelmed lately."
- ✓ Ask open and supportive questions: "How have you been feeling?"
- ✓ Keep your tone calm, nonjudgmental, and genuine.

### What Helps

- Speaking privately and without distractions
- Letting them set the pace
- Showing empathy with simple statements like "I'm really glad you told me."

### Listen to Understand, Not to Fix

Your role is not to diagnose or offer solutions—it's to listen.

- ✓ Use active listening: maintain eye contact, nod, paraphrase what you hear.
- ✓ Resist the urge to jump in with advice or comparisons.
- ✓ Validate their feelings: "That sounds really hard," or "It makes sense you're feeling this way."

### Avoid

- Minimizing ("Everyone feels like that sometimes")
- Making assumptions or judgments
- Trying to solve everything for them

### Encourage Support, Not Pressure

If someone opens up, gently guide them toward resources.

- ✓ Ask if they've considered talking to a professional, trusted friend, or family member.
- ✓ Offer to help them explore options—such as EveryMind's services, community programs, or a primary care provider.
- ✓ If they decline, keep the door open: "If you ever want help finding support, I'm here."

### Important Note

You DO NOT need to have all the answers or provide mental health advice. Your encouragement and consistency matter.

# Start the Conversation (cont'd)

## How to Talk to Someone Who May be Struggling

### Know when Immediate Help is Needed

Take action if there are signs someone may be in immediate danger.

- ✓ If they express thoughts of self-harm, suicidal ideation, or intentions to harm someone else, stay with them and seek help right away.
- ✓ Call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.
- ✓ If there is imminent danger, call 911

### About 988

988 is available to support both people who may be struggling and anyone who is reaching out because they're worried about someone else.

**\*Remember: You don't need to be in crisis to call.**

### Follow Up and Stay Connected

Checking in after the conversation reinforces trust and reduces isolation.

- ✓ Send a quick message: "Thinking of you—how are things today?"
- ✓ Celebrate small steps and efforts they're making.
- ✓ Continue being a consistent, supportive presence.

### Remember: You Don't Need to Be an Expert to Make a Difference

Being a bridge isn't about having the perfect words, it's about showing up with compassion and helping someone move toward hope, connection, and support.

### Take Care of Yourself, Too

Supporting others can be emotionally taxing.

- ✓ Set healthy boundaries
- ✓ Debrief with someone you trust (without sharing private details)
- ✓ Make space for your own mental wellbeing

### Want to Learn More?

Sign up for one of EveryMind's evidence-based mental health trainings and learn how to:

- recognize warning signs
- support someone in distress
- connect them to help

Deepen your knowledge! Sign up for trainings by visiting [EveryMind.org/Events](https://EveryMind.org/Events)

# Know How and When to Use 988

## The Challenge

**49,316 deaths by suicide in 2023**  
**1 death every 11 minutes**



### Risk Factors

Relationship concerns → Past trauma →  
Mental and physical health-related concerns  
→ Environmental stress



### Protective Factors

Access to mental health support → Feeling  
connected to family and/or community



### Warning Signs

Withdrawal/isolation → Feelings of guilt,  
hopelessness or worthlessness → Perceived  
burden on others

## What is 988?

**9,360 Average Daily Contacts**

- ✓ 24/7 free, confidential, and local support
- ✓ Available by text, phone, or online chat
- ✓ Safety Planning
- ✓ Coordination of referral to local resources

| 988                      | 911                                     |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Behavioral Health Crises | Medical Emergencies/<br>Physical Danger |

## What to Expect When You Reach Out

**Call** → **Options Menu** → **Counselor Connects**

**Text** → **Choose Veterans/  
Spanish/Main** → **Brief Survey** → **Counselor  
Connects**

**Chat** → **"Chat With Us"** → **Brief Survey** → **Counselor  
Connects**

## FAQs

### Is the 988 Lifeline only available in English?

The 988 Crisis line is available  
**24/7, 365** days a year. The line is  
available in **240 languages**  
including **Spanish**.

### Does 988 use police intervention for those who reach out to the 988 Lifeline?

**Less than 2%** of calls are redirected to  
911. Calls are **only redirected when**  
**there is an imminent risk to**  
**someone's life** ([988 lifeline](#)).



**Call or Text 988**



**Chat at 988lifeline.org**

**988**

**SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE**

# Talk to Teens with Confidence

## By Teens, For Adults



### Start the Conversation

Share your own experiences to build trust—then shift the focus back to them and actively listen.



"When I was your age, I felt stressed about exams too."



### Listen without Judging

Less advice, more listening. Validate their feelings instead of minimizing them.



"It sounds like you're really overwhelmed. I'm here to help."



### Respect goes both ways

Rethink the adult-child relationship. "I'm the adult" doesn't build trust. Respect their voice.



Challenge stigma that minimizes mental health experiences.



### Bring in the Professionals

Don't wait for a crisis. Suggest a neutral third party like 988 crisis line, therapists or counselors.



Be involved with the professionals whenever possible and work as a team.



### Create a Supportive Space

Every gesture counts. Even if it's awkward or one-sided, initiating the conversation shows you care.



Remember, just opening the conversation is progress.



### Follow Up Routinely

Check in regularly, without pressure. Routine conversations help build trust and make it easier to open up.



They'll come to you when they're ready. Every step forward takes time.

# Prepare a Self Care Toolkit

When life feels overwhelming, it can be hard to remember what actually helps. This page is a place to write down go-to strategies to have them ready when they're needed most. There's no right or wrong way to fill this out. It's simply about noticing what helps you or your loved one.

**Physical: When my body feels tense, depleted, or overstimulated, what actually helps? (ex: walking, stretching, exercise, sleep, shower, warm drinks)**

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**Social: When I need connection or support, who or what helps me feel less alone? (ex: a person I can call or text, a place I can go where I feel welcomed)**

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**Emotional: When my feelings feel heavy or intense, what helps me release or process them? (ex: talking, crying, journaling, music, other things that help me feel comforted)**

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**Mental: When my mind is racing, stuck in worry, or overwhelmed, what helps slow it down? (ex: grounding or breathing techniques, prayers, affirmations, or reminders that help)**

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**Environmental: When my environment feels overwhelming or draining, what helps change the vibe? (ex: ways I make my space feel calmer, outdoor places that help me reset, etc)**

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**When I'm really struggling... (ex: one thing I can do right away, one person I can reach out to, or one reminder I need to hear)**

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# Take Action: Build a Safety Plan for Support and Stability

A safety plan is a practical tool to help you, or someone you care about, prepare for challenges, recognize needs, and access support. Following these steps can make it easier to respond during difficult moments and stay connected to the help you need.

1

## Identify Triggers and Warning Signs

Notice situations or events that may cause stress, anxiety, or depression. Look for early warning signs, such as changes in sleep, appetite, energy, or mood.

2

## List Coping Strategies

Choose healthy ways to cope, like deep breathing, mindfulness, exercise, or creative activities. Include strategies that can be used alone or with others.

3

## Reach Out to Your Support Network

Make a list of friends, family, or mentors you can contact for support. Share the plan with them and discuss the ways they can help.

4

## Establish a Crisis Contact

Designate a trusted person to contact during severe distress. Make sure your support network knows who this person is and when to reach out.

5

## Create a Safe Environment

Identify safe spaces where you or your loved one can step away from triggers. Ensure these spaces are accessible and known to your support network.

6

## Develop a Self-Care Routine

Build daily or weekly routines that promote well-being. Include enjoyable activities like meditation, exercise, social time, or volunteering.

7

## Plan for Professional Help

Know how to reach professional support, such as therapists, counselors, or crisis hotlines. Keep contact information handy, including 988 - the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

8

## Revisit and Update Regularly

Life changes, triggers, and support networks evolve. Review and update your plan periodically to stay prepared.

A mental health safety plan helps you take control of well-being and provides a clear path to support during difficult times. Remember, you don't have to face challenges alone. Help and hope are available.

# Phase 2: Your Roadmap to Making a Difference

Think of this as your low-pressure game plan for showing up for mental health. Each square is a small, meaningful action you can take this year, on your own or with others. Pick what feels doable, come back when you're ready, and celebrate every square you check off.

Follow us on  
Instagram  
@EveryMindInc

Become a  
volunteer

Become a  
Question,  
Persuade, Refer  
(QPR) Suicide  
Prevention  
Gatekeeper

Share this  
toolkit with a  
friend

Get certified in  
Mental Health  
First Aid

Repost EveryMind's  
content to your  
social Media

Register,  
volunteer, or  
fundraise for the  
EveryMile for  
EveryMind 5K

Join our  
newsletter

Make a one-  
time donation

Become a  
monthly donor

Use a resource  
from Phase 1 to  
check in with a  
loved one

Complete the  
Self-Care  
Toolkit on  
page 9

# Build the Confidence to Support Others Through Trainings

## Question Persuade Refer (QPR)

QPR is a comprehensive, free evidence-based suicide prevention training. Through this training, you'll:

- ✓ Discover how to engage youth in open, healthy mental health conversations.
- ✓ Earn a 1-year QRP Gatekeeper certification, receive a free mental health resource guide
- ✓ Have the chance to win a \$50 gift card!

## Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

MHFA is a free, 8-hour, evidence-based mental health training tailored to adults, youth, and military and veterans. Through this training, you'll learn how to:

- ✓ Identify risk factors and warning signs of mental health challenges common among adolescent
- ✓ How to support a youth displaying warning signs by applying a core five-step action plan
- ✓ Become a certified Mental Health First Aider for 3 years and receive valuable resources



### Who are these training for?

- Parents
- Caretakers
- Students **aged 16+**
- School Staff
- Community Members

\*Note: These trainings are only available to Montgomery and Prince George's County residents

View and sign up for these virtual trainings at [EveryMind.org/events/](https://EveryMind.org/events/)

# Show Up for Mental Health in Your Community



Each May, we host the EveryMile for EveryMind 5K Run/1K Walk in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. This event brings our community together to move with purpose, raise awareness, and support the vital mental health services EveryMind provides across Maryland and the DC metro area.

## Register to Run/Walk!

Sign up with the link or QR code below for the 5K run, 1K walk, or kids' fun run and move for mental health!

## Volunteer!

Help make the event a success by lending a hand on race day.

## Spread the Word!

Share with friends, family, and colleagues to grow our impact.

## Fundraise!

Rally support and raise funds to strengthen mental health services in our community.

**Learn more and sign up at [EveryMind.org/EveryMile-for-EveryMind-5k](https://EveryMind.org/EveryMile-for-EveryMind-5k)**

## Volunteer

Volunteers are an essential part of EveryMind's mission and help ensure our programs, events, and community outreach efforts run smoothly. By giving your time, you support mental wellness across the region and help create welcoming, accessible spaces for the individuals and families we serve. Volunteering is also a great way to connect with others who share a commitment to building a stronger, healthier community.

### What you will do as a volunteer:

- Share resources
- Represent EveryMind at local events
- Engage with community members.
- Spread awareness about EveryMind
- Connect people to mental health information and support

Contact Alejandro Aguilar, Community Engagement & Events Manager  
[aaguilar@EveryMind.org](mailto:aaguilar@EveryMind.org) for questions about volunteering

# Use Your Voice to Change the Conversation

## Follow us on Social Media

Stay connected with our latest updates, stories, and resources by following us on social media. We share insights from our programs, resources and mental health tips, and ways to get involved throughout the year. When you engage with our posts, you help amplify our mission and ensure more people know where to find support.



[@EveryMindInc](#)



[@EveryMind](#)



[@EveryMind](#)

## Spread the Word About EveryMind

Your voice can help more people learn about mental wellness and the resources available in our community. Share our posts or use your own platform to highlight why mental health matters to you. By using your channels to amplify our mission, you help connect more people to support and encourage open conversations about mental health. A full social media toolkit with graphics, ideas, and resources to help you get involved and spread the word is coming soon.

What you will find in the Social Media Toolkit

- Graphics that promote mental health resources and information
- Suggested captions
- Graphics for mental health days and special events

*Social Media Toolkit coming soon!*

**Make sure you tag EveryMind when you post so we can amplify your message!**

