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Community Services

Edited by Wendy C. Morgan, M.A.  
Manager of Prevention Services

## Did You Know ?

May is ...

National Mental Health  
Month...

Family Wellness Month...

Heal the Children Month...

Teen Self-Esteem Month...

The first week (May 1<sup>st</sup> —  
7<sup>th</sup>) is Children's Mental  
Health Week...

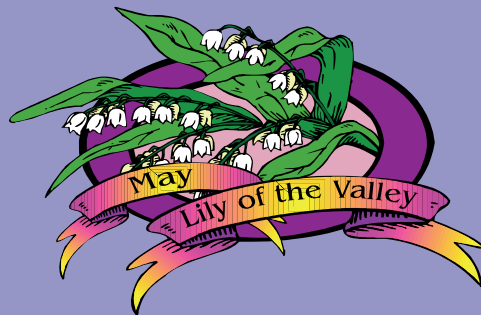
The 3<sup>rd</sup> is Childhood  
Depression Awareness  
Day...

The 7<sup>th</sup> is Children's  
Mental Health  
Awareness Day...

The 8<sup>th</sup> is Mother's Day...

The 30<sup>th</sup> is Memorial Day...

And the 31<sup>st</sup> is World No  
Tobacco Day.



## MAY is MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

May is a month full of observances related to mental health awareness issues, especially those involving children. Like adults, children and adolescents can have mental health disorders that interfere with the way they think, feel, and act. Mental health influences the ways individuals look at themselves, their lives, and others in their lives. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life.

In the United States, it is estimated that 1 in 10 children and adolescents suffer from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment. Yet, in any given year, it is estimated that fewer than 1 in 5 of these children receives needed treatment. The long-term consequences of untreated childhood disorders are costly, in both human and fiscal terms.

Studies on the brain show that physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in childhood can cause permanent damage to the brain, reduce the size of parts of the brain, impact the way a child's brain copes with daily stress, and can result in enduring problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, hyperactivity, and substance abuse. With help from families, providers, and the community, young children can demonstrate resilience when dealing with trauma.

Children's Mental Health Week is an annual observance designed to increase awareness about children with emotional and behavioral disorders and to educate communities about these disorders and their impact on families.

Childhood Depression Awareness Day is an annual observance celebrated during Children's Mental Health Week to communicate the message that depression and other mental health problems in young people are real, common, and treatable. The observance, which is planned for May 3, is sponsored by the National Mental Health Association.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness defines childhood depression as a brain disorder that

affects the acts, thoughts, and feelings of children. Clinical depression goes beyond sadness. It's more than having a bad day or coping with a major loss such as the death of a parent, grandparent, or even a favorite pet. It's also not a personal weakness or a character flaw. Youth suffering from clinical depression cannot simply "snap out of it."

While depression in children is a serious illness, it is treatable with early intervention and support from family members and health care providers.

Some of the signs of early onset depression are:

- ✦ Persistent sadness and hopelessness
- ✦ Withdrawal from friends and from activities once enjoyed
- ✦ Increased irritability or agitation
- ✦ Missed school or poor school performance
- ✦ Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- ✦ Indecision, lack of concentration, or forgetfulness
- ✦ Poor self-esteem or guilt
- ✦ Frequent physical complaints, such as headaches and stomachaches
- ✦ Lack of enthusiasm, low energy, or low motivation
- ✦ Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- ✦ Thoughts of death or suicide

Parents and other adults in a young person's life who suspect a problem with depression should seek help from a mental health professional or the child's doctor for evaluation and diagnosis. At Rockbridge Area Community Services (RACS), it is the mission of the Family, Youth, and Prevention Services unit to support and strengthen families and individuals in their community by providing comprehensive mental health and substance abuse assessment and treatment as well as comprehensive prevention programming for children, adolescents, and their families. For more information or to seek services, call 540.463.3141.

Adapted from: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org); [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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## Ask Dr. Mom

Dear Dr. Mom,  
My 3-year-old daughter threw a temper tantrum in the middle of Wal-Mart the other day. She has never done this before and I had no idea what to do. How can I prevent this from happening again, or what can I do if it does?

- Tantrum Troubled

Dear Tantrum Troubled,  
Preventing tantrums is easier than dealing with them if one starts. Several things might help. Give your child choices when possible –

even little choices can make a difference. Stick to a daily routine that balances fun activities with rest and healthy food. Praise your child when she shows self-control and expresses feelings appropriately. Anticipate when your child will be disappointed or frustrated – plan ahead with options for your child. Shopping may not be fun – have a distraction on hand to prevent boredom and frustration or unreasonable requests for goodies at the store. If you cannot prevent the tantrum, here are some tips for dealing with it. First of all, remain calm. You are a role model for your child.

Direct your child's attention to something else – distraction can go a long way and the attention you give at that time may be just enough of what is needed. Take your child to a quiet place where she can calm down safely. Hugging your child closely during a tantrum may help her to feel more secure and calm down more quickly. Resist overreacting to tantrums; this will only reinforce their use. Most of all, remember to keep your sense of humor – it may just rub off onto your child!

*Dr. Mom*

## Focus On TEEN SELF ESTEEM

Self-esteem is all about how much we feel valued, loved, accepted, and thought well of by others — and how much we value, love, and accept ourselves. People with a healthy self-esteem are able to feel good about themselves, appreciate their own worth, and take pride in their abilities, skills, and accomplishments. People with a low self-esteem may feel as if no one will like them or accept them or that they can't do well in anything. Making embarrassing mistakes, feeling clumsy, going through puppy love heart break, or not doing everything right the first time you try, is all part of being a teenager. But a teen with low self esteem takes every stumble personally and internalizes the failure as being part of who they are. This is why it is so important to help our kids survive their mistakes and deal with disappointments. A teen's self-esteem can also be diminished by bullying, low academic achievement, substance use or addiction, family conflict, and serious illness. A number of studies have found connections with low self-esteem and poor grades, juvenile delinquency, gang membership, inconsistent use of contraceptives, drug and alcohol use, dropping out of school, depression, eating disorders, and vulnerability to addiction. If you have a teenager who is struggling with low self esteem, it is important to take every opportunity that presents itself to remind them that they are valuable to you and to others. Provide them with opportunities to be with people who will build them up and encourage them. The best way to improve your teen's self-esteem is to take a very active role in your teen's life. Just by knowing your teen's interests, friends, strengths, and weaknesses, you will be aware of any problems that may arise.



**RACS Prevention Services**  
241 Greenhouse Road  
Lexington, Virginia 24450  
[www.racsb.org](http://www.racsb.org)  
540-463-3141