

THE SPECTRUM

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance of Greater Chicago



Greetings to Honor May Mental Health Awareness Month

Happy Spring! We are honoring May Mental Health Awareness month in this edition of the Spectrum. For some background, since 1949, Mental Health America and our affiliates across the country have observed May is Mental Health Month by reaching out to millions of people through the media, local events, and screenings. We invite everyone to join us in spreading the word that mental health is something everyone should care about by using the May is Mental Health Month toolkit from Mental Health America materials and conducting awareness activities.

This year, the theme of MHA's 2022 Mental Health Month Toolkit is "Back to Basics." After the last two years of pandemic living, many people are realizing that stress, isolation, and uncertainty have taken a toll on their well-being. Our goal is to provide foundational knowledge about mental health & mental health conditions and information about what people can do if their mental health is a cause for concern. For more info, [click here](#).

Behind the Board
**Margie Mitchell, DBSA-
 GC Board Member &
 Support group
 Facilitator**



What's the best advice you've ever received?

- To be honest and admit when I am wrong.

What do you do to make yourself feel good?

- I like to practice extra self-care, do things to keep my hands busy like painting my nails and knitting, going out for walks, and trying to read at night.

What do you like about the DBSA-GC community?

- I like the openness and honesty that people bring to the group and how care and support develops at individual meeting and over time. The sense of community and understanding of similar struggles lets me feel like I am not alone.

Sunday, May 22nd at 11am via Zoom: May Mental Health Awareness: Back to Basics

DBSA-GC is holding a special Mental Health Awareness event on Sunday, May 22nd from 11am-12pm that will feature ways to feel good through meditation, tips and tools on mental wellness and a special Q & A with everyone's favorite doctor, and long-time DBSA-GC medical advisor, Dr. Corey Goldstein. No RSVP is necessary! [Click here at 11am on May 22nd to join us!](#)

May is...
Mental Health Awareness Month!

BACK TO BASICS

Join DBSA-GC for a special event! This year, Mental Health America's Mental Health Awareness Month theme is "Back to Basics." MHA's goal is to provide foundational knowledge about mental health & mental health conditions and information about what people can do if their mental health is a cause for concern.

Sunday May 22nd 11am - 12pm on Zoom
 Meeting ID: 819 4595 4527

Speakers:
Pamela Rak, LCSW PC
Corey Goldstein, M.D.

DBSA
 Depression and Bipolar
 Support Alliance
 Greater Chicago

DBSA-GC Community Outreach & Engagement

Zoom Support Groups & Music Therapy

We are still holding Zoom support groups on Sundays at 7pm, an ages 50+ group on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at 7pm, and we've just added a new support group: Every Saturday at 10am with DBSA-GC's newest peer support group facilitator, Jeremy! We also have music therapy on the first Tuesday of each month at noon, and meditation with Sam weekly on Mondays at noon. Please join us when you can. Here is our [virtual event calendar](#).

DBSA GREATER CHICAGO Join us for a peer support group

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

IN PERSON OR VIRTUAL

To stay up to date on all our groups, please visit us at www.dbsa-gc.org

IN PERSON GROUPS

WEDNESDAYS AT 7PM:
ANDERSONVILLE/UPTOWN AT EBENEZER LUTHERAN CHURCH

WEDNESDAYS AT 7PM:
PALATINE LIBRARY

More in person groups on the way as venues begin to open again.

Stay Tuned!


VIRTUAL GROUPS

SUNDAYS AT 7PM:
GENERAL PEER SUPPORT GROUP

2ND & 4TH THURSDAY MONTHLY
7PM: AGES 50+ SUPPORT GROUP

FRIDAYS AT 5PM
BLACK COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP

SATURDAYS AT 10AM:
GENERAL PEER SUPPORT GROUP



In-Person Peer Support Groups

Our in-person support groups are BACK! We are still hosting our Sunday Zoom peer support group, have added a Saturday peer support group and are continuing our ages 50+ peer support group as well. Our Zoom Black Community peer support group on Fridays at 5pm is also underway.

• **PALATINE LIBRARY:** Located at 700 North Ct, Palatine, IL 60067. This group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. If you have any questions about this group, contact support group facilitator Judy Sturm at (847) 359-4140.

• **ANDERSONVILLE / UPTOWN Ebenezer Lutheran Church:** Located at 1650 W Foster Avenue in Chicago, IL. This group

meets weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. Come early, street parking only. If you have any questions about this group, contact support group facilitator Wayne Hoffman at waynehoffmandad@gmail.com or (312) 502-4212.

DEPRESSION & BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE
GREATER CHICAGO

Zoom Peer Support Group



SATURDAYS
STARTING
MAY 21ST
10am

ZOOM MEETING ID
876 7671 4217

NO REGISTRATION NEEDED

DBSA
Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance
Greater Chicago

Zoom Peer Support Group
ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN
BLACK COMMUNITIES



FRIDAYS
AT
5pm

ZOOM MEETING ID
819 3162 0578

NO REGISTRATION NEEDED

DBSA
Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance
Greater Chicago

Thank you for your patience as we continue to find new locations to host additional in-person groups.

Book Club: May 28th at 10am via Zoom with the Author!

The opposite of depression is not happiness, It's wellness. In *It's Time*, author Elaine Quinn affirms that while living with depression and its companion anxiety you can experience healing and cultivate wellness. It is then you have the freedom to feel the fullness of all emotions and to claim peace, love, and joy, knowing you are worthy of all that is good in the world. Drawing on thirty years of experience with these mental illnesses, Elaine shares powerful personal stories, fresh concepts, spiritual insights, and practical actions to take. She leads you along the path of healing and self-discovery to help you emerge from the depths of depression becoming well and being your true self. This book has answers for you, and for those you love. You can live a full and joyful life with depression and anxiety. It's time.



[Click here at 10am on Saturday, May 28th to join us.](#)



Findings of Mental Health Conditions

June 7, 2022 at 7pm on Zoom with Ali Khan

Please join us on June 6th at 7pm on Zoom for our educational night featuring Ali Khan, a volunteer of DBSA-GC who is also a soon-to-be graduate of medical school. He will be speaking about the Findings of Mental Health Conditions.

Please come with questions to ask during this hour long session. We hope to see you there!

[Click here at 7pm on Monday, June 6th to join us!](#)

Other Mental Health Events

Help Climb Out of the Darkness - Chicago celebrate 10 years of building community and bringing light to the darkness of perinatal mental health disorders.

When: Saturday, June 25th. Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. and the walk kicks off at 10:00 a.m.

Where: Humboldt Park Boathouse, 1301 N. Humboldt Drive, Chicago, IL 60622.

There is parking in the lot at the Boathouse and around the park. The walk is stroller and pet-friendly!

Like their Facebook page (Climb Out of the Darkness - Chicago) and follow them on Instagram (@climboutchicago)!

[More info here](#)

Moving the Needle on Mental Health

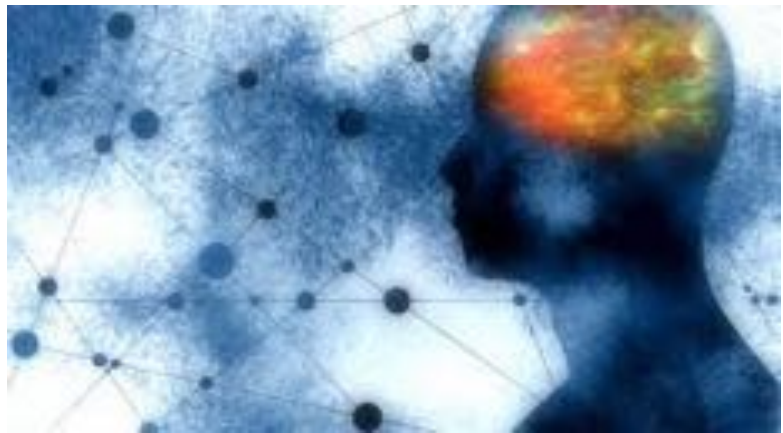
4 organizations offer unexpected, active approaches to mental health therapy in Chicago

Chicago Health by Yuliya Klochan May 11, 2022: [Source](#)

Sometimes a single experience can change everything, shifting your perspective and opening your mind to possibilities. And many in Chicago are seeking such experiences. From the pandemic to economic uncertainty, climate change to societal unrest, plenty of factors have fueled anxiety, depression, and grief in recent years. In fact, anxiety and depression [jumped by 25% worldwide during the pandemic's first year](#), the World Health Organization reported in March.

Chicagoans were no exception. An estimated 1 in 10 adult Chicago residents experienced serious psychological distress in 2020, and about 32% took advantage of behavioral and mental health treatment, according to the [Chicago Health Atlas](#).

But [not everyone here has access to conventional mental health treatments](#). Instead, local organizations are tackling mental health issues through nontraditional approaches, such as outdoor sports, improv, yoga, and theater, providing unique spaces to connect and to heal. And while mental health has taken a more prominent place in the national conversation in recent years, a societal reluctance to talk openly about mental health issues remains. “No one’s like, ‘Hey, on Tuesday over dinner, you want to talk about schizophrenia?’ Nobody dedicates that time,” says Heather Bodie, executive artistic director of Erasing the Distance, a nonprofit theater company that documents mental health stories and shares them on stage. “So that’s why we exist, to dedicate time to conversation.”



Diverse therapy options have the potential to reach unexpected people in unexpected ways. These four Chicago organizations are moving mental health discussions beyond the therapy couch, tackling stigma and creating healing spaces through nontraditional therapeutic approaches.

Urban wilderness therapy

Zorbari Nwidor was 17 years old when she saw stars for the first time. She’d been camping with [Chicago Adventure Therapy](#) in 2012. “You don’t see stars in Chicago. You see airplanes and things, and I think that was a really changing moment in my life, to be out in nature, to look up into the sky and be like, ‘Wow, I lived for this long, and I’ve never seen stars,’” she says.

The experience opened Nwidor’s world. Two years later, she became a Chicago Adventure Therapy intern. Today, she is senior program staff at the organization.

Since 2007, Chicago Adventure Therapy has promoted mental health, social skills, and personal responsibility through outdoor activities such as paddling, camping, cycling, and rock climbing.

The organization prioritizes diversity and inclusion, and most participants are young people of color between 13 and 17 years old — a group traditionally underrepresented in outdoor activities. Chicago Adventure Therapy has worked with a range of young people — including individuals in need of mental health support, refugees, gang members, and youth experiencing homelessness. In 2021, the program served more than 750 people.

Adventurers never have to pay. Chicago Adventure Therapy's funding primarily comes through individual donations and from partner agencies and schools, which bring in the majority of the organization's participants.

Laura Statesir, director of operations at Chicago Adventure Therapy, remembers one young Chicago resident with a family legacy of gang involvement whose perspective changed after he went on a Chicago Adventure Therapy trip. Now, he's in college. "Just by going on this trip where everything we were doing was different — paddling, camping, and seeing stars — he began to think that maybe there was something slightly different out there than the outcomes he thought were predetermined for his life," Statesir says.

Mental health through documentary theater

Erasing the Distance performances create self-compassion as participants witness each other's stories and see their own stories reflected back. Following the performances, the audience often stays after to chat with the cast, further exploring the issues, says Heather Bodie, executive artistic director. Audience members share their own experiences and reactions, exploring difficult mental health topics such as grief and loss or men's mental health.

"I'll never forget [what] this one person said to me after a show," Bodie says. The person confessed that they just wanted to listen, not talk about their own story. But after the performance they said, "I'm gonna go find a therapist."

Erasing the Distance uses the power of storytelling to broach difficult topics. Staff members conduct 60- to 90-minute interviews with people who volunteer to share their personal stories involving mental health struggles. The staff then shape the interviews into 10-minute monologues that professional actors perform.

"It was an exercise in freedom," says Melanie Thompson, now an associate at Erasing the Distance, of her own storytelling experience. "To see someone show me so much compassion, in even just telling my story, it moved me. I felt so grateful to have shared and so grateful to the actor." Bodie says many storytellers have told her that hearing their story increased their self-compassion. "Yes, there are tears, but there's tons of laughter, too. There is pain, but there's also tons of joy and exploration and discovery. It is so cool to hear what somebody else is living with and how they're managing it," she says.

To date, the Chicago-based nonprofit has collected more than 300 stories and performed at venues throughout the Chicago area and all over the country.

Erasing the Distance's [public productions are free](#), but custom programs and workshops have a cost. The staff continuously collects mental health accounts and has released a podcast with the stories, available on Spotify.

Improv comedy as therapy

Sometimes, theater and therapy aren't all that far apart. "When I was doing my own therapy and doing my own work on myself, I realized that my improv teacher and my therapist were telling me the same things," says Angela Nino, founder and CEO of Improv Therapy Group.

Nino found it easier to explore emotions in the safe environment of improv. So she texted her teacher about starting an improv comedy and therapy program. When her teacher responded with a thumbs up, Nino launched Improv Therapy Group to use improv to help people face mental health challenges in unexpected and dynamic ways.

The group works primarily with therapists, who then employ improv games with their clients. Improv Therapy Group also offers sessions for clergy and corrections officers, and it is developing a module for law enforcement. Participants come from the Chicago area and beyond, including some who have joined from New Zealand and the U.K. over Zoom.

Improv uses a "yes and" technique that is helpful in other areas of life, Nino says. Saying "yes and" instead of "no" requires people to build upon another's words — and worlds — ultimately expanding their own.

Creating stillness through yoga

The power and peace of yoga can promote healing. But for some populations, yoga isn't always a go-to option. In the summer of 2020, the U.S. was in turmoil with the pandemic and civil unrest. Andrew Smith and Tristan Lewis felt emotionally heavy, as did many of the Black men they spoke to. To help process the year's traumas,

Smith and Lewis organized a yoga session at 6 a.m. on a Sunday in June, in a South Loop park. Ten men RSVP'd yes; more than 20 showed up.



"It dawned on me that a lot of guys had never stepped foot in a yoga studio before," says Lewis, co-founder of The Healing, a Chicago organization that uses yoga to strengthen Brown and Black men's mental health. He adds that Black men typically don't frequent yoga studios because, due to the lack of representation in the space, many don't feel completely comfortable.

"It was something that we benefited from highly, from a mental aspect," Lewis says, of the first yoga session. "It was also comical because we were all trying to do these yoga poses, but we didn't know what we were doing."

The nonprofit temporarily moved its free monthly yoga sessions online due to the pandemic, but Lewis and his colleagues recently brought back in-person sessions.

“Yoga can help promote mental health healing, just by getting us all to be still,” Lewis says. “The power of stillness is unmatched.” The Healing also leads community outreach sessions and has a dedicated group chat for members.

4 high school students talk mental health and how the pandemic changed them

NPR by Anya Steinberg, May 14, 2022 [Source](#)

TRIGGER WARNING: Eating disorders, sexual abuse, transgender, suicide (skip to page 12)

At this point in the pandemic, American teens have spent a significant chunk of their formative years isolated from friends and in fractured learning environments. More than 2 in 5 teens have reported persistently feeling sad or hopeless, according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey of high school students. Many who were already struggling with trauma or mental health problems before the pandemic were deeply affected by the prolonged isolation.

But young people have also shown grace and resilience as they dealt with the challenges of COVID-19. NPR spoke to four high school students who marked the pandemic's two year anniversary with a newfound sense of self, and big dreams for the future.

Ruby, 17: "I left a toxic friendship, I explored myself more."

By the time the pandemic closed her school in March 2020, Ruby had already spent weeks trying to ignore her mom's warnings about COVID-19. Her mom is Chinese, and their relatives back in China had been updating her on the virus' spread since its early days. Ruby says when her spring break got extended,

her mom told her: "Oh yeah, you won't be going back to school anytime soon."

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“I would say [the pandemic] has definitely made me a stronger person.”

- Ruby, 17

At first, remote learning heightened a lot of the anxieties Ruby already felt about her Minnetonka, Minn. high school. She transferred there in the fall of 2019 and was struggling to feel like she fit in because many of her new classmates came from wealthier families. NPR isn't using Ruby's last name to protect her privacy.

"It was just something I was worrying about constantly," she said. "I was afraid to even move in class. I was just, like, sitting there, and I did not move because I was so anxious about what they were thinking about me."

When school went online, Ruby, then a freshman, was self-conscious about showing her house on camera. She also had a hard time finding a quiet place to concentrate as her two siblings also switched to remote

learning – she would often lose focus during Zoom class. During remote school, she says, "I didn't learn anything."

Ruby wasn't the only one. In the first several months of the pandemic, two-thirds of U.S. students in grades nine through 12 told the CDC reported difficulty completing their schoolwork.

One upside to remote school was that it put some distance between Ruby and a friendship that she describes as toxic. "She was the only person I really knew, so I kind of felt safe around her," Ruby explains. "But at the same time, I didn't really feel so safe because the people who she hung out with were not my people."

Things changed for the better during Ruby's sophomore year, when her school transitioned to hybrid learning and she decided to leave that friendship. She started to nurture relationships with the three people who are now her best friends. "I left a toxic friendship, I explored myself more," she says. "I would say [the pandemic] has definitely made me a stronger person."

Teja, 18: "The lack of structure just led to me becoming obsessive."

When her Seattle high school closed in March 2020, Teja's world started to disintegrate. Her jazz choir trip and swim practices were canceled, her clubs were confined to Zoom meetings and her entire life was condensed to her family's home.

Teja, then a sophomore, had been diagnosed with anorexia during her freshman year of high school and when the pandemic hit, she was in recovery. NPR isn't using her last name to protect her privacy around her anorexia.

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“I think the primary thing was the isolation. There was no one to catch me from spiraling.”

Teja, 18

"School was a huge motivator for me, for... staying on track for recovery because school is something I love. I love to learn. It's really important to me and that was only possible if I was eating," Teja says. "And then all of a sudden school was canceled."

Those early months of the pandemic were extremely destabilizing for Teja, and for other teenaged girls with eating disorders. The [CDC found](#) the proportion of emergency room visits for eating disorders increased among adolescent girls in 2020 and 2021.

Teja relapsed, and her family noticed. After a difficult conversation with her dad about how she might have to go to the hospital, Teja called a friend who talked her down. "She was like, 'It's not fair to frighten you, but on the other hand, that is the reality.'" She says the conversation was a wake-up call.

"I realized the only way I would be happy and have structure is if I created that for myself. So I made a schedule and I set goals," Teja says.

In the summer of 2020, she started going on daily walks with her dog, planning outdoor meetups with friends and writing music on a regular basis – all in addition to regular meetings with her psychiatrist. Eventually, she was healthy enough to attend outdoor swim team practices in nearby Lake Washington.

”It was a lot of fun to be back in the water again and be back with my teammates. So those things kind of helped ground me with why I wanted to continue in recovery.” But that grounding didn't last long. When remote learning continued into her junior year, in fall 2020, she says, "I just became really anxious about school in a way that I hadn't really been before.”

"I'm very perfectionistic," Teja explains, "and the lack of structure just led to me becoming obsessive.”

The things that usually brought her joy, like practicing with the jazz choir, didn't feel the same without her classmates singing by her side. "I think the primary thing was the isolation. There was no one to catch me from spiraling.”

In the fall of 2020, Teja's anxiety was getting worse. That's when the seizures started – sometimes more than 10 a day. "I couldn't leave the house," she says. Three weeks after her first seizure, she was diagnosed with a [rare neurological disorder](#) called Functional Neurologic Disorder that can be triggered by things like anxiety, stress and trauma.

"That was a really, really hard couple of months because I couldn't do anything. You couldn't see friends without having seizures. My friends had my parents on speed dial for when I'd have seizures on Zoom.”

She and her family had to go all the way to Colorado to find treatment in February 2021 – and the treatment helped. She started having fewer seizures, and this past fall, she returned to in-person classes for the first time since the pandemic started. She says being back at school has been strange, but good.

"On my first day of school, my schedule was messed up and I was like, this is such an unusual experience. Like, it's been so long since I've had an issue as small as like, 'Oh, my schedule's wrong.' “

Teja also got to return to some of the activities she loves most. She says getting back to some sense of normalcy has helped her recover from everything she went through during the pandemic. "I was able to do a live production of *Alice in Wonderland*. And that, to me, was the first time I was like: It is important that I am here. Like, if I were to get sick and I couldn't be here, it would matter. And that was the first time in my high school experience that I felt that way.”

Alex, 16: "I was asking myself, 'Am I a male? I don't look like the typical guy.' "

Pandemic isolation was a mixed bag for Alex, who lives in northern Minnesota. On the one hand, the isolation worsened a lot of the struggles he was already having around mental health. Alex, now a junior, had been sexually abused in middle school, and was later diagnosed with anxiety, depression and PTSD. NPR isn't using Alex's last name to protect his privacy as a minor.

He hoped being quarantined at home would make him feel safer and less paranoid. But it didn't. "Honestly, if anything, it made it worse," he says. He felt trapped, and he constantly worried his abuser would find him.

Sitting at home, Alex had a lot of time to think. He started to look deeper into questions he had about his gender identity. "I was asking myself, 'Am I a male? I don't look like the typical guy. I don't act like the other trans people I see online or in school,'" he recalls.

After months of contemplation, he began identifying as trans masculine. Then, in spring 2020, at the end of his freshman year, he started seeing a new therapist via telehealth appointments, which he liked better than in-person therapy. He was able to do therapy from the safety of his bed. "You have all your comfort items right there."

It helped him open up in a new way. "I kinda just started getting braver. I started expressing what I was feeling," he explains.

Since his hospitalization, Alex has been working with his therapist on finding healthy coping mechanisms for processing his traumas, like "drawing, focusing on schoolwork and getting out into the community more." Right now, he says he's doing "pretty good. I'm stressed, but I'm a high school student, so that's inevitable. I'm working on my trauma, but trauma processing is all your life. You just learn new ways to cope with it."



"I'm working on my trauma, but trauma processing is all your life. You just learn new ways to cope with it."

- Alex, 16

Daniela Rivera, 17: "I just lost all motivation"

Daniela Rivera enjoys learning, and she likes being in school – but not so much when she doesn't understand the material, which was what made school during the pandemic so hard for her. In March 2020, Daniela was in her freshman year of high school in Cottonwood, Ariz. At first, her school's remote learning option didn't include live instruction, just packets of optional work – which Daniela didn't do.

That fall, her school began using online lessons from an educational company. Daniela found herself alone in her room, clicking through hours of pre-recorded videos with no actual teacher.

"I didn't get a lot of things. I gave up completely," Daniela says. "Every day I'd just stay in my bed. I'd wake up...be on school in my bed and just get up to go eat." Her motivation for schoolwork instantly changed. "I was behind in all my classes. I would play [remote learning] videos...and go out to the living room and talk to my mom while the video is playing. I come in, like, 30 minutes later and the video is still playing. I just lost all motivation."

"[The pandemic] got me into the mindset where, like, I'm just trapped in this house and I can't do nothing. And like, I have stuff I could do outside, but I just felt like I couldn't even open the front door."

According to the CDC, nearly 2 in 5 teens reported experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic. That's something Daniela struggled with, too. In the evenings, she would FaceTime her boyfriend, and they would talk about how the days were starting to blur together.

She had a part-time job as a hostess at a restaurant on the weekends, and that job made it hard to maintain her friendships because all her friends worked weekday shifts. When her school started offering

a hybrid option partway through the fall semester of her sophomore year, in 2020, Daniela was excited. But it wasn't the same. Her lessons were still the same pre-recorded videos. She would sit in a classroom all day, separated from other students by a row of desks, with a single teacher to supervise her as she watched from a laptop.

Being back in school didn't make it any easier to keep in touch with her friends – they chose to stay fully online so they could keep their jobs. "[I'm] definitely sad because they... went from being one of the

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“Every day I'd just stay in my bed. I'd wake up ... be on school in my bed and just get up to go eat.”

Daniela Rivera, 17

closest people to me to becoming a stranger. I don't know how they are, I don't know what they're doing, I don't know what's happened in their life.”

Things got better as school permanently transitioned back to regular, in-person learning in spring 2021. But returning to business-as-usual has made Daniela realize how much she changed over the pandemic. "I've always been a shy, quiet person. But I feel like even now, I'm quieter and shyer than usual.”

She also noticed words don't seem to roll off her tongue as easily as they used to, especially when she's called on in class. "My fear of public speaking has gotten worse in all this because I haven't been, like, speaking out loud to anyone.”

One thing she's grateful for: The past two years gave her time and space to get to know herself better. In pandemic isolation, she discovered that she loves to go fishing with her boyfriend, and she's now a big fan of indie music. "I know who I am now.”

LL Bean Goes Silent on Social Media for Mental Health Awareness Month

The Freeport-based outdoor retailer has paused its online posting and encouraged followers to spend time outside.

Press Harold by Edward D. Murphy May 16, 2022

Source

L.L. Bean has taken its social media messaging offline for a month in recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month.

The Freeport-based outdoor retailer said it has put a halt to posting on social media channels and is wiping clean its Instagram feed while instead encouraging people to get outside and prioritize self-care.



Bean also announced a \$500,000 grant and two-year partnership with Mental Health America to support community-based outdoor programs and campaigns to publicize the wellness benefits of time spent outdoors.

In a statement announcing the decision to withdraw from most social media for May, Bean said time spent in nature “can lower stress hormone levels, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety and improve mood” – a message Bean said the company was leaving behind on social media sites as it temporarily exited.

The company’s approach is encouraged by organizations such as the Maine branch of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which said May should be used as a month to reconnect with family members and friends who may have drifted apart during the long months of the coronavirus pandemic.

“That’s what we promote, having the hard conversations and being vulnerable so others can share,” said River Martin, NAMI Maine’s community support manager.

He said one side benefit of the pandemic is that it has highlighted the importance of mental health and made many people more sensitive to the need for people to maintain personal connections despite the hurdles the virus has put in the way of those relationships.

“The pandemic has really helped normalize mental health, and we are seeing more folks reach out than have ever reached out before,” Martin said. “During the whole pandemic, we’ve seen organizations reach out to employees and community service organizations reaching out about how to best support the community.”

He said that May has been recognized a Mental Health Awareness Month for decades, but its prominence has grown in recent years. Bean and other companies, he said, can highlight the month’s message and help point people toward resources providing mental health care.

NAMI Maine, he said, has been encouraging use of its statewide toll-free hotline at 800-464-5767 for those looking for resources for help with their mental health. Martin said NAMI Maine also encourages company officials to have conversations with employees about mental health and make sure they can offer immediate referrals for those who feel they need help.

It’s important for people to seek help before they have a mental health crisis, he said, and that’s why NAMI Maine and other organizations want people to reach out at the first signs they might be experiencing mental health problems. “No conversation is too small,” Martin said.

Time to Rejuvenate: 10 Ways to Boost Your Mental Health This Summer

Harmony Transformations Roots May 16, 2022 [Source](#)

We often associate summertime with vacations, time by the pool, and less stress. While all of these things are true, the general lack of structure that often comes with the summer can lead to anxiety. For those who are working, being cooped up indoors can lead to restlessness or feeling sad after returning from vacation.

Regardless of whether the summer makes it more difficult for you to maintain your mental health or if it makes you feel relaxed, gorgeous weather and some much needed time to breathe after a busy spring season can help you focus on prioritizing your mental health. Here are ten ways you can rejuvenate your well being and boost your mental health over the summer.

1. Set attainable goals

Enjoying your summer and finding time to relax is definitely the ultimate goal, but we all know what it feels like to make it to the end of August without having accomplished anything we wanted to do during the summer.

Making a list or set of goals you want to get done over the summer can help structure your free time without making you feel like you have to do everything—a mindset that can be taxing on your mental health. The key is to **make sure your goals are attainable.** You don't need to read every single book on your reading list, nor do you have to get that beach body you've always wanted. Picking a few things you want to do over the summer, whether they're people you want to build relationships with or habits you want to start, will give your summer a little direction while also giving you the room you need for some much needed rest.

2. Get outside

This is by far the most important thing you can do. Good weather—especially if you live in cold or rainy areas—is not a year-long luxury. Don't miss out on the warm sunny days by staying indoors. Not only will you lose the opportunity to feel rejuvenated with a breath of fresh air, you'll also have terrible fear of missing out after you hear how your friends spend their day outside in beautiful weather.

Regardless of who you are or what you like to do, you can almost always find a way to do it outside. Have to work? Take your laptop out on the. Even if you're busy, find time for a 15 minute walk. It's sure to make you feel more upbeat than you were before stepping outdoors, making the rest of your work day that much more positive.

3. Cut down on screen time and social media

After so many virtual meetings, do you really want to spend a beautiful summer day staring at your phone? Try to find some time where you can either turn your phone off completely or set it down in a different room and walk away from it. Of course, depending on your

profession and responsibilities this may not be possible. In that case, try silencing all the notifications that aren't urgent, like news and social media, and depending on your situation, emails. Giving yourself some time away from social media and screens will make you feel less overwhelmed and stressed about work related responsibilities.



4. Reconnect with others

More time in the summer means more time to connect with friends and family. Investing time to maintain your current relationships or rekindling old ones will help keep your mental health in check over the summer.

Summer time often means more time. Life gets stressful and usually there are people who we want to catch up with but can't because of busy schedules. Taking some time to meaningfully build your relationships or to rekindle ones that died out over the course of a busy year is a great way to improve your social life and, as a result, your mental health.

5. Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully aware and present in the current moment. Starting new habits like meditation, paying attention to what you are eating and taking moments to pause and observe the world around you can help reduce stress and ease anxiety. Implementing some mindfulness practices in your daily life can help you stay grounded and boost your mental health, making any experiences you have during the summer that much more enjoyable.

6. Go for a drive

Summertime means time to prioritize your mental health by taking a break from life's everyday stressors. There's nothing like a late night summer drive as you roll the windows down and sing-along to some of your favorite tunes with your best friends. Image courtesy of [Starcollision](#).

Nothing feels more freeing than driving around aimlessly with the windows down on a warm summer night. Find a friend, create an upbeat summer playlist, and follow the road ahead. You don't need to have a destination to find a reason to go for a drive. Think less about where you're going and instead be in the moment, enjoying time singing along to some summer jams with your friends.

7. Start a garden

Starting a garden can be an ambitious project, but there's no need to be apprehensive about it. If you have a green thumb, try getting out of your comfort zone by planting something new, like fruits and vegetables. Or, if you're new to the gardening game, consider buying some low maintenance house plants.. Either way, having a garden of some sort—regardless of the size—can be a great motivator to consistently get outdoors. In addition, watching your plants grow will not only make you feel a great sense of accomplishment, but can help create order out of your days and help you recognize the passage of time.

8. Visit a new location

Summertime = vacation time. At least, that's how we tend to think about it. For some, this isn't always possible. But this doesn't mean that you can't leave your hometown behind for a little while to go exploring. Any adjacent towns you've always wanted to explore but never have? New restaurants you want to try? How about a day trip to the beach? All you need to satisfy your craving to get away for a little bit is a few free hours and a method of transportation.

9. Be active

Staying active is crucial when it comes to maintaining your mental health. One of the perks to exercising during the summer is access to beautiful weather.

If you're already someone who is physically active, make sure to maintain your exercise habits during the summer. While summertime may come with newfound time, the lack of structure that may occur might make it difficult for you to get yourself to the gym. However, don't be afraid to change up your workout routine by finding alternative forms of exercise that are suitable for the outdoors. This will not only help you build other skills, like playing tennis for instance, it will also make exercising more exciting. If you don't typically stay active during the year, the summer is a great time to start. Think about some outdoor activities that you would be interested in trying that would also get your heart pumping.

10. Start a hobby you've always wanted to try

You may have that thing that you've always wanted to try but have put off doing until later. Well, summertime is later! There's no better way to relax than to do something you really enjoy. Plus, starting a new hobby will not only fill any spare hours you have during your summer but also make it that much more exciting.

The summer doesn't last forever—you're going to want to get the most out of it, but remember to prioritize your mental health while doing so.

The Spectrum

Thank you for reading! Got Spectrum Newsletter Feedback? Do you like what you are reading and/or do you want more? We would love to hear what's on your mind. Please reach out to us if there are topics and ideas you would like to include or share in the next quarterly Spectrum. Anything goes – events, memorials, celebrations, recognition, thank you's, etc.

2022 Spectrum Schedule

Q3: Aug/Sept-Oct

Q4: Nov-Dec

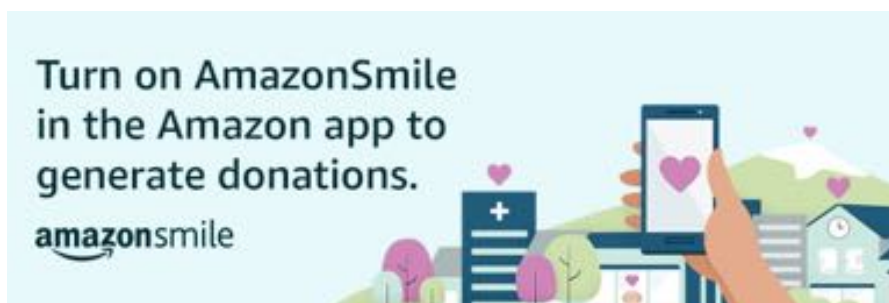
If you'd like to submit an article, event, celebration, recognition, etc. to be included in our Spectrum, please submit to Margaux@dbsa-gc.org and we'll be happy to review!

Get in Touch with Us

If you are feeling alone, please know we're here to support you. Your recovery matters to us. If you're experiencing a difficult time, please reach out and we'll do what we can to help you get back on track. For questions on our peer lead support groups or anything else on your mind, or to get more involved, please reach out to us at: wecanhelp@dbsa-gc.org and visit dbsa-gc.org. We'd love to speak with you and build our community foundation stronger.

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Wrap Up

In closing, we wish you a good spring season. Take care of yourself and make time to do things that feel good. Stay connected with us since this community supports you.

For future Spectrum newsletters, if you want to share an article, testimonial or photo, please submit it to Bridget@dbsa-gc.org and Margaux@dbsa-gc.org.

Warm Regards,

DBSA Greater Chicago Board

