

# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

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AN RCS Early Childhood FAMILY NEWSLETTER FROM YOUR  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

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## TOGETHER FOR MENTAL HEALTH

During May, we join the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. Each year we fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

- Anyone with mental illness can get appropriate support to live healthy, fulfilling lives.
- In many countries, as many as **1 in 5 new mothers** experience some type of perinatal mood and anxiety disorder.
- No one is immune. Women and men of every culture, age, income level, and race can develop mental disorders.
- No health without mental health!

National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Information retrieved from [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)



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- FRED ROGERS

# WHY MENTAL HEALTH SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

## Life changes around pregnancy make women vulnerable to mental illness.

- Symptoms can appear any time during pregnancy and the first 12 months after childbirth.
- Mental illness may also directly affect the fetus or child, with long-lasting impact on physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
- Mental health care provides the necessary support to empower people to identify resources and personal capabilities.
- This care can enhance resilience to cope with challenging life circumstances and nurture their children in more positive ways.

## Women with PMAD

- PMADs include postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, postpartum obsessive-compulsive disorder, postpartum bipolar, and postpartum psychosis.

#worldmaternalmentalhealthday  
May 4



## Women (and men) hiding their symptoms

- Estimates are that 7 in 10 women hide or downplay their symptoms.
- Without understanding, support, and treatment, these mental illnesses can have devastating impact on women and their families.



## Family Mental Health

- Perinatal mood disorders affect the entire family.
- Many people don't realize that 1 in 10 dads develop depression during this perinatal time.
- An integrated approach to family treatment can yield better outcomes for the whole family unit.

**Many people don't realize that 1 in 10 dads develop depression during the perinatal time, before and after the birth of a child.**

Retrieved from  
[wmmhday.postpartum.net](http://wmmhday.postpartum.net)

# ADULT MENTAL HEALTH & OUR CHILDREN

## EVEN INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED WHEN MENTAL HEALTH & SIGNIFICANT STRESS THREATEN THEIR FAMILY

- Adverse fetal and early childhood experiences can lead to physical and chemical disruptions in the brain that can last a lifetime.
- Both family genes and early environmental experiences work together to lay the foundation for long-term life outcomes.
- Children's resilience requires close adult relationships that support and buffer them from stress and help them adapt and respond to adversity.
- Playful learning can be one way to support children's coping during stressful, anxious times. Play is for everyone, everywhere.



### Resources & for additional information:

Common Ground  
Resource and Crisis  
Helpline 24/7  
[commongroundhelps.org/get-help](https://commongroundhelps.org/get-help)  
1-800-231-1127



"How Right Now" for  
promoting  
resiliency:  
[cdc.gov/howrightnow](https://cdc.gov/howrightnow)



For more about the power  
of pretend play and how  
every family member can  
participate and benefit  
[Learningthrough  
\\_play.com](https://learningthroughplay.com) from the LEGO  
Foundation



Please know you can  
reach out to your  
School Social Worker,  
School Psychologist, or  
teacher for assistance and  
resources

# HOW CAN WE BE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY?

Life is painful and uncomfortable for all of us at times, whether we live with mental illness or everyday stress. Sometimes our daily actions can make a difference for our children.

## CHILDREN LOOK TO PARENTS TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

- First, as the parent, take care of your own needs.
- Be intentional with your coping, knowing that your child may be more aware than they are telling you.
- When we feel anxious or depressed about world events, we can try to shield children from media exposure, but we can also try to acknowledge our own emotional responses directly in age-appropriate ways.
- Use simple words children understand to describe emotions, for example, by saying sad instead of depressed.
- Talking about these emotions normalizes them and shows children it's ok to recognize these feelings and express them.
- Talking about emotions also lets children know the emotions are not their fault.
- When you talk about what you are doing, you are modeling how to take care of yourself and take care of others around you. You are showing your children how to deal with hard feelings of their own.



## BUILDING RESILIENCY IN OUR CHILDREN

Helping our children face difficult experiences successfully can help protect them from future long-term effects of adversity so they can adapt and bounce back.

- Express love and gratitude. Children who are cared for and loved learn to express positive emotions to others. These positive emotions help buffer children against developing negative responses to adversity (such as depression) in the future.
- Be physically active. Good physical health, including regular activity and good sleep, protects kids against stress and also decreases depression, anger, and anxiety
- Foster social connections and competencies. Developing talents and having friends and loved ones can increase resiliency and connections.

Resources & for additional information:  
National Association of School  
Psychologists, [NASPonline.org](https://www.nasponline.org)

"Building Resiliency: Helping Children Learn to Weather Tough Times"

