



It's Up to Us[®]

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans



Edition 35

About the Bulletin

Like most Americans, San Diegans are finding ways to get back into society after almost two years of isolation, loss, and uncertainty. While our “next normal” has led to healthy changes for some people, it has created new challenges for others. As we move forward, we need to address the many mental health challenges that emerged or got worse during the past two years.

This bulletin provides helpful tips on how to protect our mental health and make it a priority in the “next normal” we’re facing. It’s designed to encourage conversations about mental health and provide guidance on how and when to reach out for help and how and when to support others.

This bulletin is part of the It’s Up to Us campaign, developed through the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency and supports the County’s *Live Well San Diego* vision to promote a community that is healthy, safe, and thriving. By raising awareness, encouraging dialogue, and providing access to local resources, we aim to inspire wellness, reduce stigma, and prevent suicide in all San Diegans, with a particular emphasis on San Diego’s hardest hit and most at-risk populations.

Up2SD.org[®]
LINK UP FOR INFORMATION AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Access & Crisis Line
888-724-7240

COMMUNITY RESOURCES **2-1-1**



Shine a Light On: Prioritizing Mental Health in the “Next Normal”

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, people are starting to get back into society and figuring out how to navigate life—at home, at work, and in social settings—in a “next normal.” Many are eager to regain what they feel was lost and have resumed pre-COVID-19 activities, like visiting friends and family, eating at restaurants, and going to hair salons. Others are thriving without the burden of things left behind, like rigid work schedules. Regardless of people’s experiences, one thing is true for all of us: The world today looks very different than it did before the start of the pandemic.



More and more people today are experiencing mental health challenges. In the first year of COVID-19, global rates of anxiety and depression increased dramatically.¹ For frontline workers, like health care providers and first responders, burnout has taken a toll. And while many are relieved to return to an office to feel connected and a sense of belonging, others are experiencing anxiety as a result because they’ve found comfort working from home or have health concerns.

How do we move forward and regain a sense of normalcy while solving these new mental health challenges? The world is different now, and so are we, and so must be the way we look at and manage our mental health. Change presents opportunity. It’s not just a matter of adjusting to the “next normal.” It’s about creating it. That’s how we build resilience.

Helping Older Adults in the “Next Normal”

Older adults are especially vulnerable in the “next normal.” Many still fear COVID-19 and are having a hard time processing the loss of two years they won’t get back. Here are tips to help the older adults in your life adjust to today’s world:

- Help them slowly get back into society. Try attending small gatherings at first.
- Check in with a phone call, letter, text, or safe visit.
- Offer to drive them around so they’re not stuck inside all day.
- Give them something to celebrate and look forward to, like a road trip or birthday celebration.

Did You Know?

May is Mental Health Matters Month.

Take action for mental health by checking in on yourself and others.

Tips for Supporting Your Mental Health in Current Circumstances

The world has changed, and it's okay to not be okay all the time. Take care of your mental health by creating routines that make you feel empowered and help build healthy boundaries. Check out these tips, and try a few to find what works best for you.

AT HOME

With many people still working from home, trying to balance work, school, and family life under one roof can be overwhelming. Develop routines that help you maintain close family bonds while balancing other parts of your life.

- Carve out time for the things that bring you joy at least once a week. Turn new hobbies and skills that you developed over the past two years into regular routines. Continue to embrace self-care if you've been spending more time on it.
- Start or end your day in reflection. Find a quiet space in your home where you can go to think, read, or exercise without distractions. Give your family space to do the same.
- Designate a special time for family bonding, like movie night or eating breakfast together every morning.

AT WORK

Focus on the things you can control to create a safe, positive workspace that works for you.

- Set aside at least 15 minutes each day to check in on yourself, destress, and avoid burnout. Set an alert so you don't forget.
- When it's possible, remove yourself from stressful settings. Take a break from work, and go for a walk, call a friend, take a nap, or do something else you enjoy.
- Set up a regular lunch, coffee break, or call with coworkers to create positive social connections that boost your mood. Use that time to check on their mental health too.
- If you're working remotely: Use the time you'd usually spend commuting to create a new daily routine that brings you peace. Take your morning coffee to go for a walk. Meet a friend for breakfast. Meditate.
- If you're returning to the office: Set healthy boundaries. Decide ahead of time if you're going to hug or wave, join others for lunch or eat at your desk, or attend after-hours events or go straight home after work.
- If you're a frontline worker or have stayed in-office during the pandemic: Set up regular check-in meetings with coworkers. Be open and honest about feelings of stress or burnout, which can include feeling overwhelmed, anxiety, lack of motivation, trouble sleeping, or trouble concentrating.



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Call 888-724-7240 for immediate help.
Free, confidential support in all languages
7 days a week / 24 hours a day

To get more information on ways to
improve your mental well-being, visit:
up2sd.org/topics/mental-health

If a work email, meeting, or task is upsetting you,

STOP

- Slow down.
- Take a breath.
- Observe your body, thoughts, and feelings.
- Process your possibilities, and then proceed.

IN SOCIAL SETTINGS Humans are social beings who need to feel connected to others, especially after spending so much time isolated. Easing back into social settings can be tricky or awkward, but remember you're not alone. We're all figuring this out together. Here are some tips for staying connected with people in ways that may make you feel comfortable.

- Assess your comfort level around in-person interactions. Be up front about your boundaries, and don't be afraid to say "no."
- After a lengthy visit, take the time you need to be alone and reflect.
- Be open and honest with your loved ones if you're feeling lonely or overwhelmed.



Reading News That's Hard

COVID-19 isn't the only thing that's changing our world. From news about international relations to social injustice and natural disasters, the world around us can feel heavy at times. Remember that it's okay to have feelings. That's your humanity at work.

But constant exposure to difficult news can impact our mental health. It can make anxiety worse and increase feelings of sadness.²⁻⁵ San Diegans have been impacted by events happening around the world.⁶⁻⁷ Across the country, LGBTQ+ youth have reported that recent legislation has negatively impacted their mental health.⁸⁻¹⁰

Reading the news can help us stay informed and feel connected, but it's important to make our well-being a priority too. Here are a few tools and tips to help you cope with reading difficult topics in the news and build resilience.



Schedule time for reading or listening to the news. Turn off the news if it starts to get overwhelming.



Read something uplifting or funny after reading something that's difficult.



Read or watch your news in a safe and nurturing space. Pour a warm cup of tea, surround yourself with friends or family, or put on your favorite song.



Take a break from social media or the internet. It can be helpful to delete certain apps, limit time spent online, or turn off notifications.



Channel your emotions into finding a way to help. Hard times can bring out the best in people. Use the opportunity to volunteer, donate, or reach out to someone who may be directly affected.



Keep a close eye on how your body responds to stressful news, and don't be afraid to seek support.

Need to Talk to Someone?

Unsure of where to go for help?
Chat online, or call a counselor today.



SAN DIEGO ACCESS & CRISIS LINE:

- Free, confidential support
- Crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- Referrals for mental health and drug and alcohol needs
- All languages
- 7 days a week / 24 hours a day

888-724-7240

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

DIAL 2-1-1

LIVE CHAT:



- Chat with a counselor today!
- Available Mon–Fri, 4–10 p.m.

Visit
OptumHealthSanDiego.com

¹ Santomauro, D. F., Herrera, A. M. M., Shadid, J., Zheng, P., Ashbaugh, C., Pigott, D. M., ... & Ferrari, A. J. (2021). Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet*, 398(10312), 1700-1712.

² Johnston, W. M., & Davey, G. C. (1997). The psychological impact of negative TV news bulletins: The catastrophizing of personal worries. *British Journal of Psychology*, 88(1), 85-91.

³ McNaughton-Cassill, M. E. (2001). The news media and psychological distress. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, 14(2), 193-211.

⁴ Silver, R. C., Holman, E. A., Andersen, J. P., Poulin, M., McIntosh, D. N., & Gil-Rivas, V. (2013). Mental-and physical-health effects of acute exposure to media images of the September 11, 2001, attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological science*, 24(9), 1623-1634.

⁵ Aslam, F., Awan, T. M., Syed, J. H., Kashif, A., & Parveen, M. (2020). Sentiments and emotions evoked by news headlines of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7(1), 1-9.

⁶ Kragen, P. (2022, March 4). Ukrainians in San Diego shaken by war in their besieged homeland. *San Diego Union-Tribune*; *San Diego Union-Tribune*. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/communities/san-diego/story/2022-03-04/ukrainians-in-san-diego-shaken-by-war-in-their-besieged-homeland>

⁷ Weil, M. (2022, February 28). San Diego Military Families Worried Russia-Ukraine Conflict Would Halt Deployed Loved Ones' Homecoming. *NBC 7 San Diego*; *NBC San Diego*. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/military/with-tension-rising-abroad-san-diego-military-families-grateful-to-welcome-home-deployed-loved-ones/2882897/>

⁸ Parris, D., Fulks, E., Kelley, C. (2021). Anti-LGBTQ Policy Proposals Can Harm Youth Mental Health. *Child Trends*. Retrieved from: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/anti-lgbtq-policy-proposals-can-harm-youth-mental-health>

⁹ The Trevor Project & Morning Consult (2022). Issues Impacting LGBTQ Youth. *Polling Analysis 2022*. Retrieved from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/TrevorProject_Public1.pdf

¹⁰ Hughto, J. M., Meyers, D. J., Mimiaga, M. J., Reisner, S. L., & Cahill, S. (2021). Uncertainty and confusion regarding transgender non-discrimination policies: implications for the mental health of transgender Americans. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 1-11.