

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

# B4Stage4

Outreach  
Toolkit



[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)



facebook.com/MentalHealthAmerica



@mentalhealtham  
#B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

**MHIA**  
Mental Health America  
**B4Stage4**

This activity is supported by contributions from AstraZeneca and Lilly.

# Foreword

Mental Health America, its affiliates, and other advocates from around the country have celebrated Mental Health Month every May since 1949. During this month, we reach millions of people with messages and materials of health and hope.

At Mental Health America, we're proud of being the organization that started this tradition. And we're just as proud that it has been embraced so universally.

Every year, we choose a theme for the month. In 2015, we have chosen "B4Stage4" as that theme. Here's why. Mental health concerns are no different from any other physical health concerns. They should be thought about and treated the same way – long before they reach Stage 4.

Mental Health America dedicates itself to mental health. We work for prevention for all; for early identification and intervention for those at risk; for integrated health, behavioral health, and other services for those who need them; and for recovery as a goal.

For too long, mental health issues have not been framed this way. Instead, too many people have been trapped in Stage 4 thinking about them. They wait until after a crisis – until someone is a "danger to themselves or others" – before they act. This is wrong. We don't do this for cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. We shouldn't do this for mental health concerns, either.

So this May, we're asking everyone to help us turn the attention of our nation upstream – before mental health concerns become mental health crises.

That's really what acting before Stage 4 is all about. In our May is Mental Health Month toolkit, we're offering a range of materials, strategies, and resources to bring healthy, B4Stage4 thinking to life. It's all part of keeping the focus of the month on mental health – a time when we dedicate ourselves to protecting our health, to preserving our mental health, and to preventing bad and sometimes tragic outcomes from ever happening again.



Paul Gionfriddo  
President & CEO



# Introduction

The 2015 May is Mental Health Month Toolkit is designed for MHA Affiliates, advocates, and organizations of all types to raise awareness of the importance of addressing mental health.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Understand that it is important to identify and treat mental illnesses early, just as they would with physical illnesses like diabetes or heart disease;
- Learn the risk factors and warning signs for mental illnesses;
- Assess their own mental health through use of MHA's scientifically proven, free, anonymous, and confidential screening tools; and
- Increase understanding of the resources and treatment options available to help people address their mental health.

This year's toolkit includes:

## Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Sample Press Release
- Drop-In Article
- Radio PSA Scripts
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

## Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Facebook and Twitter Posts
- Facebook Cover and Profile Images
- Twitter Header and Profile Images
- B4Stage4 Infographic
- Screening Web Button
- Horizontal Banner Image
- Vertical Banner Image

## Items for Advocates

- Tips for Advocates: How to Advance Mental Health B4Stage4
- Sample Letter to Policymakers

## Fact Sheets and Handouts

- B4Stage4: Changing the Way We Think About Mental Health
- B4Stage4: Get Informed
- B4Stage4: Get Screened
- B4Stage4: Get Help
- B4Stage4: Where to Get Help (Decision Map)
- May is Mental Health Month Calendar/Poster

## Questions?

If you have further questions about Mental Health Month, please contact Danielle Fritze, Director of Public Education at [dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net).

# Outreach Ideas

Many of you are likely well on your way to planning for Mental Health Month. If not, here are some ideas to help you.

- Ask your governor or mayor to declare May as Mental Health Month, using the sample proclamation that is part of the toolkit.
- Contact your local heart, diabetes, cancer or lung association to partner and share messages about mental health and the importance of treating it like any other health condition. Offer to host a workshop for their members and during support group meetings.
- Organize a community run or walk for mental health. Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Send a “viral” email to all of your partners, family members and friends, and local officials inviting them to participate.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, church, or library). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org). Make sure to have a printer so people can print their results.
- Plan a day at your state Capitol. Invite advocates, consumers, concerned citizens and community and business leaders to visit each policymaker to discuss your community’s mental health.
- Host a meet-and-greet with local leaders in mental health and the community they serve at the local town square. Ask a consumer and local community leader to share why mental health is so important to them personally.
- If your community has a number of buildings with bell towers or a bell-ringing ensemble, ask them to ring their bells for mental health on May 1 or another day. Alert the public and the media in advance. Share materials with attendees on the importance of mental wellness.
- Team up with your local school district to promote children’s mental health during National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day (Thursday, May 7).
- Post to your organization’s social media networks: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc. to raise awareness of May as Mental Health Month. Make sure to use the May is Mental Health Month hashtags: [#mhmonth2015](https://twitter.com/mhmonth2015) or [#B4Stage4](https://twitter.com/B4Stage4).
- May is also Older American’s Month. Reach out to your local senior communities, including assisted living and nursing homes. Mental illnesses are not a normal part of aging!

We'll be reaching out in early June to ask about your outreach and impact. Make sure to keep track of your efforts by doing things like:

- Counting how many handouts you distribute
- Tracking media hits and impressions
- Keeping tally of likes, shares and retweets of your Mental Health Month posts on social media networks
- If you do a screening event or health fair, keep count of how many people visit your booth and/or take a screen
- Conducting a pre/post survey to see how you've increased knowledge about mental health issues among those you reach. Set up a quick survey online using [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

## Let us know what you've got planned!

Tell us about your events so we can post them on MHA's Web Calendar, and help you get the word out. Contact Antionette Means at [ameans@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:ameans@mentalhealthamerica.net) with the following information:

Name of Event

Date

Location

Brief Description

Registration/Sign-Up Instructions

Contact Person

## Like our materials? Want more?

Brochures are available through the Mental Health America store to supplement the information provided in the 2015 B4Stage4 – May is Mental Health Month toolkit.

Visit the Mental Health America store by clicking the "Store" link on the dark blue menu bar at the top of the Mental Health America's website, [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

\*MHA Affiliates – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on printed materials at the MHA store. To place an order, contact Antionette Means at 703-797-2592.

# Key Messages

- Addressing mental health before Stage 4—this year’s theme for May is Mental Health Month—calls attention to the importance addressing mental health symptoms early, identifying potential underlying diseases, and planning an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.
- When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don’t wait years to treat them. We start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. So why don’t we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness?
- About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health disorder sometime in their life, with first onset usually in childhood or adolescence.
- Research shows that by ignoring mental health symptoms, we lose ten years in which we could intervene in order to change people’s lives for the better. During most of these years most people still have supports that allow them to succeed—home, family, friends, school, and work. Intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can save lives and change the trajectories of people living with mental illnesses.
- One of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health screening. Go to [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) to take a screening for either depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Use your screening results to start a conversation with your primary care provider, or a trusted friend or family member and begin to plan a course of action for addressing your mental health.
- MHA’s goal is to get every American screened and aware of their mental health, so they can address it #B4Stage4.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with the rich assortment of statistics cited throughout the fact sheets and infographics.

# Sample Press Release

## This May is Mental Health Month Addressing Mental Health #B4Stage4

Contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[CITY, STATE] (DATE)—Addressing mental health before Stage 4—this year’s theme for May is Mental Health Month—calls attention to the importance addressing mental health symptoms early, identifying potential underlying diseases, and planning an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Mental health conditions should be treated long before they reach the most critical points in the disease process—before Stage 4.

“When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don’t wait years to treat them,” said [NAME] [TITLE] of [AFFILIATE]. “We start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. So why don’t we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness?”

“This Mental Health Month, we are encouraging everyone to learn the signs, ask for help if needed, address symptoms early, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.”

One of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health screening. Mental Health America has online screening tools for depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org). MHA’s goal is to get every American screened and aware of their mental health, so they can address it #B4Stage4.

MHA has also developed a series of fact sheets available on its website ([www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)) on realizing the critical importance of addressing mental health early, recognizing the risk factors and signs of mental illness and how and where to get help when needed.

May is Mental Health Month was started 66 years ago by (AFFILIATE’s) national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone.

“When feelings and emotions get overwhelming, it’s hard to know what to do,” [NAME] said. “Sometimes, these early symptoms might not ever become serious. Like a cough, they often go away on their own, and are nothing to fear. But sometimes, they are a sign of something more severe and shouldn’t be ignored. Taking a screening is the first step to protect your mental health, and addressing mental illness before Stage 4.”

Research shows that by ignoring symptoms, we lose ten years in which we could intervene in order to change people’s lives for the better. During most of these years most people still have supports that allow them to succeed—home, family, friends, school, and work. Intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can save lives and change the trajectories of people living with mental illnesses.

“Prevention, early identification and intervention, and integrated services work,” concluded [NAME]. “When you address symptoms before Stage 4, people can often recover quickly, and live full and productive lives.”

For more information on May is Mental Health Month, visit Mental Health America’s website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may).

[BOILERPLATE]

# Drop-In Article

## Addressing Mental Health Before Stage 4 (#B4Stage4)

When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don't wait years to treat them. We start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. When people are in the first stage of those diseases, and are beginning to show signs of symptoms like a persistent cough, high blood pressure, or high blood sugar, we try immediately to reverse these symptoms. We don't ignore them. In fact, we develop a plan of action to reverse and sometimes stop the progression of the disease.

So why aren't we doing the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness?

When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what the risk factors and symptoms are will help to catch them early. Often times, family and friends are the first to step in to support a person through these early stages. Experiencing symptoms such as loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, feeling anxious, or hearing voices, shouldn't be ignored or brushed aside in the hopes that they go away. Like other diseases, we need to address these symptoms early, identify the underlying disease, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Mental health conditions should be addressed long before they reach the most critical points in the disease process—before Stage 4.

Many people do not seek treatment in the early stages of mental illnesses because they don't recognize the symptoms. Up to 84% of the time between the first signs of mental illness and first treatment is spent not recognizing the symptoms.

Mental Health America's screening tools can help. Taken online at [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org), a screening is an anonymous, free and private way to learn about your mental health and see if you are showing warning signs of a mental illness. A screening only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results. A screening is not a diagnosis, but it can be a helpful tool for starting a conversation with your doctor or a loved one about your mental health.

This May is Mental Health Month; [AFFILIATE NAME] is raising awareness of the important role mental health plays in our lives and encouraging members of the community to learn more about their own mental health and to take action immediately if they are experiencing symptoms of a mental illness.

Mental illnesses are not only common, they are treatable. There is a wide variety of treatment options for mental illnesses ranging from talk therapy to medication to peer support, and it may take some time for a person to find the right treatment or combination of treatments that works best for them. But when they do, the results can be truly amazing and life changing. [AFFILIATE] wants to help people learn what they can do both to protect their mental health and know the signs of mental illness #B4Stage4.

It's up to all of us to know the signs and take action so that mental illnesses can be caught early and treated, and we can live up to our full potential. We know that intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can save lives and change the trajectories of people living with mental illnesses. Be aware of your mental health and get screened #B4Stage4 today!

# Radio PSA Scripts

ANNOUNCER V/O: What would you think if your doctor used the phrase “Stage 4” when talking about your health? For many illnesses, Stage 4 means trouble. When we think about cancer or heart disease, we don’t wait years to treat them. We start well before Stage 4 if we can—we begin with prevention. So why don’t we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness? It’s time to change the conversation. May is Mental Health Month and Mental Health America’s Before Stage 4 campaign calls attention to the importance of addressing mental health symptoms early, identifying potential underlying illnesses, and planning an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Take a screening and find out more at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net). This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

ANNOUNCER V/O: Mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, are real, common and treatable. And recovery is possible. But not all of us think about our mental health enough. It’s time to change that. May is Mental Health Month and Mental Health America’s Before Stage 4 campaign calls attention to the importance of addressing mental health symptoms early, identifying potential underlying illnesses, and planning an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Take a mental health screening and find out more at [MentalHealthAmerica.net](http://MentalHealthAmerica.net). This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

ANNOUNCER V/O: Just as everyone fits on a spectrum of health, everyone fits on a spectrum of mental health. When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don’t wait years to treat them. We start Stage 4 if we can—we begin with prevention. So why don’t we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness? Mental Health America’s Before Stage 4 Campaign calls attention to the importance of addressing mental health symptoms early, identifying potential underlying illnesses, and planning an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Learn how you can protect and improve your health before stage 4 by visiting their website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net). This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

ANNOUNCER V/O: Loss of sleep. Feeling tired for no reason. Feeling low or anxious. Hearing voices. If you are experiencing these symptoms, they shouldn’t be ignored or brushed aside in the hopes that they go away. Like other diseases, we need to address mental health concerns early, identify the underlying illness, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health. Take a mental health screening and find out more at [MentalHealthAmerica.net](http://MentalHealthAmerica.net). This message is brought to you as a public service of [Affiliate] and [this radio station].

# Proclamation

Encourage your local public officials to go on the record in support of mental health. Below, please find a sample proclamation that designates May as Mental Health Month. An official signing of a proclamation is a perfect occasion for a news event, photo opportunity or other activity.

## Mental Health Month 2015 "B4Stage4"

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, all Americans experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives; and

WHEREAS, prevention is an effective way to reduce the burden of mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, there is a strong body of research that supports specific tools that all Americans can use to better handle challenges, and protect their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, mental health conditions are real and prevalent in our nation; and

WHEREAS, with early and effective treatment, those individuals with mental health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, each business, school, government agency, healthcare provider, organization and citizen shares the burden of mental health problems and has a responsibility to promote mental wellness and support prevention efforts.

THEREFORE, I [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], do hereby proclaim May 2015 as Mental Health Month in [STATE OR COMMUNITY]. As the [TITLE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL], I also call upon the citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools in [STATE OR COMMUNITY] to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental health conditions before they reach stage 4.

# Sample Tweets

May is #MHMonth2015! Download @mentalhealtham's toolkit to raise awareness & end the stigma about #mentalhealth <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Did you know that 50% of people who develop serious #mentalillness experience symptoms by age 14? #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015 <http://bit.ly/1BUIZLg>

#B4Stage4: natl campaign 2 identify #mentalhealth concerns & intervene early #GetScreened [mhascreening.org](http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3) <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Learn early warning signs of #mentalillness key 4 recovery=recognize issues & get help early #MHMonth2015 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Support #B4Stage4 campaign & protect your #mentalhealth Check out @mentalhealtham's #MHMonth2015 toolkit #Prevention <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Embrace your #mentalhealth Identify issues early & make it easier 2 treat & prevent. [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Don't be afraid to ask 4 help, get #screened & start the conversation early: [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Learn the early warning signs of #mentalhealthconditions w/ @mentalhealtham's toolkit #MHMonth2015 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Talk to someone & ask 4 help your #mentalhealth matters [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Therapy isn't the only treatment 4 #mentalhealthconditions. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3> #GetInformed #MHMonth2015

Think of 5 ppl in your life @ least 1 is struggling with #mentalhealthcondition #starttheconversation #B4Stage4 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

## Other ideas:

Tweet the tips from the Calendar each day!  
Share infographics from the toolkit  
Retweet @MentalHealthAm always

## Use these hashtags to join the conversation:

#MHMonth2015  
#B4Stage4  
#mentalhealthawareness  
#GetInformed  
#GetScreened

# Sample Facebook Posts

We support @mentalhealthamerica and the #B4Stage4 campaign for early intervention and prevention. Screening is one step in that process. Get screened today: [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) and support #MHMonth2015 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

It's Mental Health Month #MHMonth2015 - Support early identification, prevention, and intervention. People do recover! #B4Stage4 Get involved <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Did you know that it typically takes ten years from the first time someone has mental health concerns until they get a correct diagnosis and proper treatment? We can't wait for that. Support #MHMonth2015 and embrace #B4Stage4 thinking, learn more: <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can save lives and change the trajectories of people living with mental illnesses. Support @mentalhealthamerica and the #B4Stage4 campaign Get #screened, [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)

Would you wait 10 years to get help if you were experiencing symptoms of cancer or diabetes? Don't wait to ask for and receive help. Take a #screening and talk to your doctor or someone you trust, [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Learn the early warning signs. When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what these changes are will help to catch them early. Often times, parents, teachers and mentors are the first person to step in to support a person through these early changes. Learn the warning signs #B4Stage4 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Just as everyone fits on a spectrum of health – ranging from poor to excellent – everyone fits on a spectrum of mental health. Identifying symptoms early can make it easier to treat and prevent more serious issues. Don't be afraid to ask for help, get #screened and start the conversation early: [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Treatment for mental illnesses varies for each individual. For some, seeing a therapist, taking medication, or peer support may be the right fit, but it's up to you to find the right treatment option that meets your needs, get informed about your choices and talk to someone you trust #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015 <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3>

Recovery is possible! It is important to remember that even though mental health conditions may require intensive, long-term treatment and a lot of hard work at Stage 4, people can and do recover and reclaim their lives. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1Agy9v3> #B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

Think of 5 people in your life (including yourself). At least 1 is struggling with a mental health condition. Support @MentalHealthAmerica and make mental health a priority in your life #B4Stage4 Get screened and start on the path to recovery [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) #MHMonth2015

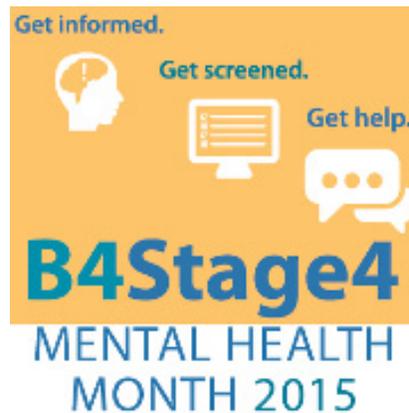
# Social Media Images

Download and save the images provided for use on your social media platforms or websites. All images (including additional infographics and banner ads can be downloaded by visiting <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-month-2015-toolkit-download>, then right-clicking on the image and selecting "save picture as."

Screening Button (150x162 px)



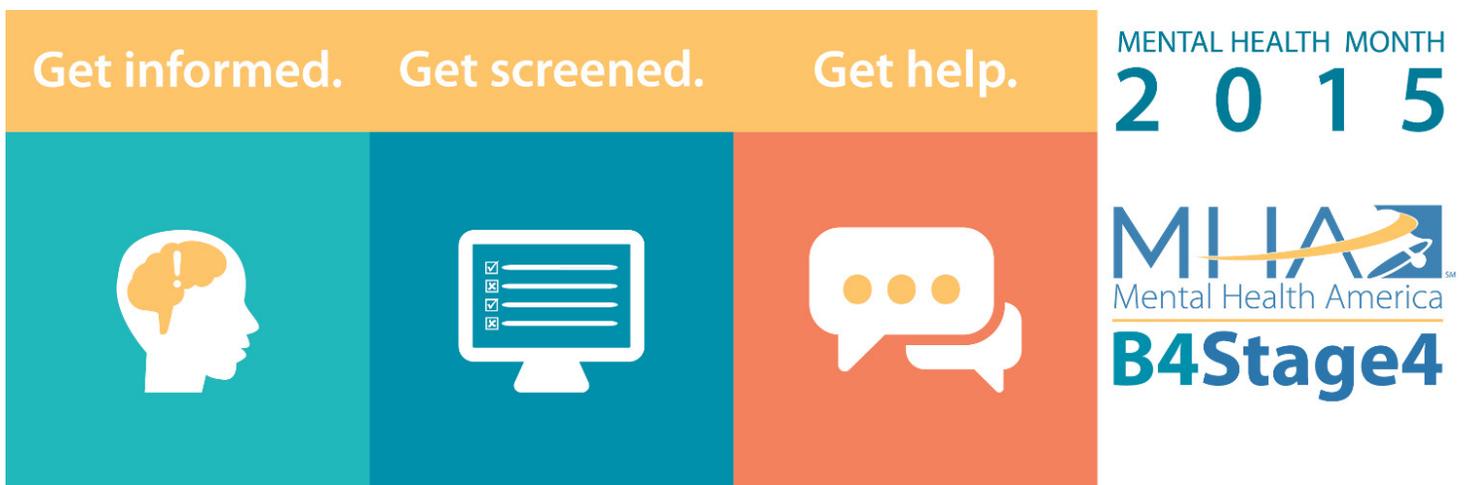
Facebook Profile Photo (180 x180 px)  
Twitter Profile Photo (240 x 240 px)



Facebook Cover Photo (851 x 315 px)



Twitter Header Photo (1500 x 500 px)



# Tips for Advocates

Mental Health America would like to share with you some tools to help you move your community B4Stage4. To spread the message that we need to act B4Stage4, you can:

- Educate your community about mental health and raise awareness for prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery using MHA's materials
- Promote screening in your community using our online screening tool, available at [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)
- Learn about effective prevention, early intervention, and treatment interventions, some of which you can start to read about at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/effective-interventions](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/effective-interventions) or at [www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost)
- Encourage your community to fill out our survey when they are having trouble accessing a behavioral health service at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/cant-find-care>
- Sign up for action alerts or volunteer with your local Mental Health America affiliate
- Share your story and highlight what works in behavioral health and what we need to better meet your community's needs

We have also provided a letter that you and other members of your community can use to encourage policy-makers to invest in services B4Stage4. You can send this letter to your state legislators, your city council, your state educational agency, your local board of education, or any other public or private groups you think might be interested in investing in a behavioral health prevention program.

After sending the letter, you can check back in a few weeks to see whether the policy-maker is interested in funding a program, which one, and what their plans are for going forward. This will encourage them to act and keep the process going. If they are not interested in funding a program, hopefully they can point you to someone else who will be.

We look forward to working with you in promoting prevention for all, early intervention for those at risk, treatment for those who need it, and recovery as the goal. With your help, this May is Mental Health Month we can inspire more people to think and act B4Stage4.

# Polycymaker Letter

Dear [Insert Name Here]:

May is Mental Health Month, and on behalf of children, parents, families, and friends, we hope that you will take this opportunity to invest in our community's behavioral health. Mental Health America started May is Mental Health Month over sixty years ago to build a national focus on crucial mental health issues. Although we have made incredible progress since May is Mental Health Month first began, we still have a long way to go and it is crucial to make this May count. This May in particular, Mental Health America is asking policy-makers to join our B4Stage4 campaign by foccusing on prevention and early intervention for their constituents.

Behavioral health is a pressing issue for our community. In [INSERT LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NAME HERE], children are sitting in their classrooms right now, learning how to count and spell. By the time they finish middle school and enter high school, most mental illness will have already developed and it will already be affecting their schoolwork, their friendships, and the course of their lives. If we act now, we can offer these children, and our community, the brightest possible future.

If we invest in even just one effective, evidence-based prevention program, this will make all the difference in the world for that class of children. With a program in place, the children will build more of the skills and resilience they need, and fewer children will struggle with depression, substance abuse, criminal justice involvement, and teen pregnancy as they grow up. The classroom of children will be more socially connected, more able to support one another, and more likely to thrive as they get older. They will also experience fewer hospitalizations, be less likely to be incarcerated, and use fewer public benefits, saving our community a lot of resources we can use elsewhere to get *even better* outcomes. When these children finally graduate from school and become part of our community, they will make our community stronger, healthier, and more prosperous.

There are many rigorously researched and evidence-based programs out there, and we need to figure out what's best for our community and get prevention in place. The Washington State Institute of Public Policy calculated out the costs and benefits of some of these programs for their state and that can serve as a guide (available at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost>). I personally like \_\_\_\_\_ (*Fill in an early intervention program you like. MHA likes programs like: youth and adult peer mentoring, Nurse-Family Partnerships, the PAX Good Behavior Game, and MST – Psychiatric*).

Our children can't wait, they only have one childhood and they're growing up right now. Invest in a prevention program and support our children and our community to grow, thrive, and prosper.

Sincerely,

[Your Name Here]

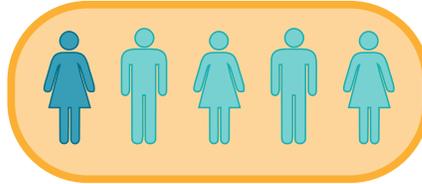
Learn more about the programs we like at:  
<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org>  
<http://paxis.org/products/view/pax-good-behavior-game>  
<http://mstservices.com/target-populations/psychiatric>

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

## B4Stage4

### Changing the Way We Think About Mental Health

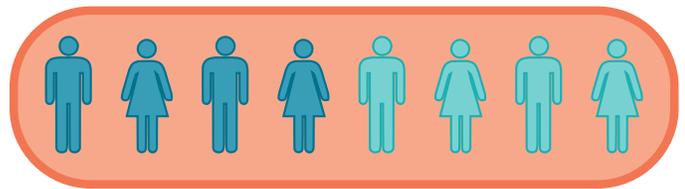
When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don't wait years to treat them. We start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. When people are in the first stage of those diseases and are beginning to show signs or symptoms like a persistent cough, high blood pressure, or high blood sugar, we try immediately to reverse these symptoms. We don't ignore them. In fact, we develop a plan of action to reverse and sometimes stop the progression of the disease. So why don't we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness?



## 1 in 5

American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.<sup>1</sup>

## 50 PERCENT



of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.<sup>2</sup>

## Stages of Mental Health Conditions

**Stage 1:**  
Mild Symptoms and Warning Signs

At Stage 1, a person begins to show symptoms of a mental health condition, but is still able to maintain the ability to function at home, work or school—although perhaps not as easily as before they started to show symptoms. Often there is a sense that something is “not right.”

**Stage 2:**  
Symptoms Increase in Frequency and Severity and Interfere with Life Activities and Roles

At Stage 2, it usually becomes obvious that something is wrong. A person's symptoms may become stronger and last longer or new symptoms may start appearing on top of existing ones, creating something of a snowball effect. Performance at work or school will become more difficult, and a person may have trouble keeping up with family duties, social obligations or personal responsibilities.

**Stage 3:**  
Symptoms Worsen with Relapsing and Recurring Episodes Accompanied by Serious Disruption in Life Activities and Roles

At Stage 3, symptoms have continued to increase in severity, and many symptoms are often taking place at the same time. A person may feel as though they are losing control of their life and the ability to fill their roles at home, work or school.

**Stage 4:**  
Symptoms are Persistent and Severe and Have Jeopardized One's Life

By Stage 4, the combination of extreme, prolonged and persistent symptoms and impairment often results in development of other health conditions and has the potential to turn into a crisis event like unemployment, hospitalization, homelessness or even incarceration. In the worst cases, untreated mental illnesses can lead to loss of life an average of 25 years early.

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

Catching mental health conditions early is known as Early Identification and Intervention. However, many times people may not realize that their symptoms are being caused by a mental health condition or feel ashamed to pursue help because of the stigma associated with mental illness. It's up to all of us to know the signs and take action so that mental illnesses can be caught early and treated, and we can live up to our full potential. Even though mental illnesses may require intensive, long-term treatment and a lot of hard work at the later stages, people can and do recover and reclaim their lives.

One way to see if you may be experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a screening. Visit [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) to take a quick, confidential screening for a variety of mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, mood disorders or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Use your screening results to start a conversation with your primary care provider, or a trusted friend or family member and begin to plan a course of action for addressing your mental health.



[www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)  
Anonymous • Free • Confidential



Remember, mental health conditions are not only common, they are treatable. There is a wide variety of treatment options for mental illnesses ranging from talk therapy to medication to peer support, and it may take some time for a person to find the right treatment or combination of treatments that works best for them. But when they do, the results can be truly amazing and life changing.

For more information about what you should know and what you can do at each stage, visit [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may).

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)



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[#B4Stage4](https://twitter.com/#B4Stage4) [#MHMonth2015](https://twitter.com/#MHMonth2015)

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# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

## B4Stage4 Get Informed

When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what the risk factors and symptoms are will help to catch them early. Often times, family and friends are the first to support a person through these early stages. Like other health conditions, we need to address the symptoms early, identify the underlying illness, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.

### Risk Factors

#### Genes

**17-28%**

of risk for mental illnesses can be accounted for by variations in common genes.

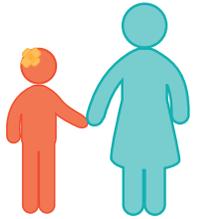
Much stronger links were found in twin and family studies. Estimates for total heritability, or how much a disease is tied to genetics, are<sup>1</sup>:

- Schizophrenia 81%
- Bipolar disorder 75%
- ADHD 75%
- Depression 37%



#### Biology

In one study, head injury between the ages of 11-15 was the strongest predictor for development of schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder.<sup>2</sup>



Brain changes like building a "tolerance" or reward response to stress, or abnormalities in the prefrontal and frontal cortex, and irregularities in the function of the neurotransmitter glutamate are also risk factors for mental illness and substance use.<sup>4</sup>



#### Environment

People who are exposed to adverse childhood events including abuse, neglect, divorce, witnessing domestic violence and having parents who have substance use issues, mental illnesses or are in jail are:

**2.6x**  
more likely to have depression



**5x**  
more likely to have serious alcohol problems



**17x**  
more likely to have learning or behavioral problems

**3x**  
more likely to have serious job problems<sup>3</sup>



#### Lifestyle

Substance use can increase chances of developing a mental illness



and having a mental illness can increase risk of using substances

People with any mental illness are:

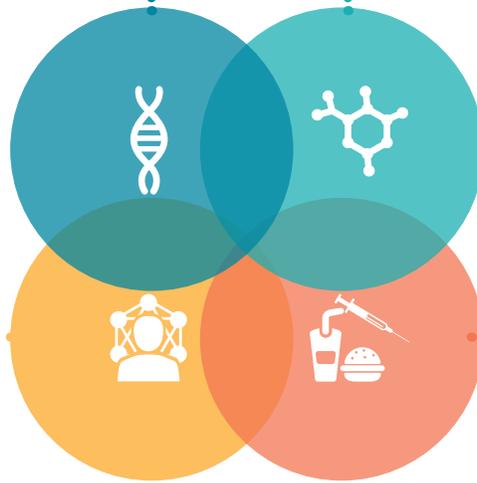
**2.3x**  
as likely to develop nicotine dependence



**3x**  
more likely to develop alcohol dependence



**30x**  
more likely to develop illicit drug dependence<sup>5</sup>



# Early Warning Signs and Symptoms

Having a combination of symptoms (not just one symptom) indicates that someone might be showing signs of a mental health condition. Be aware of these symptoms when they last longer than a few weeks:



Problems with concentration, memory, or ability to think clearly



Changes in eating such as loss of appetite or overeating



Not being able to complete school or work tasks



Feeling overly worried



Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or worthless



Sensitivity to sounds, sight, smell, or touch



Irritability and restlessness



Loss of interest in activities that are normally enjoyable, withdrawal from others, or disconnection



Feeling like your brain is playing tricks on you. Hearing knocking or scratching sounds, or name being called



Changes in energy level and sleep patterns. Often someone will sleep during the day and be up at night

## Signs and symptoms that require immediate attention:

- Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting one's self or another person
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
- Unexplainable changes in thinking, speech, or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Serious drop in school or work performance
- Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), go to your local Emergency Room or call 911.**

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)



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#B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

**MHIA**  
Mental Health America  
**B4Stage4**

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# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

## B4Stage4 Get Screened

Many people do not seek treatment in the early stages of mental illnesses because they don't recognize the symptoms.

**84%**

of the time between first symptoms and first treatment is spent not recognizing the symptoms of mental illness.

**16%**

of time is spent getting help.<sup>1</sup>

The delays in treatment for mental illnesses are longer than for many other health conditions.<sup>2-4</sup>



Anxiety Disorders



Mood Disorders



Psychosis

Screening can help catch mental health problems early—B4Stage4.

Screening is an anonymous, free and private way to learn about your mental health and if you are showing warning signs of a mental illness.

A screening only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results. A screening is not a diagnosis, but it can be a helpful tool for starting a conversation with your doctor or a loved one about your mental health.



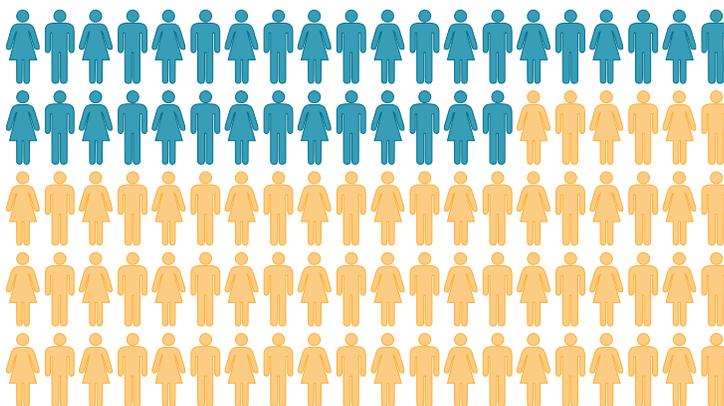
[www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)

Anonymous • Free • Confidential

MHAScreening.org uses proven tools to check for symptoms of depression, anxiety, mood disorders and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

**90%**

of people who started a screen at MHAScreening.org completed a screen and got immediate results.



**66%**

of people who took a screening scored moderate to severe. Of those, over 60% had never been diagnosed.

## Getting screened increases the chances of getting treatment.

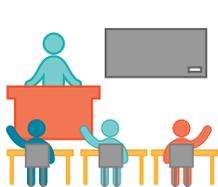


When positive screening results were given during a primary care visit, doctors were **over 3 times more likely to recognize the symptoms of mental illness** and to plan to follow up with the patient.

Treatment following screening has been shown to reduce symptoms of mental illness and the **positive effects of treatment are still seen a year later.**<sup>5-7</sup>

## The earlier that mental health problems are caught and treated, the less it costs and the better the results.

Early ..... Late



Good Behavior Game Prevention Program

**\$81.04**  
per student  
per year<sup>8</sup>



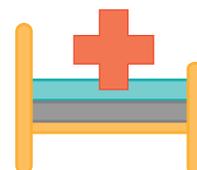
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety

**\$1,239.62**  
per year or course  
of 12 sessions<sup>9</sup>



Intensive Home-Based Family Therapy for Youth

**\$7,680.85**  
per year<sup>10</sup>



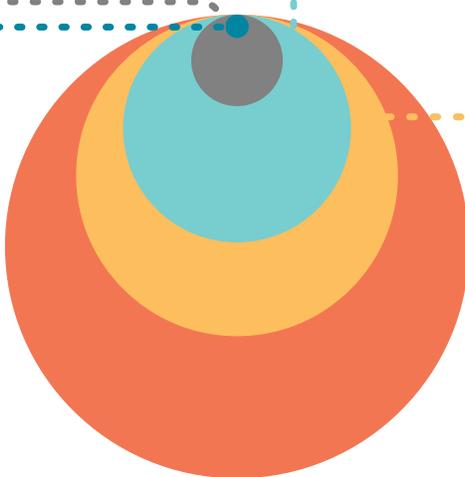
Hospitalization

**\$15,317.57**  
per stay  
(average length  
of stay 7.2 days)<sup>11,12</sup>



Incarceration

**\$31,846.46**  
per year<sup>13</sup>



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#B4Stage4 #MHMonth2015

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Mental Health America  
**B4Stage4**

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1484>  
<sup>11</sup> <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/expenses-per-inpatient-day/>  
<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/mental-health.htm>  
<sup>13</sup> <http://www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/price-of-prisons-updated-version-021914.pdf>  
 \*Cost figures adjusted for 2015 using The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

## B4Stage4

## Where to Get Help

When you've decided to seek help, knowing what resources are available and where to start can be tricky. Use the decision map below to help you figure out your options. If you don't find help where a path ends, try any of the resources in the gold boxes.



# MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015

## B4Stage4 Get Help

You've decided to get help—that itself is a big step—now it's important that you understand options for treatment. You may end up trying a few different options or a combination of treatments, not just one. That's okay—it is all about what works best for you. This list doesn't include everything, and there are many other treatments and providers (visit [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net) for more information). Make sure you tell your treatment team about all of the options you're using.

### Therapy

There are many approaches to therapy for individuals and groups, including cognitive behavioral therapy.

**Provided by:** Psychologists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Pastoral Counselors, other specialists like Marriage and Family Therapists, some Psychiatrists, Inpatient Care, Hospitals



### Medication

Medications aren't cures, but they can treat symptoms. Every medication has benefits, risks, and side effects. Keep in mind that it may take 6-8 weeks for a medication to have its full effect.

**Provided by:** Psychiatrists, Other Medical Doctors, Nurse Practitioners and Physician's Assistants (under supervision of a doctor), Inpatient Facilities, Hospitals



### Peer Support

While they aren't counselors, peers can give valuable insight on how to recover from mental illnesses because they have experience. Peers provide hope, education and advocacy.

**Provided by:** Certified Peer Specialists, Peer Supporters, Support Groups, Online Support Communities



### Community-Based Services

Community-based mental health services are team approaches that help you and your family work on all aspects of life and recovery. Common community services include: evaluations of your mental health and role in the community, education to empower personal recovery, individual and group therapy, case management, and supported education and employment. These services are provided through small or large programs and while some work might be completed in an office, most of the treatment is provided at your home and in your natural environment.

**Provided by:** Local MHAs, Community Mental Health Treatment organizations and programs. Check out the SAMHSA Treatment Locator at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)



### Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Many Americans, nearly 40 percent, use health care approaches developed outside of mainstream Western, or conventional, medicine for specific conditions or overall well-being.

The most commonly used natural product among adults in the past 30 days was fish oil/omega 3s (reported by 37.4 percent of all adults who said they used natural products).<sup>1</sup>

**Provided by:** Doctors, Pharmacies, Internet (Caution advised—some natural supplements can have serious interactions with medications. Always discuss Complementary and Alternative treatments with a doctor.)



### Self-Care

Self-care can include online, self-managed programs like Beating the Blues, which can improve the symptoms of anxiety and depression.<sup>2</sup> It can also include things like exercise, which can have a moderate effect on depression.<sup>3</sup>

**Provided by:** You



# Managing Expectations

Even if you have insurance, not all providers will accept it. There are many reasons that this happens, including low reimbursement rates and large amounts of paperwork. However, you may be able to get reimbursed for some of your care—ask your insurance company about out-of-network care and their reimbursement process.

Check out our guide on How Insurance Works at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/how-insurance-works](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/how-insurance-works).

It's going to take a while to see someone. Nationally, there's only 1 mental health provider for 790 adults. With 1 in 5 adults experiencing a mental health condition in a given year, a lot of those providers have their hands full.<sup>4</sup> This is a network problem that groups like Mental Health America are trying to change at national, state, and local levels.

Some areas don't have the care you need, even if you can pay for it. This can happen because of your location (if you live in a rural area, you may have to travel a long distance to find a therapist) or because providers in your area don't offer the supports you need (like community-based services). Thirty to forty percent of children and adults report that they couldn't get the mental health treatment they needed because of cost, inability to access treatment, or inadequate insurance.<sup>4</sup> This is an access to care problem that advocacy groups like Mental Health America are working on. Want to help? Find your local MHA Affiliate at [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net) and see how you can get involved.

It's going to cost money. For example, individuals nationwide spent an average of 10 percent of their family's annual income out of pocket for mental health/substance abuse treatment.<sup>5</sup> However, the cost of waiting can be worse. If you need help paying for treatment, visit [mentalhealthamerica.net/paying-care](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/paying-care).

Your first provider may not be "the one". Choosing a mental health provider can be kind of like dating. Sometimes, you're just not compatible. You may have to change providers before you feel comfortable. While it can feel like a hassle, it's worth it to find the right fit.

Some people are going to be critical or doubtful. More than half of people believe that others are caring and sympathetic to individuals with mental illness, however that may not always be the case.<sup>6</sup> You may encounter some naysayers, but there are also people who will support you and want you to get better. If you don't have them in your life, you can find them in support groups or online communities.

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)



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MAY 2015



SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2015



**1** Switch up your exercise regimen. Try a dance class or a new sport. Exercising with other people can enhance its stress-reducing benefits.

**2** Try something new and creative. Art projects can be relaxing and promote well-being.

**3** Feed your brain. Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as wild salmon, are linked to decreased rates of depression and schizophrenia.

**4** Feeling groggy? Take a nap! Napping can improve your ability to work and perform daily tasks.

**5** Share an apple or some nuts with your teacher or mentor. They are good sources of vitamin E, which helps maintain the thinking functions of the brain.

**6** Don't wonder about your mental health! Take a screen at [MHAScreening.org](http://MHAScreening.org) and get the tools you need.

**7** Craving sugar? Try swapping sweets for complex carbohydrates, like fruits, veggies, and whole grains. This may help boost activity or serotonin, an important chemical in the brain.

**8** What's for dinner? Foods rich in vitamin B12 and folic acid - such as grilled chicken with a side of broccoli - can help prevent mood disorders.

**9** Travel to a new place or try something you've always been a little scared of - do something outside of your comfort zone to give yourself a sense of satisfaction that you can handle life's challenges.

**10** Stop and smell the roses...literally. Or pick up some flowers for Mom. Studies show that being surrounded by nature is a mood booster.

**11** Get connected - share a meal with someone or pick up the phone. Studies show that good relationships make the difference between very happy and less happy people.

**12** Hold the door for a stranger or sign up to volunteer for your favorite charity. Studies show that random acts of kindness increase release of oxytocin- the "feel good" hormone.

**13** Consider donating time or money to a worthy cause. By helping others you can foster a sense of belonging and remind yourself that you are relatively lucky.

**14** Feeling in a rut? Do something silly and laugh at something you did. Remember, everyone deserves a break and we're often hardest on ourselves.

**15** Get comfortable and read a good book. Reading can help relieve stress and tension.

**16** Write down and share a few things that you are grateful for. People who keep track of their gratitude are more upbeat and have fewer physical aches and pains than others.

**17** Watch a comedy or visit a funny website. Laughter boosts the immune system and can reduce anxiety.

**18** Call someone close to you and tell them how much you appreciate them. Thanking them for their support can boost your mood and theirs.

**19** Swap regular coffee for decaf or freshly brewed tea. While a little caffeine can improve brain function, reducing your overall caffeine intake supports sleep.

**20** Take the stairs instead of the elevator, or park your car farther away from the store. Even small additions of exercise throughout the day can decrease tension and improve sleep.

**21** Add some green to your office or home (if you don't have much of a green thumb, try a cactus). Seeing plants can reduce stress and anxiety.

**22** Keep Cool, Be Mindful. Try this mindfulness technique: Eat an orange slowly, segment by segment. Focusing on the taste, touch, sight and smell of the orange will help reduce stress.

**23** Make a list of activities you enjoy. Set aside time each week to focus on yourself and what makes you happy.

**24** Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep tonight. People who get enough sleep are more likely to succeed at their daily tasks.

**25** Enjoy Memorial Day! Make sure to enjoy 15 minutes of sunshine, and apply sunscreen. Sunlight synthesizes Vitamin D, which experts believe is a mood elevator.

**26** To deal with a difficult task, write out steps you can take to complete it. People facing stress feel less depressed after problem-solving.

**27** Give yourself a break! Take 10 minutes out of your day for a walk. Small breaks (and exercise) improve your ability to deal with stress.

**28** Give yoga a try. Stretching and other forms of exercise help relieve tension caused by stress.

**29** Take a break from social media. Looking at social media can raise your levels of anxiety.

**30** Take a few minutes to breathe deeply - in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try this technique: Pretend you're taking a giant whiff of a bouquet of flowers, then pretend to blow out a candle.

**31** Don't go it alone. Tell your goals to someone you trust and ask them to help you stick with a plan. Studies show that social support helps you achieve your goals.

**Bonus: Play a Brain Game**

Can you find the following items in the scene above?

- An angry bear
- Fish
- Someone reading a book
- Twelve perfect circles (heads don't count)

1. The bear is next to the trunk of the second tree from the right. 2. The fish is with the water droplets on the right side of the fountain. 3. The person reading a book is red and sitting against the tree in the front left. 4. From left to right: There are 2 complete circles in each tree on the left, the two big trees, the basketball, and there are 5 total complete circles in the trees on the right side of the image.