



# May is Mental Health Month

This pandemic year has brought [extraordinary challenges](#). Many are concerned about their mental health for the first time. Others have experienced increased symptoms or relapse. For millions, this pandemic has come on top of layers of chronic stress, [trauma](#), and [grief](#) from [facing systemic racism](#) and brought with it a disproportionate risk of dying from COVID or from an act of racial violence. The pandemic has highlighted the [serious mental health implications of economic insecurity and poverty](#).

Mental Health Month invites us to [talk openly about mental health](#), to [destigmatize mental health challenges](#), and to educate and equip ourselves and our communities for the long-haul. Below are resources to support you and your community during mental health month and throughout the year. Categories: *Organize, Equip, Network, Pray & Worship, Learn More, and Practice Self-Care.*

## Organize

[12 Things Your Congregation Can Do in Mental Health Ministry](#) (new edition)

[Mental Health Ministry 101](#) gives an overview of the Presbyterian Mental Health Initiative adopted by the General Assembly in 2018 (grants, survey, network). A Matthew 25 theological lens and key parts of mental health ministry are described with links to resources. Useful for a self-guided introduction or Zoom conversations with a small organizing group.

## Equip your community with ‘first responder’ training

[Mental Health First Aid Training](#) is available in several versions (adult/adults, adult/youth, and teen/teens). This 8-hour course is designed to de-stigmatize mental health challenges and teach skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health concern, substance use problem, or experiencing a crisis. More than 2.5 million have been trained across the USA. Many presbyteries and congregations have organized trainings or sponsored individuals to be trained as trainers.

The [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) (SPRC) has a collection of resources for faith communities. Many faith communities are organizing or sponsoring ‘gatekeeper’ trainings in suicide prevention skills. This is a type of training for general audiences that teaches the skills to recognize and respond to people who are at risk of suicide. The [LivingWorks ASIST](#) model and [QPR](#) are two examples of suicide prevention training used by congregations and presbyteries. [A series of five short videos on suicide prevention, intervention, and response for clergy and faith leaders](#) has been produced by the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness.

[National Crisis Helplines Handout](#) is a single-side downloadable pdf with curated links to national helplines for distributing to your community during Mental Health Month. Consider compiling a list of local mental health services helplines on the flip side to share with your congregation.

## Equip your community for 'peer-to-peer' relationships

[Companionship](#) is a ministry of presence, a relational response to isolation and suffering and supportive of healing and recovery. *Companionship* training teaches skills for accompaniment when someone is experiencing emotional or mental health challenges. Companionship is a relationship of equals rooted in mutuality and recognition of our common human frailty. The model has five practices: hospitality, neighboring, side-by-side, listening and accompaniment. Training is available through Pathways to Promise, an interfaith cooperative bridging faith, culture, and mental health. [More information and dates of upcoming trainings.](#)

## Network

[The Presbyterian Mental Health Network \(PMHN\)](#) is a new network facilitating connections and supporting innovation in mental health ministries across the PCUSA. [Sign up here](#) to be added to the PMHN mailing list.

Consider joining the [Presbyterian Mental Health Network \(PMHN\) Facebook Group](#) where you can participate in discussions, post questions, and find or share resources for mental health ministry.

[Mental Health Ministries E-Spotlight](#) is an interfaith newsletter produced six times a year (Winter, Spring, Summer, September, Fall, Holiday Issue). It's full of tips, ideas, articles, and seasonal resources for observing Mental Health Month (May), Suicide Prevention Month (September), Mental Illness Awareness Week (October), Blue Christmas (December) with suggestions for worship, education, and more.

## Pray and worship

[The UCC Mental Health Network](#) in partnership with the United Church of Canada has produced an exciting new collection of worship resources: [Radical Belonging: Mental Health Sunday Resources and Liturgies for All](#). (downloadable for free from the website in pdf or Word format). [The Work of the People](#) is a subscription-based resource with a diverse collection of video liturgy and contributors such as Walter Bruggeman, Barbara Brown Taylor, Richard Rohr. [NAMIfaith.net](#) and the [Mental Health Ministries E-Spotlight](#) newsletter also include worship resources.

## Learn more

Host [NAMI courses](#). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will send trained teachers to lead Peer-to-Peer (for adults with a mental illness diagnosis), Family-to-Family (for family members of adults with a diagnosis), and Basics (for family members of a minor with a diagnosis) courses at your church. Your church simply provides a good space for these 6-12-week courses to take place. [NAMI](#) offers a wealth of resources, including a helpline and an outstanding virtual annual conference in July.

Learn about [trauma-informed ministry](#), the [mental health issues that affect older adults](#), or [mental health issues on college campuses](#). The PCUSA Office of Christian Formation has produced several timely 'QuickSheets' on mental health topics.

Learn about the [mental health impact of systemic racism](#) and what you and your community can do about it. To learn more, check out [Race & Culture Mental Health Resources](#) compiled by the PCUSA Office of Mental Health Ministry.

Learn more about the [mental health implications of poverty](#), how hard it can be to recover and escape the poverty trap, and [some evidence-based strategies being tried to help break the cycle](#).

[Mental Health America](#) has developed [Tools2Thrive](#), a downloadable Toolkit for Mental Health Month 2021 with mental health self-help tips sheets. MHA is committed to advancing an anti-racism agenda and has produced an 'evergreen' [#ImpactofTrauma](#) toolkit for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Month in July.

Three collections of resources have been vetted and curated by the PCUSA Office of Mental Health Ministry for sharing with your community.

- [COVID-19 Mental Health Resources](#) (Everyone, Parents and Kids, Pastors & Congregations, Specific Topics and Diagnoses)
- [Race & Culture Mental Health Resources](#) (Racial Trauma, Resources by and for Specific Communities)
- [General Mental Health Ministry Resources](#)

## **Practice and model self-care**

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has developed a wealth of [emotional and spiritual care resources](#). Examples include *Building Resilience* webinars that teach in-the-moment tools to engage the relaxation response of body and mind and virtual *Support Discussions* and *Resilience & Renewal* retreats.