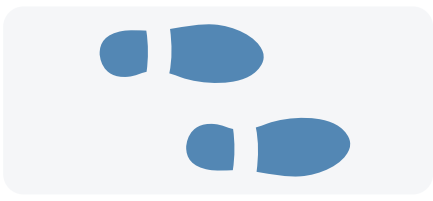


Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week

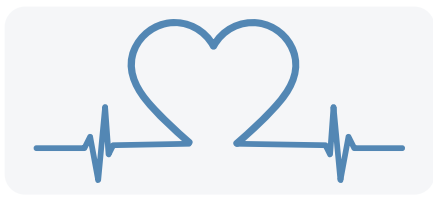
The meaning and importance of the shift from **Awareness** to **Acceptance**



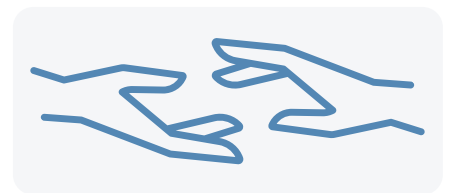
Why? Awareness is passive. **Acceptance inspires action!**
(asking for help, seeking treatment, offering support)



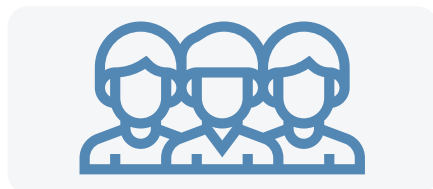
- Awareness means you know it exists
- **Acceptance** means you make a personal connection and **take steps** to learn more



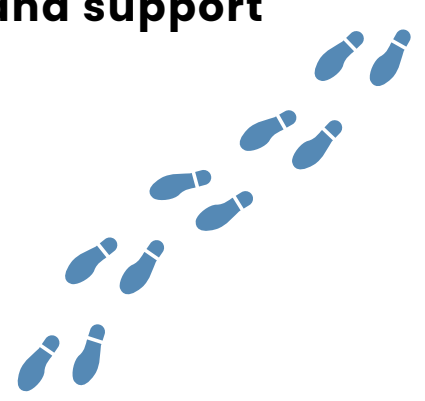
- Awareness means you acknowledge the issue
- **Acceptance** means you **work to understand** and offer compassion and sensitivity to others



- Awareness means you share concern
- **Acceptance** means you **offer help and support** without judgment



- Awareness means you are informed about the issue
- **Acceptance** means you **embrace** it and are invested and committed to **inspiring** and **building support** in your own community



Awareness Is Not Enough!



It's Time to Step into Action.



- **Acceptance** is the next step towards building an inclusive, supportive society that celebrates all children and youth
- **Acceptance** moves us to advocate for equitable support and family-driven treatment options
- **Acceptance** supports social justice for children who experience mental health challenges - and their families

Show others that **children's mental health matters**.
Take action during Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week - and **every day of the year!**

Mental Health Acceptance

Because awareness **ISN'T ENOUGH.**

In 2022, the National Children's Mental Health Week campaign was redefined to emphasize the need to move beyond awareness.



Equitable Treatment

Acceptance means recognizing that our mental health is **as important** as all other health issues.

It means acknowledging that we all have mental health needs that **require care**, just like brushing our teeth.

It means responding to mental health conditions with **treatment and support** like any other disease.

Acceptance would mean my child **feels safe** to say she is going to see her therapist, just as freely as she says she is going to the doctor or dentist.



Empathy & Understanding

It means a more **empathetic approach** towards children who struggle with mental health issues and recognizing it's not something they can turn on and off.

Acceptance means understanding that a mental health diagnosis is **not the end** - that coping skills and support are available.

It means understanding when someone has an emotional disability and is symptomatic, they need **support, not punishment.**

We asked children, youth and families - "What does acceptance of mental health challenges mean to you?"



Supportive Community

Acceptance means my child **isn't embarrassed or afraid** to ask for help.

It means children with mental health challenges are accepted, supported, and **feel wanted and worthy.**

It means **being held** in the caring hands of everyone in the community.

It means being treated with the same **dignity and respect** as others.

It means being brought **into the fold** - into the group. It feels like protection.

It means my kids are happier and **feel understood.**

Acceptance means I am loved and cared for **as I am.**

It means having patience and making the effort to **try to understand** what someone is going through.

Acceptance means having the right to be unique - to express your feelings, thoughts, and opinions **without judgment.**

It means **feeling free** to discuss your challenges without feeling like others are judging or discrediting your experiences.

It means seeing **people first** - acknowledging their strengths, not just their challenges or diagnosis.



Respect for Families

Acceptance means educators and community members would understand my child's behavior, and that is a reflection of trauma that she experienced - not her personality or our parenting skills.

Acceptance means respecting that I am the expert on my child and trusting that I know what's best for him/her.



Acceptance means the world!



Social Justice

For Youth Who Experience Mental Health and/or Substance Use Challenges



We asked parents and caregivers, "What **access and opportunities** would your child gain if their mental health challenges were supported and **ACCEPTED** in your community?" Here's what they said.

Supportive Community



- Easier to make friends
- Access to a school psychologist or counselor
- Relationships/connections with supportive adults & peers
- A meaningful role in the community

“Support and resources would be devoted to ensuring my child can be as successful as any other child in the community.”

Appropriate Education



- Inclusion rather than isolation
- Well-established accommodations for I.E.P.s & 504 plans
- Participation in prosocial sports, clubs & school activities
- Support, rather than discipline, for difficult behaviors

“With appropriate support, youth could achieve a higher level of education, leading to expanded employment choices, financial growth, independence and stability for their future.”

Improved Treatment



- More likely to seek help; less reluctant to ask
- Having skilled providers in every community
- Families/youth would guide treatment planning
- Effective treatment is available - *when it's needed*

“Access to skilled providers and referral services would be a relief. Coordinated efforts between schools, families and support agencies is imperative.”

Increased Funding



- For research on mental health challenges
- For schools, camps and other programming
- Equitable insurance reimbursement for treatment
- To support families balancing work and care needs

“Our children need resources, support, and the chance to learn, grow, and - most of all - thrive as they are. **We need equity!**”

The Heart of Acceptance

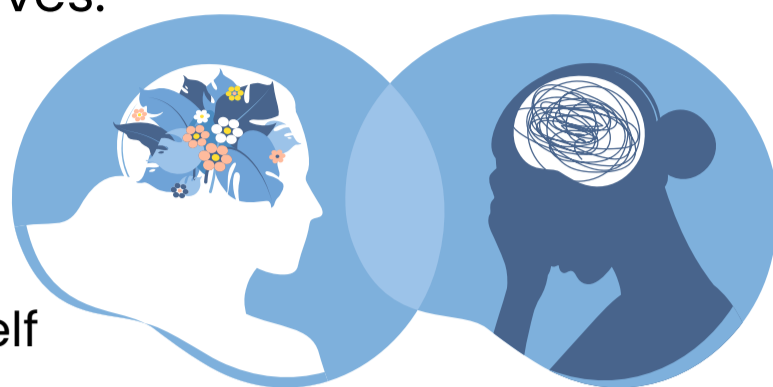


What Acceptance of Mental Health Needs Means for Youth and Young Adults

Getting to the heart of the matter, young people shared how acceptance would change the way they think and feel about themselves.

They said:

- I would feel more confident
- I would believe in myself
- I would love and accept myself
- I would be true to myself
- I would be able to find my value
- I would not feel like a bad kid
- I would feel wanted
- I would feel accepted, supported, and worthy
- I would feel welcomed and supported
- I would feel happier and understood
- I would feel I am loved and cared for as I am
- I would not feel shameful
- I would feel empowered
- I would feel the right to be unique
- I would have the ability to live and thrive
- I would smile again
- I would feel free to share my feelings
- I would feel important and valued
- I would have a stronger, more positive sense of self
- I would feel like I have a place in my community
- I would better understand myself and the world I live in
- I would have a happier, healthier lifestyle
- I would be more willing to share
- I would feel better about myself
- I would feel self-love
- I would feel more positive
- I would feel good about myself
- I would learn, grow and thrive
- I would have a healthier mind set
- I would have a healthier self-image
- I would feel successful
- I would be more comfortable being a part of my community
- I would feel encouraged and empowered
- I would feel successful in my goals
- I would have some fun along the way
- I would feel I can achieve independence and stability
- I would have self-acceptance
- I would strive to contribute to my community
- I would have self-esteem
- I would have normalcy
- I would have a successful, normal, and cultivated life
- I would be able to enjoy things other children enjoy
- I would be confident and wouldn't isolate myself



"I would feel like the sky's the limit!"



#youthvoice

#acceptance

www.fcmh.org

Mental health challenges are nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical diagnosis, just like heart disease or diabetes. Mental health diagnoses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking, or behavior (or a combination of these). **Mental health** is associated with emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It is also a factor in how an individual handles stress, relates to others, and in making choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. It's critical that we talk about these challenges and that we do so **in a person-centered way**.

REFRAMING LANGUAGE

WHY CHANGING OUR THINKING, OUR ACTIONS, AND OUR LANGUAGE MATTERS



The terms we use to describe mental health challenges matter. We have all heard derogatory terms used to describe someone who has a mental health challenge. Here are a few to jog your memory: Cuckoo; Mad as a hatter; Screwy—having a screw loose; Bananas; Loopy; Crackers; Wacko (whacko); Loony; Insane; Nuts; Freak; Psycho, Crazy; Weirdo. Can you imagine mocking someone with a diagnosis such as cancer or heart disease? **Here's how we can do better.**



UPDATED LANGUAGE

Prejudice and discrimination

Acceptance

Experiencing or living with a mental health challenge

Experiences/has been diagnosed with emotional, mental, and/or behavioral health challenges

Person experiencing / living with or diagnosed with a mental health challenge

Person who experiences substance use challenges



OUTDATED LANGUAGE

Stigma

Awareness

Suffering from a Mental Illness

Emotionally Disturbed

Mentally Ill Person; referring to someone with a diagnosis as schizophrenic, bipolar, OCD, etc.

Drug Abuser, Alcoholic, Addict, Substance Abuse



WHY IT MATTERS

Prejudice refers to thinking, discrimination refers to action—both can be changed.

Being aware doesn't call for action, change in behavior, or thinking.

People who experience mental health challenges can and do live healthy, fulfilling lives. Suffering implies one is unwell, unhappy, or can't recover.

Being diagnosed, experiencing symptoms of, or having been diagnosed with a mental illness is a common part of the human experience. The term disturbed perpetuates prejudice and creates a barrier to treatment.

Certain language exaggerates mental illness and reinforces prejudice. Always use person-first language.

Avoid words that suggest a lack of quality of life for people with substance use concerns. Terms like addict reduce a person's identity, deny dignity/humanity and imply powerlessness or the inability to recover.

The importance of using person-first language when talking about mental health and substance use challenges cannot be overstated. This is true for members of the media, support and treatment professionals, family members, friends, and the community at large. Person-first language separates the individual from the symptoms they experience—maintaining their identity as people with strengths who have the power to recover. **Here are a few examples.**

Person-first phrases

- A person living with a mental health challenge
- A person with substance use challenges
- My son diagnosed with bipolar disorder
- My daughter experiencing schizophrenia
- The individual I'm supporting who is experiencing depression
- My father who experiences alcohol misuse

Phrases that hinder recovery

- The mentally ill, psycho, crazy, lunatic
- Addict, meth head, burnout, druggie, junkie
- My son is bipolar
- My schizo daughter
- A depressed individual
- My alcoholic father



Experiencing Mental Health Symptoms that Interfere with Daily Life/Activities

Died by Suicide

Person in Recovery

The Family Support Workforce includes family peers, clinicians, and others who support families

Family peer support (FPS) is provided from one family member with lived experience as a primary caregiver to another caregiver in the effort to strengthen the whole family's well-being. FPS will assist family caregivers in navigating child, adult and family serving systems



Emotional breakdown, Nervous breakdown

Committed Suicide; Completed Suicide

Former Addict; Former Alcoholic; Drunk

Professionals and Family Peer Specialists separates family peer support professionals from others

Peer Support This term is more typically associated with adult peers.



Using terms that don't acknowledge an individual's symptoms perpetuates avoidance of needed support that promote recovery.

The term committed is associated with a crime. The term completed suggests an accomplishment.

Emphasize strengths and the ability to recover, not limitations.

The Family Peer workforce should be thought of as professional and a respected career choice as much as clinicians, care managers, etc.

There are specific differences between adult peers and family peers. They have different lived and systems navigation experience.

Why Mental Health Month is Important: NFF Board of Director Quotes



It is about time that we see mental health in the context of our neighbors and communities – in each other. Only when we see the interconnectedness will **we find light**.



Our mental states and the weather are much alike. Sunny or not. Hot or cold. Still or breezy. Wet or dry. We cannot change the weather, other than to **weather the weather**. The same is true of being happy or sad. Both thoughts and weather can change in an instant. Savor the moment. This is what I taught myself, as best I can. It is what every great spiritual teacher recommends. It also the essence of acceptance and commitment therapy, ACT.



It reminds us of what we most treasure about our children and what makes them - the way they think, the way they feel, the way they see the world. I love that the month focuses on **health, not illness**. We want to support the mental health of ALL children, not just our own, so that they all have a chance to thrive and succeed. I am so glad that the Federation and all the families who are part of it are dedicated to **knocking down barriers** that the world sometimes puts in the way of children and families. It makes my heart happy to be a small part of that.



In mental health we mostly focus on treatment needs, particularly high-end services designed to fix problems. We label people with diagnoses that permit us to fund invasive treatments and prescribe medications. Mental health is **more than treating problems**. It is **support for the well-being of people** before problems occur. When we create positive childhood experiences, we support mental health. When we create connection and belonging, we support mental health. When we address the social determinants of health, we support mental health. Let's commit to all of that this Mental Health Month.



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly **one in five** US adults live with mental health challenges. While people of color have rates of mental health challenges similar to whites, they are more likely to last longer and result in more significant disability. Most mental illnesses go untreated, especially in communities of color. Sadly, our nation's historical and continuing oppression of and discrimination against communities of color has led to stigmatizing mental health attitudes and reluctance to seek care. That is a key reason why celebrating Children's Mental Health Acceptance is so important, particularly for communities of color. We have all been aware of these issues for decades; we must **move beyond awareness to acceptance**. This will help dispel the stereotypes and stigma about mental health in communities of color and reach individuals with mental health needs at an earlier age to prevent more significant disabilities and help all communities recognize the need to ensure high quality, affordable mental health care is **available to all**.



Mental health is part of our health. So, for me the acknowledgement, support and advocacy to **reduce stigma and discrimination** for those who struggle with maintaining mental health and wellness in this stressful society is a necessity. Mental Health Awareness Month gives us the opportunity to continue to **shine a light** on the struggles that we ALL have and to continue to work towards equitable ways of identifying, addressing and supporting people, including children and their families, in some of their most vulnerable moments. **It takes a village** and mental health awareness month allows all of us to **be part of that village**.



Mental health is a growing challenge to the successful matriculation of our next generation into adulthood. Youth navigating mental health crisis are much more likely to end up in juvenile correctional settings than in supportive services and appropriate systems. **Our children, families, and communities deserve better**.

May is Mental Health Month | #AcceptAdvocateAct | #SocialJusticeForFamilies

Learn more at: www.ffcmh.org/socialjustice | www.ffcmh.org/acceptancecampaign