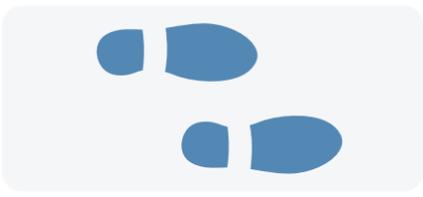


# Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week

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)



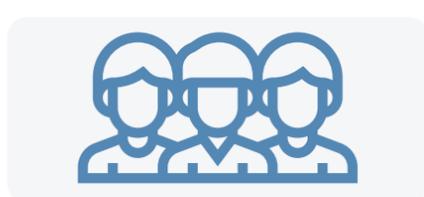
- Awareness means you know it exists
- **Acceptance** means you make a personal connection and **take steps** to learn more



- 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.

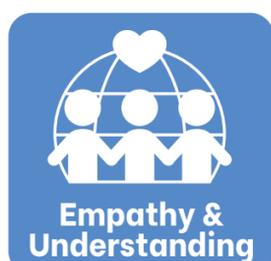


Acceptance means recognizing that our mental health is **as important** as all other health issues.

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.



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?"



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.



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

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FAMILIES  
Bringing Lived Experience to Family Support



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

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FAMILIES  
Bringing Lived Experience to Family Support

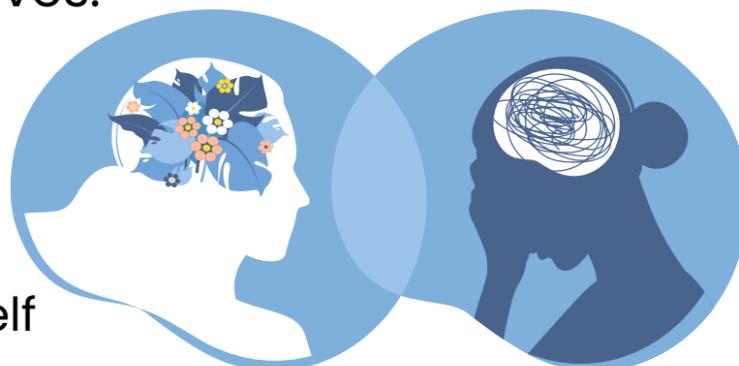


## What Acceptance of Mental Health Needs Means for Youth and Young Adults

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.ffcmh.org**