

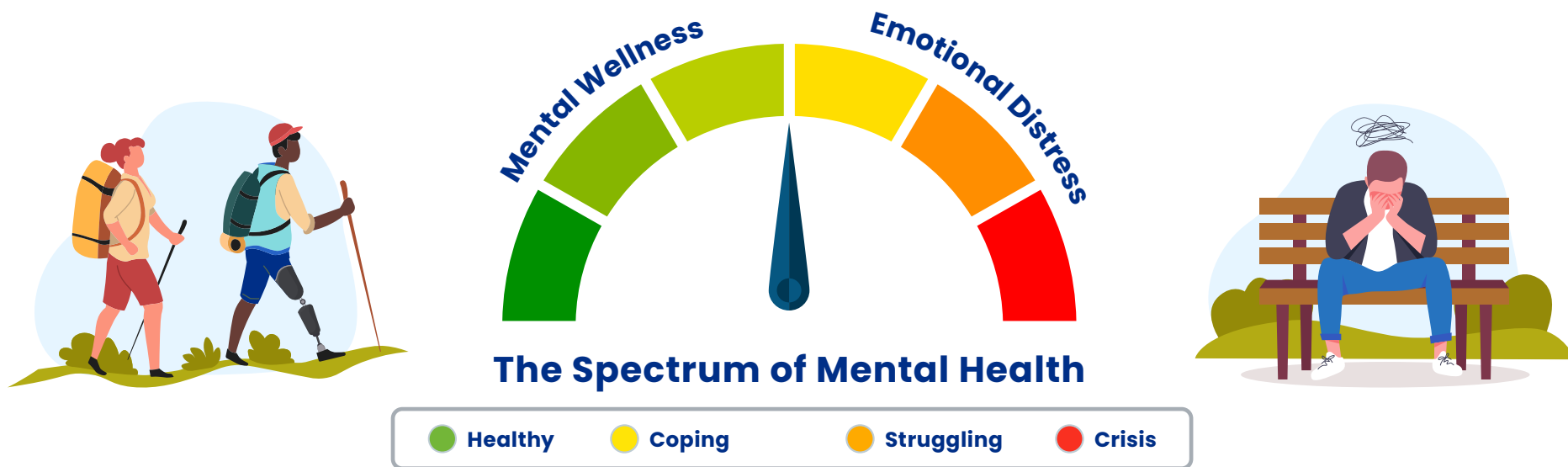


What Might Work For You?

Mental Health Support Options



How Much Support Do You Need?



When you decide you need some support for your mental health and well-being,

it's important to remember there's not one ideal path for everyone. Mental health support can mean many different things, and what works well for someone else may not be the right choice for you. Or an approach you might have tried before with little success could be just what you need at this time in your life. By exploring different options to see what is most helpful, you can put together the right support plan for your needs.

The important thing to remember is there is no shame in seeking support; while we're all encouraged to take care of physical health, we also need to check-in and take care of our mental health too.

This guide will walk you through the most common mental health support options available. Use this information to consider which of these options would be best for you based on the kind of support you need.

The type of support you need depends on where you are right now on the spectrum of mental health.

Taking care of yourself and staying connected with supportive people are the first steps to support your mental health. You can choose from different types of professional services, peer support, faith-based counseling, practices specific to your culture, and more.

Self Care

For many people, using self-care methods on a regular basis can help you overcome routine stresses of daily life or prevent an existing mental health condition from getting worse. When you take care of your body by getting enough sleep, regular movement, eating good foods, and avoiding alcohol and drugs, your mind benefits too.

Self care can also mean taking time out of your day to recharge your personal battery. This could include spending time in nature, listening to music, doing breathing exercises, practicing mindfulness or meditation, or talking with someone who makes you feel good about yourself.

Get more self-care tips and ideas to try [takeaction4mh.com](https://www.takeaction4mh.com).

Social Support

If you have family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or other people in your life you can talk to about things that are troubling you, their support can be very helpful. Often, just saying thoughts out loud can help you to work through your feelings or find ways to make your situation better.

Sometimes it's easier to speak with someone you already know and trust than to open up to a professional. You can bring up what's on your mind in a way that's comfortable for you, and tell them what kind of support you need. Do you want them to just listen? Or to help you find solutions to your problems?

Get some ideas for how to reach out to people you know to ask them for help [takeaction4mh.com](https://www.takeaction4mh.com).

Spiritual Support

If you hold specific spiritual or religious beliefs, you may find support for your mental health needs within your faith community. This may include counseling with a spiritual leader, such as a chaplain, clergy member, or faith healer, or getting support from members of support groups in the community. You may also find strength and hope through spiritual practices like meditation, prayer, or attending worship services.

Many cultures and faiths already have beautiful, integrated healing practices. For example, some communities may have traditional healers (e.g. curanderos) who can advise on treatments at botanicas or other traditional medicine shops; other cultures may have alternative methods for wellness such as acupuncture, cleansing rituals and ceremonies or yoga.

While many people find these approaches helpful, they may not be enough on their own. They can be combined and complementary to professional support such as therapy, peer support, and other options.



Peer Support Groups

Many people benefit from talking with others who are dealing with similar problems as theirs in support groups or self-help groups. This might include in-person meetings, online support communities, or dedicated social media groups.

You can both give and receive support by connecting with people who have shared experiences. Through these connections, you may feel less alone and more understood. You can learn about the ways of coping that have worked for others as well as share what has worked for you. Peer support can also build self-esteem and confidence and help you feel more hopeful.

Some peer support organizations offer one-on-one support from a Peer specialist who has lived experience with mental illness. They can help you create a plan and access the services you need. You may feel more comfortable with someone who understands what you are going through and who has been there themselves.

For example, the National Alliance on Mental Illness [nami.org](https://www.nami.org) offers free Peer-led support groups for people with mental health conditions and separate groups for their family members and others close to them.

Phone, Text and Digital Support

When you can use some support on the spot or just want to talk with someone, you can reach out to a variety of free phone- and text-based services. These services are staffed by professional counselors or trained volunteers. Some have a focus on certain groups, such as youth or young adults, LGBTQI+ individuals, veterans, cultural communities, or people with a specific health or mental health diagnosis.

Phone and Text Support

A hotline is a number you call when you are in crisis or when your life or health is in immediate danger. For example, the **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) provides emotional support if you are thinking about suicide or having a mental health crisis. The 988 hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Just call or text 988 anytime you need them.

A warmline is for those who do not have an urgent need but would like to talk with someone who will listen or provide advice. They may be open during specific hours, and often are run by volunteers who have lived experience with mental illness themselves. The **California Peer-Run Warmline** [mentalhealthsf.org](https://www.mentalhealthsf.org) is a 24/7 service for mental and emotional support on issues like relationships, anxiety, depression, drug use, and more. NAMI also offers a peer support helpline [nami.org](https://www.nami.org).

Some hotlines and warmlines offer other ways to access them besides a phone call, such as texting or online chat. With **CalHOPE Connect** [calhopeconnect.org](https://www.calhopeconnect.org), you can chat with trained, supportive peers. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and California Warmline also both offer online chat via their websites. Another service, called Crisis Text Line [crisistextline.org](https://www.crisistextline.org), provides 24/7 access to speak with a crisis counselor through text messaging or Whatsapp.

Digital Support

There are online services that can match you with a licensed mental health professional in a video call or via text or online chat. This can be a one-time conversation or ongoing sessions, often for a monthly fee that can cost less than in-person therapy. Some free services have trained volunteer "listeners" and serve a similar role as a telephone warmline. These can help supplement your regular therapy appointments or help you cope until you are able to access mental health services.

Other online resources provide automated support or helpful digital tools. For instance, **chatbots** simulate a session with a live therapist, helping you work through your concerns using interactive questions and exercises. **Phone Apps** offer strategies or tools you can use to track your thoughts and moods, manage anxiety, or practice mindfulness to improve your mental health every day.

The One Mind PsyberGuide [onemindpsyberguide.org](https://www.onemindpsyberguide.org) provides a directory of many of these digital mental health apps and services, with expert reviews.



Professional Services

If you think you might benefit from talking with a trained mental health professional, you have many options to explore. You can ask for a therapist that speaks your language, and even be matched with a therapist that comes from the same cultural or identity background as you.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy (also known as “talk therapy”) is the most common approach. The professionals that provide therapy include psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists.

You may be able to choose between options like individual, group, or family therapy. You can even speak with a therapist online if that’s more comfortable for you. You might prefer a therapist who specifically works with people who share something in common with you. For example, some focus on certain cultural communities, ages, sexual orientations, or languages. They may have special experience or training with mental health challenges such as trauma, abuse, or suicide risk.

Therapists have a wide range of styles in how they carry out their therapy sessions. They may vary based on the focus of the sessions and what they talk about with you. For example, they may help you learn how to overcome a specific problem you’re having, or understand how your past experiences affect your current choices. They might use different methods to interact with you and help you make progress.

Some common types of therapy include:

- **Behavioral therapy** – works on replacing unhealthy ways of acting with healthy ones.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** – focuses on changing unhelpful thoughts and patterns of thinking.
- **Solution-focused therapy** – focuses on your goals for the future, rather than on the past.
- **Humanistic therapy** – centers you as the one who can best understand yourself and provides guidance and support to help you accept yourself and feel fulfilled.
- **Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy** – explores the effects of your unconscious thoughts and past experiences on your behaviors.

You may respond to a certain type of therapy more than another, so you can try switching types if you feel an approach is not working for you. If, after a few sessions, you don’t feel like you’re connecting with a particular therapist, you can absolutely change your therapist and ask for someone else. You may have to try multiple providers before you find the one who is right for you.



Alternative Therapies

Some types of alternative mental health care that people find helpful include animal-assisted therapy, such as horseback riding or interacting with dogs. Art, music, and dance therapy can help people express their thoughts and emotions, work through their problems, and relieve stress.

Other practices, like yoga, acupuncture, herbal remedies, Ayurvedic medicine, shiatsu, and reiki, are all examples of alternative therapies. These approaches aim to balance a person’s physical, mental, and spiritual sides.

Medical Treatment

People with conditions such as clinical depression, anxiety, or schizophrenia often have greater success when they combine therapy with treatment such as medication.

In addition to medicine, other medical options are available and might be helpful for specific conditions. This includes tools like brain stimulation therapies, which can help treat severe depression, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, which can help treat trauma.

You can start the process by talking to your doctor about what you are feeling and experiencing. Or, if your insurance does not require a referral, you can go straight to seeing a psychiatrist, which is a doctor who focuses on mental health conditions and can prescribe medication if needed. They can often make a diagnosis and create a plan with you for ongoing follow-up and support. Many psychiatrists do not offer therapy, but primarily manage their patients’ medications.

Keep in mind that you may not always be able to see a professional as quickly as you would like. Wait times and health insurance rules can make it hard to get help when you need it. While you are waiting to get connected, you can get help from peer support groups or reach out to the 988 Crisis [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) or California Peer-Support Warmline [mentalhealthsf.org](https://www.mentalhealthsf.org), or any of the other supports shared.

● Crisis Services

If you are in crisis and feel you might hurt yourself or others, you can get help immediately by calling the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) at 988 or emergency services at 911.

Many communities have mental health urgent care clinics, where you can see someone right away for mental health and psychiatric services without an appointment. You can also go to your nearest hospital emergency room.

Sometimes the best thing for someone who is having a severe crisis or extreme symptoms of mental illness is admission to a treatment facility or hospital. You can get the professional care you need until you are ready to take care of yourself again. Voluntary admission means that you make the decision that you need help and work with a treatment team to figure out the best options for your needs.

In some cases, when a person poses a danger to themselves or others and refuses a health care professional's recommendation to enter a treatment facility, they may be involuntarily committed. Sometimes a doctor will put them on an emergency hold for 72 hours to temporarily keep them safe in a facility while they are being assessed. After that, a court order may be necessary if the person does not want to stay.

How Do I Know Where to Start?

There is no correct or "right" path towards mental wellness. Everyone is on their own journey, and you can review the different support options and decide which one is right for you. If it doesn't work, you can try another one, or combining the two. Lots of people try different things before they find what supports them best.

Your path to mental wellness is your own, and there are so many options for support to choose from along the way in your well-being journey.

If you or someone you know are ever in crisis, call or text 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Help is available 24/7.





As part of California's ongoing mental health movement, the Take Action for Mental Health campaign is designed to help you **check in**, **learn more**, and **get support** for your own mental health or the mental health of someone you care about.

CHECK IN

**on your own and
others' mental health**

LEARN MORE

about mental health needs

GET SUPPORT

**for yourself or someone
you care about**

Takeaction4mh.com



Funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).