

# MAKING IT THROUGH

Mental Wellness | Updates | Events

## Resources

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Move Your Way Campaign"  
Website: <https://health.gov/moveyourway>

*Move Your Way is a physical activity campaign from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services to promote the recommendations from the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.*

*If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis contact:  
National Suicide prevention lifeline by dialing: 988- 24/7 text line.*

## Connect with us on social media!

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[X](#)

## Public Health Forum March 16, 2024 (Save the date)

Making It Through will provide workshops for young people as well as a resource table.



## Welcome!

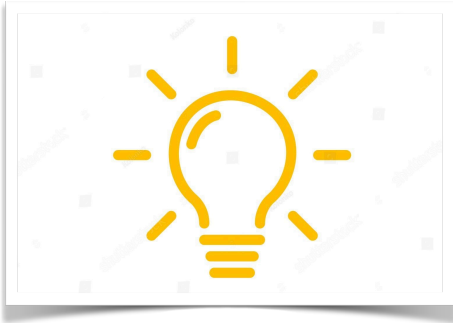
"Get on your feet, Get up and Make it Happen, Get on your feet, stand up and take some action" - These uplifting words echo from a renowned song by Gloria Estefan. Some of you may recognize these lyrics, while others might need to turn to the trusty "Google search." Whichever category you fall into, understand that these words are significant to the theme of mental health and the value of physical movement.

So, why is physical movement important for mental health? Let's take a look at the facts first. In October of 2023, a Household Pulse survey reported that over 48.4% of Americans ages 18-29 report symptoms of anxiety and depression ( USAfacts.org). According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), exercise improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression and negative mood and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. *Exercise has also been found to alleviate symptoms such as low self-esteem and social withdrawal.* This is also echoed in an article by The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, in 2021. It states, increasing physical activity **directly contributes to improved mental health and better overall health and well-being.**

As a Mental Health Practitioner, I engage with individuals on a daily basis who are navigating complex trauma, relationship challenges, anxiety, depression, and various other issues. When I assess clients, one of the first questions I ask is, "What are your current coping strategies?" Unfortunately, I often receive blank stares or responses like, "I don't have any," or "I come home and watch Netflix," "talk on the phone," or "scroll through social media." Understand that these activities can be relaxing, have you ever considered how much they may actually trigger anxiety or depression? This is a topic that could be explored further in another article.

The truth is, all of the examples mentioned above are important for a person's well-being. However, it is vital to understand that the mind also needs stimulation. While engaging in activities like watching a good movie, reading a book, or scrolling through social media can provide some level of mental stimulation, it is important to note that physical movement, such as walking, exercising, and dancing, has





***Tips on how you can incorporate movement into your daily mental health practice:***

- Plan movement into your daily routine by adding it to your calendar.
- Take a 10-15 minute walk every day, and if possible, turn off your phone during this time.
- As you walk, take note of what you see, smell, touch, and taste, engaging your senses.
- Consider joining a gym, yoga class, or any other form of physical activity that appeals to you.
- Find an accountability buddy who can motivate and support you in staying active.
- Take audio books with you on your walks or during exercise to make it more enjoyable.
- And finally, don't forget to dance! It's a fun and liberating way to get your body moving.

**By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you can enhance your overall well-being and improve your mental health.**

been scientifically proven to change our brain waves. Not only does it increase memory, but it also helps reduce symptoms associated with depression and anxiety, it also improves sleep patterns. When we engage in physical movement, we are able to reset and distract ourselves from ruminating and often irrational thoughts. I encourage you to give it a try, perhaps in the privacy of your own home, to minimize any potential feelings of embarrassment. However, if you're like me, you may think, "What embarrassment? I love to dance... anywhere!"

Now, I want you to imagine a stressful situation. While holding onto that thought, turn on your favorite upbeat song. As you listen to the music, I want you to start moving your body. Begin with your feet, then your arms, and keep on moving. As you do this, take a quick assessment. Can you still focus on that stressful situation and dance at the same time? If you find it challenging to do both simultaneously, it can be assumed that the impact of that stressful situation is not as overwhelming as it seemed before you started dancing. The example above can be used with exercise or walking, whatever your movement of choice is..just do it..” get on your feet”.

Engaging in exercise triggers the release of "feel-good" chemicals in your body like endorphins and serotonin, that help to uplift your mood. Furthermore, not only does exercise improve your mood, but it also fulfills your physical fitness needs, further boosting your overall well-being and proving to be a healthy distraction from negative thoughts.

Movement plays a vital role in your overall well-being. The aforementioned studies provide substantial evidence to support this claim. When we are feeling down, it is common to have little motivation to be active. Instead, we often prefer to stay in bed, on the couch, or isolate ourselves as a way of coping. While movement may not completely solve the problem, it can significantly improve your mental health. And isn't that what we all strive for? To feel just a little better every day?