

# MENTAL HEALTH MONTHLY



# Welcome to *Mental Health Monthly*!

As the world bursts into color and life, we're thrilled to bring you the second issue of *Mental Health Monthly*—a celebration of growth, resilience, and the small, powerful moments that shape our mental well-being. Spring is here, and with it comes a season of renewal, reflection, and the perfect time to nurture your mind and spirit. Whether you're seeking inspiration, practical tools, or a deeper connection to the mental health community, this issue is crafted with you in mind.

At the heart of this month's edition is a special recognition: Jewish Family Service of Colorado's **KidSuccess program**, this issue's **Community Improvement Award** recipient. For 30 years, KidSuccess has been a beacon of hope in Colorado schools, offering children not just therapy, but a lifeline—building emotional resilience, fostering family connections, and proving that mental health support can be as essential as a school lunch. Their holistic, school-based approach has transformed lives, and we're proud to honor their legacy of compassion and innovation in youth mental health. Dive into their story and discover how they're shaping a brighter future, one child at a time.

But that's just the beginning! Here's a glimpse of what else awaits you in this vibrant issue:

- **Mental Health Moments:** Life can feel like a whirlwind, but calm is closer than you think. Discover quick, science-backed exercises to reset your mind and find peace—no matter where you are or how busy your day gets.
- **Advancement Award:** Innovation drives progress, and mental health is no exception. Meet the trailblazers honored with our *Advancement Award*—individuals and organizations pushing the boundaries of mental health care, advocacy, and research. Their work is lighting the way forward.
- **Parenting:** Parenthood is a journey of heart, grit, and endless learning. Taylor Brown opens her heart in "*Teaching Maeve to Be Strong*," sharing the joys and challenges of raising a daughter who's learning to claim her power in a world that's still catching up. It's a must-read for anyone nurturing the next generation.
- **Book of the Month:** Spring is the season of fresh starts, and what better way to embrace it than by understanding your own mind? Join our Book Club as we dive into Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, a mind-bending exploration of how we think—and how we can think better. It's the perfect companion for your spring journey.

We believe mental health is a conversation, not a monologue. That's why we invite *you* to be part of it. Have a story to share, a question to ask, or a hero to nominate for our awards? Reach out to us at [admin@mentalhealthmonthly.org](mailto:admin@mentalhealthmonthly.org). Your voice helps us grow as a community dedicated to well-being, one step at a time.

So, grab your favorite drink, find a cozy spot, and dig in. Let this issue be your guide to a spring filled with clarity, connection, and the kind of growth that lasts. Welcome aboard!

# Mental Health Moments

In today's fast-paced world, where stress, overwhelm, and emotional ups and downs can feel like constants, it's easy to lose sight of your mental well-being. That's where **Mental Health Moments** comes in—a series designed to bring you brief, practical exercises that seamlessly fit into your busy life.

These aren't just quick fixes. They're real-world strategies, backed by research and everyday experience, to help you:

- **Decrease stress** with simple techniques you can do anywhere,
- **Regulate emotions** to feel more in control,
- **Improve your mood** with small, purposeful actions.

Whether you're juggling deadlines, facing personal challenges, or simply seeking more balance, these exercises are crafted to be accessible and effective for everyone. In the articles ahead, you'll explore tools like the calming power of deep breathing, the clarity of mindfulness, and the mood-boosting effects of short, intentional activities—all designed to work within your daily routine.

Join us as we dive into these **Mental Health Moments** and empower you to take small, meaningful steps toward a more resilient, balanced life. Your mental health deserves a moment—every day.

## Take a Breath – The Power of Deep Breathing to Calm Your Mind

Imagine this: It's 2 p.m. on a Wednesday, and you're staring at a screen full of unread emails. Your phone buzzes with yet another reminder, and your to-do list feels like it's growing by the second. Or maybe it's 8 a.m., and you're already running late for work, spilled coffee on your shirt, and the kids are arguing in the backseat. Your heart starts racing, your shoulders tense, and suddenly, it feels like the walls are closing in. You need a way to hit pause—*fast*. That's where deep breathing comes in, a simple yet powerful tool that can help you regain control in just a minute or two. And the best part? You can do it anywhere, anytime.

## What is Deep Breathing?

Deep breathing is like a secret weapon against stress. It's quick, effective, and doesn't require any special equipment or a quiet room—just you and your breath. This technique has been used for centuries in practices like yoga and meditation to promote relaxation and mental clarity. When life feels overwhelming, deep breathing can be your go-to for finding calm amid the chaos.

## How to Practice Deep Breathing: A Step-by-Step Guide

Here's how to practice deep breathing in just a few easy steps:

1. **Find Your Position:** Sit or stand comfortably. If you can, sit with your feet flat on the floor or lie down. But even if you're in a crowded place, you can still do this discreetly.
2. **Hand Placement:** Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. This helps you feel the breath moving through your body. If you're in public, you can skip this step and just focus mentally.
3. **Inhale Slowly:** Breathe in through your nose for about 4 seconds. Imagine your breath as a wave, filling your belly with air. You should feel your stomach rise under your hand, not your chest.
4. **Exhale Gently:** Breathe out through your mouth for about 6 seconds. Let the air escape slowly, like you're deflating a balloon, carrying away your tension.
5. **Repeat:** Continue this pattern for 1 to 2 minutes. Even a short session can make a big difference.

**Pro Tip:** If you're short on time, even 30 seconds of deep breathing can help. Don't worry about doing it perfectly—just focus on slowing down your breath.

## The Science of Calm: Why It Works

You might be wondering, *How does something as basic as breathing help with stress?* The answer lies in your body's built-in relaxation system. When we're stressed, our body activates the **fight-or-flight response**, preparing us to face danger. This is great for escaping a bear but not so helpful for dealing with emails or traffic jams. Deep breathing activates the **parasympathetic nervous system**, which is like the body's brake pedal. It slows your heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the production of stress hormones like cortisol. In fact, studies have shown that just a few minutes of deep breathing can lower cortisol levels by up to 50%. It's like flipping a switch that turns off your body's stress response and turns on relaxation.

## Real-Life Success Stories

Take Sarah, a marketing manager juggling a hectic workload and family responsibilities. She used to feel buried under stress, especially during busy weeks. "I'd get this tightness in my chest, and my mind would race," she recalls. "It felt like I couldn't catch a break." Then, she discovered deep breathing. "Now, when I feel that tension creeping in, I stop for just a minute and focus on my breath. It's amazing—I can actually feel my body relaxing, and my thoughts slow down. It's like a mini-vacation for my brain."

Similarly, John, a college student, uses deep breathing before exams to calm his nerves and improve his focus. "It helps me clear my head and remember what I've studied," he says. And Maria, a nurse, takes a few deep breaths between shifts to reset her mind. "It's a quick way to let go of the stress from one patient and be present for the next," she explains.

These stories show that deep breathing works for people in all walks of life, from high-pressure jobs to everyday challenges.

## Try It Yourself: When and How to Use Deep Breathing

The next time you're feeling overwhelmed—whether it's before a big meeting, during a tough conversation, or even while stuck in traffic—give deep breathing a try. You can also use it as a daily practice: try it first thing in the morning to start your day on a calm note, or right before bed to help you sleep better. If you think you don't have time, remember that even 30 seconds can make a difference. It's a tiny investment of time that can pay off in a big way. You might be surprised at how quickly you feel calmer, clearer, and ready to tackle whatever comes next.

**Overcoming Obstacles:** Some people worry they don't have time or that they're “doing it wrong.” But deep breathing is flexible—just focus on slowing your breath, and you'll still benefit. If you're in public, skip the hand placements and breathe quietly. It's about progress, not perfection.

## Taking It Further: Advanced Techniques

Once you're comfortable with basic deep breathing, you can explore other techniques. For example:

- **The 4-7-8 Method:** Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, and exhale for 8. This can be even more relaxing.
- **Visualization:** As you inhale, imagine breathing in peace and calm; as you exhale, imagine releasing all your worries.

These variations can deepen your practice and offer even more benefits.

## Your Breath, Your Power

So, the next time stress starts to creep in, remember that you have a powerful tool at your disposal—one that's free, always available, and incredibly effective. Take a deep breath, and let the calm wash over you. Make it a habit, and you'll find that you're better equipped to handle whatever life throws your way.

# Jewish Family Service of Colorado's KidSuccess Program: Three Decades of Transforming Young Lives Through School-Based Mental Health

Imagine a bustling school hallway, where amidst the chatter and laughter, a quiet revolution is taking place. In a small office tucked away from the main corridors, a licensed therapist sits with a student, helping them navigate the turbulent waters of anxiety and self-doubt. This scene, repeated in schools across Colorado, is the heart of Jewish Family Service of Colorado's (JFS) KidSuccess program—a beacon of hope that has illuminated the path to mental wellness for thousands of children over the past three decades.

For 30 years, KidSuccess has been dismantling the barriers that keep young minds from flourishing. In a world where one in five U.S. children grapples with mental health challenges—yet most never receive the help they need, this program stands as a testament to what's possible when innovation meets compassion (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). By embedding therapy within the school day, KidSuccess has transformed classrooms into sanctuaries of healing, proving that mental health care can be as integral to education as reading and math.

As KidSuccess celebrates its 30th anniversary and earns the prestigious *Mental Health Monthly Community Improvement Award*, its story is one of relentless dedication and profound impact. This is not just a tale of a program's success; it's a blueprint for a future where every child's emotional well-being is nurtured, and every dream is within reach.

## A Visionary Response to a Growing Crisis

In 1995, the landscape of youth mental health care was bleak. Long waitlists, distant clinics, and pervasive stigma meant that for many children, help was a distant dream. The system was failing,



and the need was urgent. It was against this backdrop that a coalition of visionaries—educators, therapists, and community advocates—came together with a radical idea: what if therapy could be as accessible as a school lunch?

Thus, KidSuccess was born, rooted in the Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam*—the call to repair the world. Launched as a pilot in a few Denver schools, the program dared to reimagine schools as dual-purpose spaces: places of learning and healing. By bringing licensed therapists directly into classrooms, KidSuccess shattered the barriers of distance, cost, and judgment, making mental health support a natural part of the school day.

Over the years, the program has evolved, adapting to the changing needs of Colorado’s youth. From supporting children with autism to helping refugee students adjust to life in America, KidSuccess has remained agile, always listening to the voices of students, families, and educators. It has weathered funding challenges and policy shifts, emerging stronger and more resilient. Today, with 22 schools and counting, KidSuccess is not just a program—it’s a movement.

## Numbers Tell the Story—But Lives Tell It Better

The numbers behind KidSuccess are staggering: in the 2024-2025 school year alone, the program served 929 students across 22 schools, with six new schools joining to meet soaring demand. But these figures are more than statistics—they represent lives transformed. Consider that each of these students, many from marginalized communities, now has a fighting chance at a brighter future.

Schools report a cascade of positive outcomes: attendance rates climb, grades improve, and behavioral issues diminish. These results stem from KidSuccess’s holistic approach, which doesn’t merely treat symptoms but builds resilience. For every student who shows up more often, learns more effectively, or navigates conflicts with greater ease, there’s a ripple effect—classrooms become calmer, teachers feel supported, and families find relief.

## Equity at the Core: Reaching Those Who Need It Most

Equity is not just a buzzword for KidSuccess—it’s the program’s North Star. From Denver’s diverse urban core to rural towns where the nearest therapist might be hours away, KidSuccess prioritizes communities with the greatest need and the fewest resources. For low-income families, the program eliminates the financial burden of therapy, offering services free of charge. For children of color, foster youth, and newcomers to America, it provides culturally responsive care that honors their unique experiences and challenges.

In rural Colorado, where mental health services are scarce, KidSuccess is a lifeline. By bringing therapy directly to schools, it saves families from long, costly trips to distant clinics. In urban schools, where diversity is both a strength and a challenge, the program offers tailored support—whether it’s helping a refugee student navigate cultural adjustment or providing trauma-informed care to a child in foster care.

Jessi Aragon, School Social Worker at Place Bridge Academy, a school with a large immigrant population, shares, “JFS has been a great partner for our mental health team. They’ve supported newcomers adjusting to America and helped kids learn social-emotional skills to thrive in school.” This adaptability is key to KidSuccess’s success, ensuring that no child is left behind.

## A Holistic Paradigm: Integration Within JFS’s Ecosystem

KidSuccess is not an island—it’s a vital thread in JFS’s comprehensive tapestry of over 30 programs, each designed to address interconnected challenges. This integration allows for a whole-family approach: a student receiving therapy might have a parent accessing JFS’s job training program or a sibling benefiting from food assistance. By tackling root causes like poverty and isolation alongside mental health, KidSuccess builds resilience that lasts.

## Voices from the Frontlines: Testimonials of Transformation

School leaders witness KidSuccess’s impact daily:

- **Samanda Davis, Social Worker, Thomas Jefferson High School:** “We have formed a great partnership with the KidSuccess program, we are lucky to have access to the program within my building. The kids who participate have all benefited from the program and have demonstrated social emotional growth.”
- **Rebecca Mercer, Principal, Isabella Bird Community School:** “School-based mental health is everything. It reduces barriers for families by providing accessible services during the school day. The program helps to reduce stigma, improve academic outcomes and provides critical early intervention for at-risk students with needs.”
- **Jessi Aragon, School Social Worker, Place Bridge Academy:** “JFS has been a great partner to our mental health team. Being a large and very diverse school, we have a lot of mental health needs, and JFS has helped us meet these needs. Over the years, JFS has supported newly arrived students adjusting to school in America, provided group and individual counseling, and been a great partner to collaborate with to meet our students’ needs. The students they work with have been able to learn social/emotional skills and overall, improve how they function at school.”

These voices underscore KidSuccess as a lifeline, blending expert care with human connection.

## Recognition and the Road Ahead: A Beacon for Change

The *Mental Health Monthly Community Improvement Award* is more than a trophy—it’s a clarion call. As youth mental health needs surge, driven by factors from digital pressures to global uncertainties, KidSuccess’s recognition arrives at a pivotal moment. “KidSuccess shows how science and compassion can strengthen communities,” remarks Christian Brown the Editor-in-Chief of *Mental Health Monthly*. This accolade not only honors three decades of impact but also positions KidSuccess as a beacon for others, offering a scalable model that prioritizes accessibility, equity, and innovation.



## **A Legacy of Hope, A Future of Possibility**

As KidSuccess steps into its fourth decade, it carries with it a legacy of hope and a vision for the future. For 30 years, it has been a safe harbor for children navigating the storms of mental health challenges, turning pain into possibility and adversity into strength. Its blend of expert care and deep compassion has not only changed the trajectory of individual lives but also reshaped entire schools and communities.

Yet, the work is far from over. As the need for youth mental health support continues to grow, so too must our collective commitment. KidSuccess is more than a program—it's a movement, one that invites each of us to play a part. Whether through a donation that funds a therapy session, a volunteer hour that amplifies its reach, or a word of advocacy that inspires change, you can help ensure that every child has the chance to thrive.

Visit [jewishfamilyservice.org/donate](https://jewishfamilyservice.org/donate) to join this transformative journey. Together, we can build a world where mental health is not a luxury but a fundamental part of every child's education—a world where every young mind is nurtured, and every dream is within reach.

Congratulations to Jewish Family Service of Colorado and the KidSuccess program on 30 years of extraordinary impact. Here's to the next chapter, where the light of hope shines even brighter.

## Teaching Tots

Welcome to "Teaching Tots," our corner of Mental Health Monthly where the chaos of toddlerhood meets the quiet hope of raising strong, steady kids. Here, we share stories, lessons, and hard-won advice from parents and experts alike—real conversations about guiding our little ones toward life skills, independence, and emotional stability. It's not about perfection (because who's got that with a toddler?), but about the small, messy moments that shape who they'll become. This month, Taylor Brown opens her heart with "Teaching Maeve to Be Strong: Raising a Girl Who Claims Her Power." As Maeve's "Tay," Taylor's on a mission to help her three-year-old navigate a world that's as thrilling as it is tough—building resilience, courage, and a voice that won't shrink. Whether you're wrangling a tiny warrior or a budding dreamer, join us in discovering how to nurture the big stuff, one wobbly step at a time.

### Teaching Maeve to Be Strong: Raising a Girl Who Claims Her Power

**By: Taylor Brown**

At three, Maeve is a bundle of curiosity and courage, teetering on the edge of a world that's both thrilling and terrifying. Lately, I've been thinking about how to teach her to be strong—not just in the scraped-knee, climb-the-slide sense, though she's got that in spades—but in the deeper way that will carry her through a society that still hasn't figured out how to handle women who stand tall. Being big can be scary, full of new experiences that loom like giants. But I want Maeve to know that trying and failing is so much more fun—and more powerful—than not trying at all.

I've seen what "big" looks like for women in charge.

Picture this: a woman strides into a meeting room, heels clicking, voice steady as she assigns tasks and holds her team accountable. She's the boss—sharp, decisive, unapologetic. Later, whispers slink through the office: "She's such a bitch." Now swap her out for a man—same tone, same demands. The tune changes: "He's tough, but fair." Maybe even, "That's a real leader." I've lived this double standard, from cubicles to corner offices, and it's glaring. Women in power pay an invisible tax: be assertive, but not too assertive; lead with confidence, but soften it with a smile. Stray from that tightrope, and the labels stick—bitch, mean, cold. Men? They're "strong," "decisive," "natural." As her "Tay", I'm determined to raise Maeve to see through that script—and rewrite it.





Take the slide at the playground. The first time Maeve faced that steep, shiny drop, she froze. “Tay, it’s big,” she whispered, her little hand clutching mine. I could’ve carried her back to the sandbox, where everything’s safe and small. But instead, I knelt down and said, “Let’s be brave together. I’ll catch you.” She watched other kids tumble down, then took a deep breath and went for it. She flopped onto the mulch, giggling, and shouted, “Again!” That flop wasn’t failure—it was fuel. I want her to carry that into life: the idea that “big” isn’t something to shrink from, even when the world might call her pushy—or worse—for trying.

Because the world will try to label her. A 2018 study from the “Journal of Personality and Social Psychology” found women leaders are tagged “abrasive” or “unlikeable” for the same behaviors—confidence, directness—that earn men praise. I’ve felt it myself. At 24, I ran operations for a small company, pushing my team to meet deadlines. I got results—and resentment. A colleague told me to “soften it up,” while a male peer barked orders with no blowback. My power had a leash; his didn’t. I don’t want Maeve to inherit that leash. I want her to roar without apology, knowing her strength isn’t a betrayal of some feminine code—it’s her birthright.

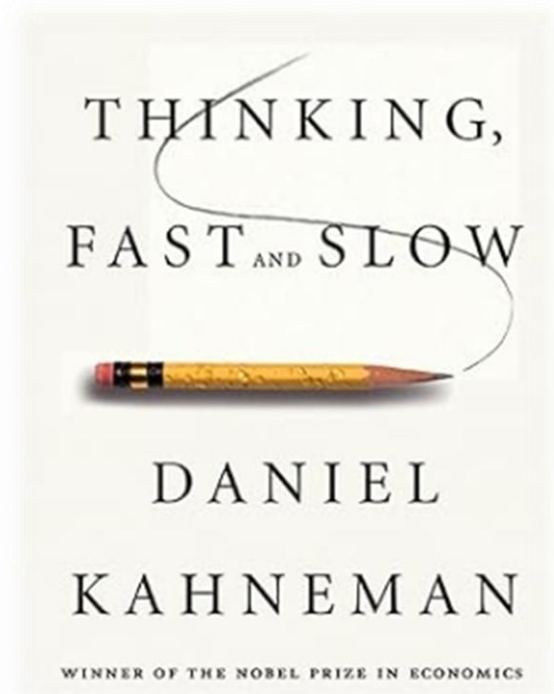
So we practice. When she spills juice trying to pour it herself, we chant, “Try again.” When her block tower crashes, we rebuild. The other day, she hauled a stick longer than she is tall, tripped, and sat there, lip trembling. “Tay, it’s big,” she said. I sat beside her. “Yeah, it’s huge. Want to start smaller?” She grabbed a twig, then another, until she was dragging sticks like a tiny warrior, laughing at the chaos. Strength isn’t just muscling through—it’s adjusting, persisting, claiming space. I want her to grow up knowing that “too big” is a challenge, not a limit.

This isn’t about making her fearless—it’s about showing her fear doesn’t get the last word. Society might call a woman’s bark “mean” while a man’s is “authority,” but Maeve doesn’t need to play by that rulebook. When she scribbles a wild swirl of crayon, I hang it up. When she belts out a song with half the words wrong, we dance. Failure’s not a monster—it’s a friend who teaches her to keep going. And when she’s big—big in dreams, risks, feelings—I want her to wear her power like a crown, not a burden.

As Tay, I’m raising a girl who’ll climb, fall, and climb again. The “bitch” tag might trail women like me who demand excellence, but for Maeve, it’ll just be **noise**. Because if trying and failing beats not trying at all, then strength isn’t something she’ll find—it’s something she’ll build, one bold, wobbly step at a time. And I can’t wait to see how big she’ll grow.

## Book of the Month: *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman

Spring has arrived in all its chaotic glory—windows flung wide, birdsong piercing the morning, and me, sprawled on the floor after tripping over a sneaker I swore I’d use for that new jogging routine. One minute, I’m riding a wave of seasonal optimism—new season, new me!—and the next, I’m staring at a to-do list longer than a CVS receipt, wondering why I’m already behind. If this rollercoaster feels familiar, you’re in good company. That’s why I keep *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman within arm’s reach. As a science writer who’s spent years geeking out over the brain’s wild wiring, I can’t sing this book’s praises enough. It’s not just a read—it’s a decoder for our mental mayhem, a backstage pass to the quirks that make us human, and a lifeline for navigating spring’s dizzying promise of renewal. So, grab your coffee (or allergy meds), join the *Mental Health Monthly* Book Club, and let’s dive into this masterpiece together.



### Why This Book Is My Spring Obsession

I first stumbled across *Thinking, Fast and Slow* on a dreary school afternoon, drowning in notes and caffeine, when it hit me like a bolt of clarity. Daniel Kahneman, a psychologist who turned economics on its head (and snagged a Nobel Prize in 2002 for it), unravels the mystery of how we think with two distinct systems: System 1—fast, intuitive, and emotional—and System 2—slow, deliberate, and logical. Published in 2011, this isn’t some dusty textbook; it’s a vibrant, accessible journey into the mind’s inner theater, revealing why we leap before we look—especially when spring’s energy has us buzzing with big ideas.

Kahneman’s influence stretches far beyond psychology. His work has reshaped behavioral economics, decision science, and even public policy, offering a lens into the irrational quirks that drive us. “Kahneman showed us that our brains aren’t the flawless calculators we imagine,” says Dr. Sarah Thompson, a neuroscientist at Stanford University. “He exposed the shortcuts and biases that steer our choices, often without us noticing.” In spring—a season of fresh starts and lofty goals—this insight feels like a superpower. Whether I’m plotting a garden overhaul or vowing to finally master yoga, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* has become my guide to dodging mental pitfalls and embracing the season’s potential.

April's renewal vibe is intoxicating: flowers blooming, days stretching longer, sunlight coaxing us out of winter's cocoon. But our brains? They're still lugging around old habits and cognitive baggage. Kahneman gets it. He explains why I fixate on a missed deadline more than I celebrate a small win, or why I'm convinced I'll stick to a jogging routine despite a history of, well, tripping over sneakers. This book has been my secret weapon—both as a writer obsessed with the brain's mysteries and as someone determined not to let spring's optimism fizzle by May. If you're planting seeds (literal or metaphorical) or just itching to shake off the winter blahs, this is your invitation to dig in.

## The Science of Two Systems: Fast vs. Slow Thinking

Kahneman's brilliance lies in spotlighting the two mental gears we shift between every day. System 1 is our brain's autopilot—quick, instinctive, and fueled by emotion. It's the part that screams, "You'll totally crush that 5K!" or nudges me to impulse-buy a yoga mat still gathering dust in its box. System 2, meanwhile, is the cautious analyst—slow, logical, and deliberate. It's the voice muttering, "You hate running," or "Maybe Google 'beginner yoga' before you pull something."

Neuroscience backs this up: System 1 leans on the limbic system, home to emotions and snap judgments, while System 2 taps the prefrontal cortex, where reasoning and self-control hang out. Spring's vibrant energy turbocharges System 1—new plans, bold dreams, impulsive leaps—but Kahneman teaches us how to coax System 2 into the driver's seat when the stakes get high. "Understanding these systems is like having a mental dimmer switch," Dr. Thompson explains. "It lets us dial down knee-jerk reactions and turn up clarity, especially when stress or excitement clouds our view."

Take my tulip saga: When my first bulb failed to sprout, System 1 wailed, "You're a gardening disaster!"—a dramatic overreaction. Then System 2 strolled in with a reality check: "It's one bulb, not the whole patch. Relax." This push-pull is universal, and spotting it can soothe the soul. "When we see System 1 taking over, we can pause and engage System 2," Thompson adds. "It's a simple shift that boosts mental health—less self-criticism, better choices."

## Spring's Mental Traps and How to Avoid Them

Spring is prime time for resolutions, but many fizzle out by summer. Kahneman's work offers a roadmap to make them stick. Here are some key concepts and how they apply to your spring goals:

- **Loss Aversion:** We feel losses more keenly than gains. Frame your goals positively to harness System 1's emotional drive. Instead of "I don't want to be out of shape," think "I want to feel strong and healthy."
- **Planning Fallacy:** We underestimate how long tasks will take. When planning your spring garden or home project, build in extra time. Use System 2 to break tasks into smaller, realistic steps.

- **Sunk Cost Fallacy:** We continue investing in something because of past effort, not future benefits. If your spring cleaning turns into a mess, it's okay to stop and reassess. Don't let past investment dictate future actions.
- **Availability Heuristic:** We overestimate the likelihood of events based on vivid memories. If you're hesitant to start a new project because of a past failure, System 2 can remind you that one setback doesn't predict the future.

These insights are grounded in decades of research, much of it conducted by Kahneman and his collaborator Amos Tversky, whose work is chronicled in Michael Lewis's *The Undoing Project* (Barnes & Noble). By understanding these biases, you can approach spring with a clearer mind and a better chance of success.

Cognitive Bias	Description	Spring Example	Solution
Loss Aversion	Losses loom larger than gains	Avoiding exercise due to fear of failure	Frame goals positively: "I'll feel energized"
Planning Fallacy	Underestimating task duration	Overloading your spring schedule	Break tasks into steps, add buffer time
Sunk Cost Fallacy	Sticking with failing endeavors	Continuing a doomed DIY project	Reassess and pivot if needed
Availability Heuristic	Judging based on vivid memories	Avoiding new hobbies due to past flops	Use System 2 to evaluate realistically

## Mental Health and Thinking Patterns

As part of the Mental Health Monthly Book Club, I've come to appreciate how Kahneman's ideas connect to mental well-being. System 1's quick judgments can fuel anxiety or self-criticism if left unchecked. For example, ruminating on a missed deadline is System 1 in overdrive. Engaging System 2 to analyze and reframe those thoughts can break the cycle. "This is where mindfulness comes in," says Dr. Thompson. "Slowing down and observing your thoughts without judgment aligns with System 2, helping you manage stress and make calmer decisions."

Mindfulness practices, which encourage pausing and reflecting, are a natural complement to Kahneman's framework. By cultivating this awareness, we can better navigate spring's pressures—whether it's juggling new projects or resisting the urge to overcommit. This connection to mental health makes *Thinking, Fast and Slow* a perfect fit for our book club, offering tools to not only achieve goals but also maintain emotional balance.

## Spring Resolutions in Action

To bring Kahneman's ideas to life, consider my friend Jamie, who decided this spring to start a vegetable garden. Fueled by System 1's enthusiasm, she bought every seed packet in sight, envisioning a bountiful harvest. But when her first plants wilted, System 1 panicked: "*I'm hopeless at this!*" After reading *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, she paused, engaged System 2, and

researched proper planting techniques. By adjusting her approach, she now has a thriving garden—and a newfound confidence in her ability to learn from mistakes.

Or take my colleague Mark, who vowed to run a 5K this spring. System 1 had him signing up for a race without training, but System 2 prompted him to create a realistic plan, starting with short jogs. By balancing both systems, he crossed the finish line—and avoided my sneaker-tripping fate. These stories show how Kahneman’s insights can turn spring’s impulsive energy into lasting progress.

## Why It’s a Must-Read for Spring

*Thinking, Fast and Slow* has sold over 2.6 million copies and topped bestseller lists for nearly a decade, earning praise as a “masterpiece” by The New York Times (NYT Review). Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to make complex science relatable, offering practical tools for everyday life. As David Brooks noted, Kahneman’s work “will be remembered hundreds of years from now” for reshaping how we see ourselves (Macmillan).

This spring, as you embrace new beginnings, let Kahneman’s insights guide you. Whether you’re tackling a new hobby, setting personal goals, or just trying to stay sane amidst the chaos, this book will help you navigate with clarity and confidence. Join me in the Mental Health Monthly Book Club, grab your copy of *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Goodreads), and let’s explore the fascinating world of our minds together. After all, understanding how we think is the first step to thinking better—and living better.

## Join Us: Share Your Story and Celebrate Mental Health Champions

Here at *Mental Health Monthly Magazine*, we believe mental health is a journey we're all on together. These moments—like deep breathing—are just the start. Now, we're inviting YOU to be part of the conversation and help us shine a light on the people and ideas making a difference.

### Contribute to *Mental Health Monthly Magazine*

Welcome to our community-driven platform where your voice matters. Got a mental health hack that's changed your life? Stumbled across research that blew your mind? We're all ears! Here's what we'd love to hear:

- **Your Story:** Share your mental health triumphs or struggles—what worked, what didn't, and what's worth passing on.
- **Your Research:** Break down a fascinating mental health discovery for us.
- **Research Requests:** Suggest a topic you'd love to see explored.
- **Community Gems:** Highlight a local resource or support system doing great things.
- **Mental Health Movers:** Tell us about innovators or advocates pushing the field forward.

**Pitch Us:** Send a 200-300 word summary to [publishers@mentalhealthmonthly.org](mailto:publishers@mentalhealthmonthly.org) with "Magazine Pitch" in the subject line. Include a brief bio, your proposed topic, and why it fits our mission of real talk and real impact. If we love it, we'll team up with you to shape it into a feature. Expect to hear back within 2-3 weeks.

### Nominate for Our Mental Health Awards

Know someone who's a game-changer in mental health? Nominate them for our annual awards! We're looking for individuals or groups making waves—therapists, advocates, researchers, or everyday heroes. Email a 200-300 word nomination to [publishers@mentalhealthmonthly.org](mailto:publishers@mentalhealthmonthly.org) with "Awards Nomination" in the subject line. Tell us who they are, what they've done, and why they deserve recognition.

Your story matters. Your heroes matter. Let's fill these pages with insights, experiences, and celebrations that inspire change. Send us your pitch or nomination today—join the movement!



