

I was in the bathroom at work on 4/27/24 when a high school student walked out of the bathroom without washing his hands. I called out, "You forgot to wash your hands," to which he responded, "I don't have time." He explained that he was already late for class as his basis for not attending to a fundamental hygienic task that is socially agreed upon (or so I thought). The student's behavior was unsanitary, but it got me thinking about mental hygiene. Sometimes "mental health" is only discussed when a person is experiencing a nervous breakdown, suicidal ideation, self-harm or something we would classify as a mental illness. The truth is, however, that we all have mental health, and discussing mental health only when someone is in crisis creates a reactionary model for wellness.

What if we attended to and thought about our mental health in the same way that we wash our hands multiple times a day, brush our teeth at least twice a day, and floss—you do floss, right? Otherwise, we're left with a mental health care model that's actually a breeding ground for illness—push to the limit, crash, and then think about what health looks like while medicating the pain caused by disease and its symptoms.

I came up with an acronym, A.C.T., to help shift our thinking away from a reactionary model and toward a responsive model:

Step 1: **acknowledge** that we all have a mental health

Step 2: **consider** how you will care for your mental health

Step 3: **take action** based on step 2 and reflect on how it made you feel

### **The Temple Takeaway:**

Disclaimer: the information contained in this newsletter is not a substitute for professional counseling or therapy services. My reflections are based on my own experiences managing my mental health while observing others manage their mental health. May might be Mental Health Awareness Month, but being aware of and managing your mental health is important every month. For professional counseling resources check out the [Christan Counselors Network](#). This is a good step toward assessing your mental health. In isolation we might look better than we actually are, but you can't look good and get better at the same time.