

# 988

AMERICA'S  
SUICIDE PREVENTION +  
MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS  
LIFELINE



## In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to be operated through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the lead federal agency, in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs, working to make the promise of 988 a reality for America. Moving to a 3-digit dialing code is a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to strengthen and expand the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (the Lifeline).

Of course, 988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number—it is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for all Americans who might be experiencing suicidal thoughts, who are at risk of suicide, or who are struggling with emotional distress. Preparing for full 988 implementation and operational readiness requires a bold vision for **a crisis care system that provides direct, life-saving services to all in need.**

SAMHSA sees 988 as a first step towards a transformed crisis care system in much the same way as emergency medical services have expanded in the US.



In pursuit of this bold yet achievable vision, SAMHSA is first focused on strengthening and expanding the existing Lifeline network, providing life-saving service to all who call, text or chat via 988. Longer term, SAMHSA recognizes that linking those in crisis to community-based providers—who can deliver a full range of crisis care services—is **essential to meeting behavioral health crisis needs across the nation.**





## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Lifeline and will 988 replace it?

**The Lifeline** is a national network of over 180 local, independent, and state-funded crisis centers equipped to help people in emotional distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis. Moving to 988 will not replace the Lifeline, rather it will be an easier way for all Americans to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers.

### When will 988 go live nationally?

**The 988 dialing code** will be available nationally for call, text, or chat on July 16, 2022. Until then, those experiencing a mental health or suicide-related crisis, or those helping a loved one through crisis, should continue to reach the Lifeline at its current number, **800-273-8255**. SAMHSA recommends not promoting 988 widely until it is available nationwide.

### How is this different than 911?

**Like 911**, there will need to be a system of entities working in lock step to support the establishment and growth of 988 in a way that meets our country's growing suicide prevention and mental health crisis care needs. SAMHSA is actively engaged with 911 counterparts at the federal, state and local levels to plan for smooth coordination.

### How is 988 being funded?

**Congress has provided the Department of Health and Human Services workforce funding through the American Rescue Plan, some of which will support the 988 workforce.** Also, the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request provides additional funding for the Lifeline itself and for other existing federal crisis funding sources. At the state level, in addition to existing public/private sector funding streams, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 allows states to enact new state telecommunication fees to help support 988 operations.

### Is 988 available for substance use crisis?

**SAMHSA views 988 as an opportunity to transform our country's behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need.** The Lifeline accepts calls from anyone who is suicidal or in emotional distress, including substance use crisis. This transformation will take time and requires resources from federal, state and local levels to prepare the crisis system to better meet these needs.

## Urgent realities.



Too many Americans are experiencing suicide and mental health crises without the support and care they need. In 2019 alone, the US had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes — and for people aged 10 – 34 years, suicide is the second leading cause of death.

## Easier access.



Moving to an easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code will provide greater access to life-saving services.

## There is hope.



Providing 24/7, free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress works! The Lifeline helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day.

Email 988 questions to:

**988Team@  
samhsa.hhs.gov**

# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED HELP

When living with a mental health condition or facing a mental health concern, it's common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. But many people overcome the mental health challenges they face. You aren't alone – help is out there, and recovery is possible.

## MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS CAN BE HARD AND CONFUSING.

It's becoming more and more common to talk about mental health in the open, but there's still a lot of stigma, or judgment, that people have about mental health conditions. If you've seen or heard negativity about the same challenges you deal with, you might internalize those attitudes and feel shame about your experiences. This shame, or self-stigma, makes it difficult to talk about your concerns.

## ADMIT TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE STRUGGLING.

Accepting that you might have a mental health condition can be scary – it suddenly feels so real. But it can also put you on a path to getting the help you deserve. Take a mental health screen at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) to get an idea of how severe your symptoms are. Having some language to describe what you're dealing with is helpful in doing more research and connecting with peers.

## TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

It can be hard to know what to say, but just naming what you're experiencing is a good start. Friends and family can be key supporters as you start your recovery journey – healing is hard to manage alone, and your loved ones can only support you if they know what's going on. Talking in person can feel overwhelming – try writing down what you want to say to gather your thoughts or put everything into a letter to give them and talk about it later.

If you're worried that the people closest to you won't be supportive, try reaching out to other people who seem kind: coworkers, teachers, friends' parents, or that person you haven't talked to in a few years but who posts about their mental health on social media. Can't think of anyone in your life who you are comfortable opening up to? Consider calling a warmline – they are staffed by trained peers who have gone through their own mental health struggles and know what it's like to need help. You can find a list of available warmlines at [mhanational.org/warmlines](http://mhanational.org/warmlines).

## TERMS TO KNOW

### RECOVERY:

a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential

### STIGMA:

negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

### SELF-STIGMA:

negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's own mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

### PEER:

someone who shares the experience of living with a mental health condition and/or substance use disorder

### MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL:

a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider

### THERAPIST:

a mental health professional trained to help individuals understand and cope with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; may assess and/or diagnose mental health conditions

### PSYCHIATRIST:

a licensed medical doctor who has completed additional psychiatric training; can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe and manage medication, and provide therapy

### HEALTH INSURANCE:

a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs

### SLIDING SCALE PAYMENT:

a payment model providers can use to make treatment financially accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it due to income or lack of health insurance coverage

### OUTPATIENT:

treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays

## TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL.

Finding help can be intimidating. For some people, just the thought of talking to a doctor about your mental health is scary. There might be long wait times or words you don't understand, and how do you even know where to begin? No matter what, you are deserving of help.

Start by reaching out to your primary care doctor. It might feel weird to talk to them about emotional issues, but they can help in many ways. They can ask questions to help you better understand what you're going through, let you know what kinds of support are out there, and recommend lifestyle changes or medication. They can also help connect you to specialized mental health professionals, like a therapist and psychiatrist.

Therapy, medication, and other mental health treatments can be amazing experiences, but for some, the cost just isn't realistic. If you don't have insurance, or if your insurance doesn't cover mental health services, you may not know what to do next.

### Options for people without insurance:

Ask therapists about their sliding-scale payment options. Get started by visiting [mhanational.org/finding-therapy](http://mhanational.org/finding-therapy).

Look into local colleges or universities for an outpatient psychology program. Do a Google search for "outpatient psychology program" followed by the name of a nearby school, or search for "university hospitals" followed by your town or state if you don't know of specific colleges.

Group therapy generally costs about a third of the price of an individual session – a local community center should be able to guide you to a group that fits your needs. Check out your state's Department of Behavioral Health website or this directory of peer-run services at [cdsdirectory.org](http://cdsdirectory.org).

Reach out to local nonprofits or resource centers – locate the MHA affiliate near you at [mhanational.org/find-affiliate](http://mhanational.org/find-affiliate).

## THE TRADITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DOESN'T MEET EVERYONE'S NEEDS.

Most of the western health care industry has taken on the medical model of understanding and treating health conditions – focusing on the diagnosis and management of symptoms. Often, the social, cultural, and historical factors that impact the mental health of communities that have traditionally been marginalized are ignored.

Other types of treatment include community care, culturally-based practices, and self-directed care. Learn more about these at [mhanational.org/july](http://mhanational.org/july). You might also want to consider support groups or peer support. These are all valid forms of mental health support – if it works for you, then it works!



**IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR JUST WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF, TAKE A SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](http://MHASCREENING.ORG).**



I AM

BRAVE

O

# Instructions

Welcome to "15+ Make Time To Listen... Take Time to Talk" interactive conversation starters. We've designed this as a "win-win" game where everyone gets a chance to LISTEN and TALK.

The basis of the game is to get to know more about your family, friends, and caregivers by honestly answering the questions on each card and carefully listening to the replies. There are no rules since everyone is a winner. However, you can only be a winner if you honestly answer the questions, take a chance on opening true conversations and REALLY LISTENING to responses. Cards marked with a star (★) are fairly easy and those with two stars (★★) are a little more challenging.

Go ahead, get started, and remember that these are only conversation starters and you do not have to finish all the cards to continue talking.

15+ MAKE TIME TO LISTEN... TAKE TIME TO TALK

CMHS-SVP-0051  
Printed 2003

What was the best thing that happened to you today?

MAKE TIME TO LISTEN



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What do you love about school/work?

MAKE TIME TO LISTEN



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What does success mean to you?

MAKE TIME TO LISTEN



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What makes you scared?

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What do you remember about your first day at school/work?

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What three things make a person popular in your school/at work?

What makes you laugh?

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MAKE TIME to LISTEN



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Why do you think some kids/adults dress differently?  
Talk more about this.

What makes you angry?

MAKE TIME to LISTEN

MAKE TIME to LISTEN



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Where would you go if you could travel anywhere in the world? Why?

What's a skill you wish you had? Why?

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MAKE TIME to LISTEN



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What one thing would you do to make the world more peaceful?



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Do you like being challenged?  
How?



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How can we stop violence?



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What other cultures interest you? Why?



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If you could share anything with your best friend, what would it be?

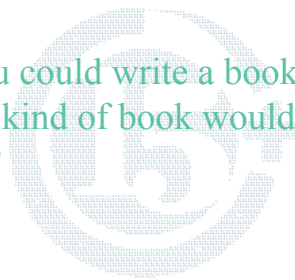


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If you could write a book, what kind of book would it be?



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If you could sit down with the most powerful person in the world and give that person advice, what would that be?

Do you learn more when you win or when you lose?

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If you could do one thing to make the earth cleaner and more livable, what would it be? Why?

A blank coupon - you decide how to share quality time.

MAKE TIME to LISTEN

MAKE TIME to LISTEN



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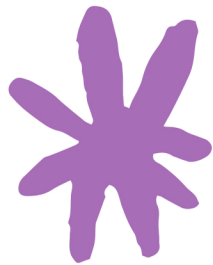
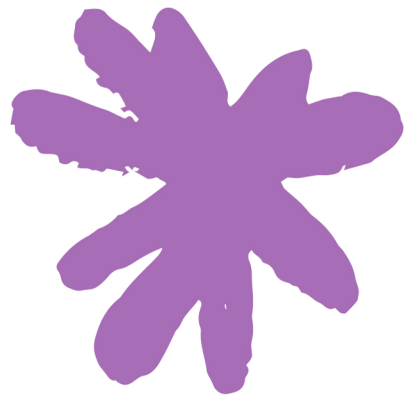
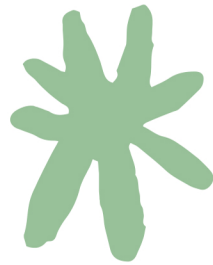
This card entitles you to one hour of:

You decide what to do.

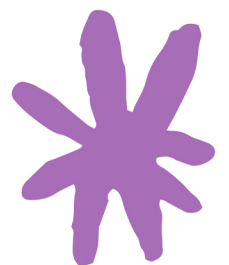
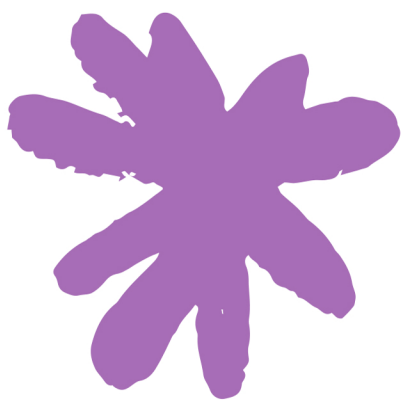
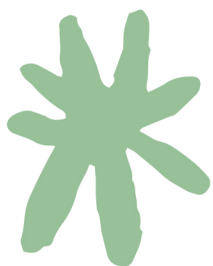
MAKE TIME to LISTEN



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I AM A  
GOOD FRIEND



# MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Whether you realize it or not, mental health plays a big role in your overall well-being. When you're mentally healthy, you are able to enjoy your life and the people in it, feel good about yourself, keep up good relationships, and deal with stress. It's normal for your mental health to shift over time – we all face difficult situations in our lives. Creating positive habits is a great way to support your mental health when you're doing well and helps you build skills to use if you do face symptoms of a mental health condition.

## FOOD CHOICES AND NUTRITION

The quality of food you eat can impact your overall physical and mental health. Your gut is often called "the second brain" and communicates with your actual brain – physically through the vagus nerve and chemically through hormones and neurotransmitters (chemical messengers that carry signals between cells). The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut are called the "gut microbiome" – eating nutritious foods is the number one thing you can do to keep your gut microbiome healthy and protect your brain.

### Important nutrients for mental health:<sup>1</sup>

#### OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS:

essential to brain health and reduce inflammation and risk of heart disease

#### B-GROUP VITAMINS:

help to regulate brain chemicals, immune function, and amino acids (the building blocks of proteins)

#### VITAMIN D:

important for brain function, including mood and critical thinking

Learn more at [mhanational.org/food](http://mhanational.org/food) and [mhanational.org/gut-brain](http://mhanational.org/gut-brain).

## EXERCISE

Staying active benefits many aspects of health and can prevent physical and mental health symptoms from worsening. Making time for exercise and movement each day improves self-esteem, brain function, and sleep and has been found to lessen social withdrawal and stress.

Getting exercise doesn't have to be intimidating!

You don't have to work out for hours on end – just 15 minutes of intense exercise at a time, ten times a week, will get you the recommended amount of physical activity. Just one hour of exercise per week can help prevent symptoms of depression.<sup>2</sup>

Choose activities that are easy to work into your life – walk the dog for an extra 20 minutes or do some floor exercises while you're watching a movie or your favorite show.

Learn more at [mhanational.org/exercise](http://mhanational.org/exercise).

## SLEEP


Your health heavily depends on how rested you are. Sleep plays a role in your moods, ability to learn and make memories, organ health, immune system, and other bodily functions like appetite, metabolism, and hormone release.<sup>3</sup> It also helps the body re-energize its cells and clear out toxins.<sup>4</sup>

Quality of sleep matters, not just how many hours you get.

### Good quality sleep means:<sup>5</sup>

 **BEING ASLEEP FOR 85% OF THE TIME YOU'RE IN BED OR MORE.**

 **FALLING ASLEEP IN UNDER 30 MINUTES.**

 **WAKING UP NO MORE THAN ONCE PER NIGHT FOR NO LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES.**

Learn more at [mhanational.org/sleep](http://mhanational.org/sleep).

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

Dealing with stress is a normal part of life – we all experience it during times of too much responsibility, too little sleep, or external worries like money or relationships. In most cases, stress comes and goes fairly quickly, and the body can return to its typical state. However, consistently high stress – because you are unable to relieve your stress or are constantly facing stressful situations (chronic stress) – can negatively impact attention, memory, and how you deal with emotions in the long term.

Learn more at [mhanational.org/stress](https://mhanational.org/stress).

## IDENTIFY COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are activities or strategies you can use to reduce or tolerate tough feelings. No one thing works for everyone, so it might take a few tries to figure out what helps you. Test out a range of techniques so that you're prepared for those times when your well-being starts to slip.

You may want to keep a running list (on your phone or on paper) of what works for you, like calling a friend or doing an at-home workout. This makes it easier to get started when you're in a tough mental state.

If you're starting from scratch, MHA has resources for "Building Your Coping Toolbox."

Learn more at [mhanational.org/coping-toolbox](https://mhanational.org/coping-toolbox) and [mhanational.org/manage-emotions](https://mhanational.org/manage-emotions).

## BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having people in your life who you relate to and can lean on goes a long way in improving your mood and general well-being. Humans are social beings, and our brains are wired to seek connection. Having people to support you during times of hardship protects your long-term mental health. Not only can a strong social support system often prevent mental health concerns or symptoms from developing into a diagnosable mental health condition – a strong social support system has also been shown to improve overall outcomes in recovering from a mental health condition.

Find your people:

Connect with people over shared hobbies and interests – it's less intimidating to make new friends when you already have something in common.

Consider community service or volunteering. Giving back is a great way to feel less alone – you'll meet new people and likely learn about local events and resources.

Focus on quality relationships – having one person you really trust will serve you better than many surface-level connections.

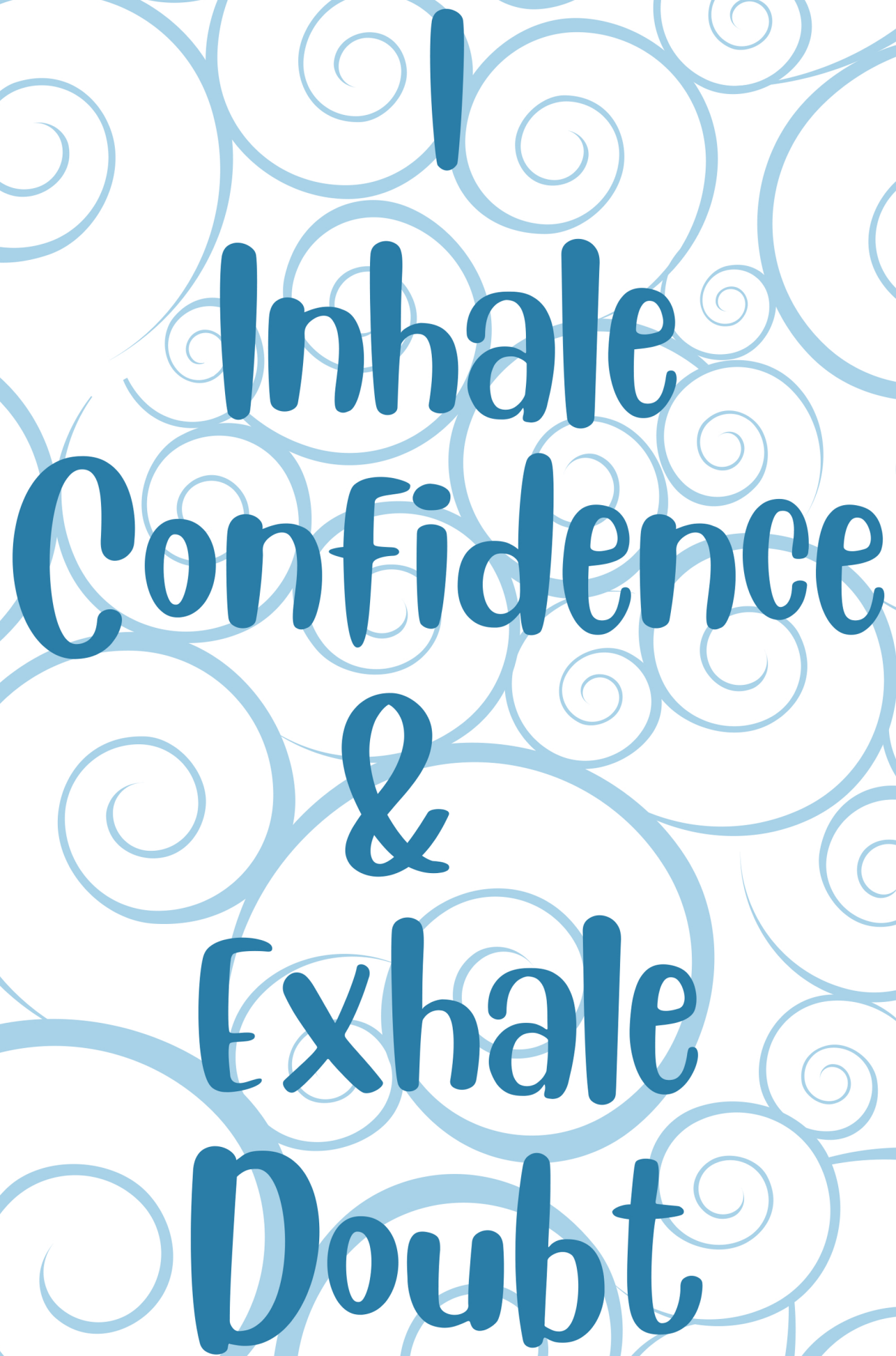
Learn more at [mhanational.org/social-connections](https://mhanational.org/social-connections).



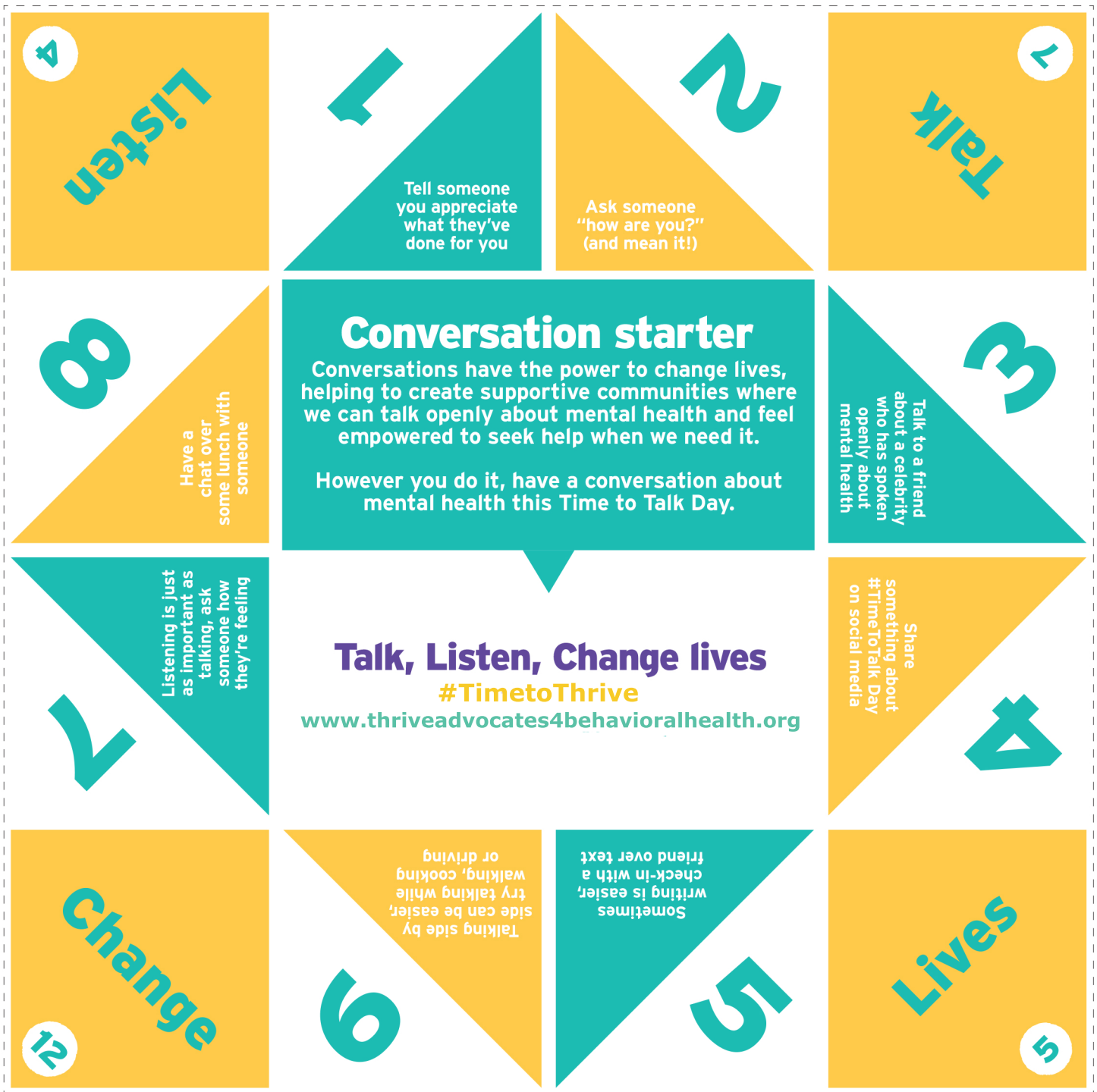
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## SOURCES

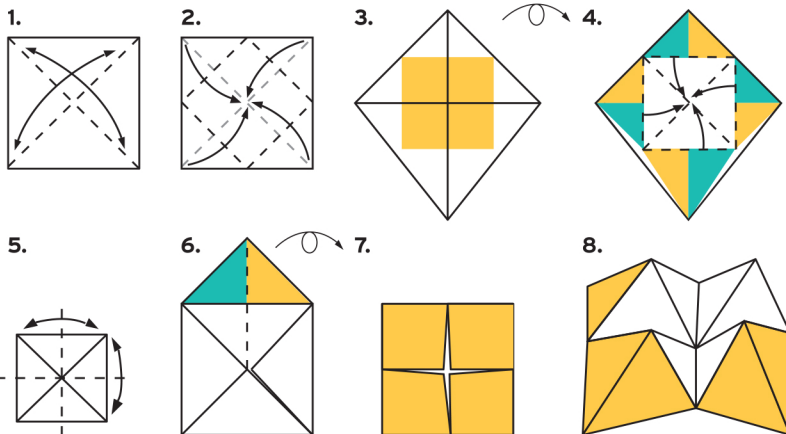
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Inhale  
Confidence  
&  
Exhale  
Doubt



### Folding instructions



### How to make a conversation

- Pick a circled number and open in alternate directions that amount of times
- Pick a teal number and open alternately that amount of times
- Pick your final number, open flap and start your conversation

Friends of Nate



Advocates for Behavioral Health



BE

KIND

TO

YOURSELF



**What's one thing you loved doing as a kid?**



Conversation cards



**What is one thing in your life you are most proud of?**



Conversation cards



**What is a family tradition you still continue?**



Conversation cards



**What is the silliest fear you have ever had?**



Conversation cards



**Where is the most beautiful place you have ever been?**



Conversation cards



**Who had the biggest impact on the person you are?**



Conversation cards



**What languages are spoken in your family?**



Conversation cards



**What is your secret talent?**



Conversation cards



**What's something you do that you really enjoy?**



Conversation cards



**If you had an opportunity to do anything, what's one thing you'd like to try?**



Conversation cards



The image features a repeating pattern of hand-drawn hearts in three colors: light blue, light green, and light purple. The hearts are scattered across the page, some larger and some smaller, creating a decorative border around the central text.

I AM

LOVED



**Getting clean and sober is difficult. Staying clean and sober is equally challenging.** Connection is the opposite of addiction. Hope Creates focuses on helping youth and young adults (ages 15-30) stay clean and sober by providing a vibrant and supportive creative community that comes together to have screaming fun as we create and exhibit our work! We empower youth and young adults in recovery from addiction, and their families, through expressive arts and entrepreneurial business skill development.



## *The Power of Hope Creates*

- **Non-traditional opportunities for engagement and personal growth**
- **Creative self-expression** in a “screaming fun,” safe and clean/sober environment
- **No prerequisite content knowledge or skills are needed.** Adolescents in recovery can take “safe risks” and **discover** parts of themselves they didn't know or believe existed
- **Building a clean/sober community** to support relapse prevention: peer support, adult mentors, connections, personal successes and being in service to peer recovering addicts
- **Integration of many aspects of skill development** across personal factors, environments, and occupations, consistent with occupational therapy best practices
- Provision of **learning environments and materials that aren't otherwise available** to many of our participants
- **Entrepreneurial opportunity** for individuals to **create value themselves** instead of relying on their parents to support their activities. A portion of the artwork is donated to Hope Creates by participants to cover a percent of art supplies. Exhibiting artists are given access to a wide spectrum of expressive art classes as compensation for their art donations
- **The voices of individuals in recovery are heard by society,** activating a community dialogue through art exhibitions that **de-stigmatize addiction and mental illness**

**Contact Us: Kathie Thomas, Executive Director**  
**Email Us: Kathie.thomas@hopecreates.org**  
**Call Us: (314) 384-6020**

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**IT'S  
OKAY  
TO  
NOT  
BE  
OKAY**