



# 安心指南

## A Guide to Emotional Well-Being for the Chinese Community

English Version

## Preface

### Welcome to the Chinese Health Initiative's Emotional Well-Being Guide (in both Chinese and English)

For over fifteen years, the Chinese Health Initiative (CHI) has addressed the unique health needs of the Chinese community and supported El Camino Health in delivering culturally sensitive care. Throughout the years we have tackled critical health disparities impacting our community, focusing on [heart health](#), [hypertension](#), and [diabetes](#), with highly successful programs that have made a meaningful impact.


In recent years, we have identified a growing need in the Chinese community. Data on emotional well-being and mental health issues in the Chinese community highlights the importance of focusing our efforts in this area.

#### Surveys in Santa Clara County\* have found:

- ▶ 24% of Chinese residents felt depressed one or more times in the past week
- ▶ 18% of teenagers felt sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in the past 12-months
- ▶ Chinese residents confirmed that they do not have the information they need to manage and improve their emotional and mental health. Additionally, the resources available are often outdated, inaccurate, not provided in their preferred language, or difficult to follow.

*\*Asian Pacific Islander's Health Assessment*

In response to these challenges, CHI launched an Emotional Well-Being initiative several years ago. This initiative encompasses community outreach and offers support through [webinars](#) and an online [resource hub](#). As interest and attendance at our events and use of our online resources have grown, we recognized the need for a more comprehensive resource. This led to creation of the Chinese Health Initiative's A Guide to Emotional Well-Being for the Chinese Community.





## Preface

### **The CHI Emotional Well-Being Guide has been developed by local health experts and Chinese leaders in our community**

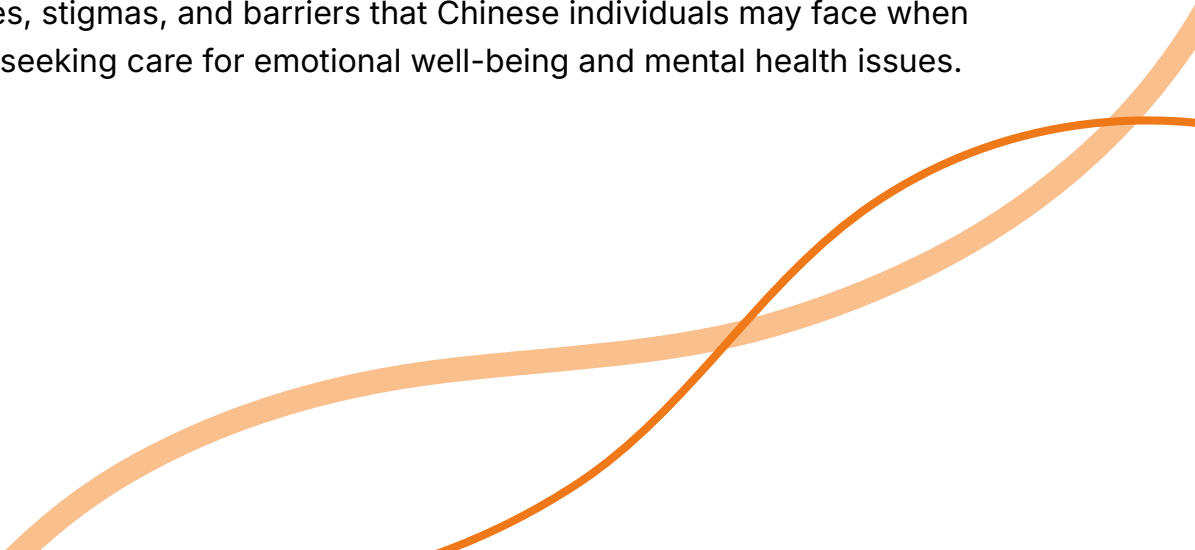
To create culturally relevant content for this guide, CHI has worked with mental health experts, including a psychologist, licensed marriage and family therapist, clinical social worker, and psychiatric-mental health nurse. Their expertise has ensured the inclusion of the most relevant and valuable information to address the unique mental health needs of our local Chinese community. Members of CHI's Mental Health Education Taskforce also reviewed the guide to further enhance its relevance and accuracy.

The guide is full of highly regarded and relevant sources of information, such as the American Psychological Association, National Institute of Mental Health, National Alliance on Mental Illness, and County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services. A full list of sources and references can be found at the back of the guide.

### **Who is This Guide For?**

The CHI Emotional Well-Being Guide is designed for individuals seeking emotional well-being advice or mental health support for themselves, for someone in their family, or friend. The guide provides an overview of various issues, local resources, and practical advice, tips and tools. It also serves as a valuable resource for those looking to talk to, guide, or intervene with family or friends experiencing mental health issues.

While this information can be beneficial to non-Chinese individuals, it is particularly valuable for Chinese adults. The guide specifically addresses the unique Chinese cultural perspectives, stigmas, and barriers that Chinese individuals may face when understanding and seeking care for emotional well-being and mental health issues.

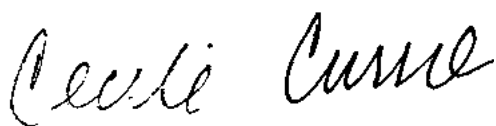


## Preface

### Remember, You Are Not Alone — We Are Here to Help!

This guide reflects our dedication to providing culturally competent resources that support the Chinese community in navigating mental health challenges and enhancing emotional well-being.

It is our honor and privilege to offer this guide filled with support, information, and resources. As the Chinese saying goes, 拋磚引玉 (throw a brick to attract jade). We hope this guide builds awareness, inspires collective efforts to address these important needs, and encourages others to contribute to building a healthier, more resilient Chinese community.



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This guide is a valuable resource for both you and those around you. It is available in:

- ▶ [English](#)
- ▶ [Traditional Chinese](#)
- ▶ [Simplified Chinese](#)

We encourage you to share it with friends, family members, or anyone who may benefit from it.

If you have any questions or would like to comment on this guide, please email us at [chi@elcaminohealth.org](mailto:chi@elcaminohealth.org)



華人健康促進計畫  
Chinese Health Initiative



## How to Use this Guide

The guide is organized into three main sections:

### Part I | Mental Health Literacy

An introduction to understanding mental health, life challenges, and common disorders, providing foundational knowledge about how mental health impacts daily life.

### Part II | Enhancing Emotional Well-Being

Practical tools and strategies for managing stress, building resilience, and practicing self-care. This section integrates Western and Eastern approaches to emotional health, focusing on culturally relevant methods for stress management.

### Part III | Accessing Mental Health Services

Comprehensive guidance on finding support, accessing local resources, initiating mental health conversations with loved ones, and navigating crisis support for urgent situations.

Due to the extensive amount of information in this guide we recommend:

- ✓ Scanning the **Table of Contents** first. Identify areas you feel might address your needs, or the needs of someone you care about.
- ✓ Certain topics are covered in multiple chapters. For example, building resilience is covered in chapters 2, 4, and 5, breathing and meditation are discussed in chapters 4 and 6, and how to search for Chinese-speaking support groups is included in chapter 7 and 8.
- ✓ Use the **digital search function (Ctrl+F)** to quickly locate specific terms or topics.
- ✓ Explore highlighted resources and tips throughout the guide or refer to the resource list at the end for additional support.
- ✓ Please note that resources and services may change over time. For the most current information, it is advisable to visit the referenced websites.
- ✓ **Be sure to take seriously any sections advising you to seek immediate assistance (by dialing 911, 988) or professional support (such as consulting a therapist or physician).**

## Acknowledgement

Many thanks and gratitude go to our **contributors, advisors and reviewers**, for sharing their professional expertise. Their invaluable insights and guidance have ensured the creation of accurate, up-to-date, and impactful information.

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# Table of Content

- Introduction**
- Preface
  - Acknowledgement
  - How to Use This Guide

## Part I | Mental Health Literacy

### Chapter 1 Understanding Mental Health

- What is Mental Health?
- Differences Between Mental Health Problems and Mental Health Disorders
- Factors Affecting Mental Health
- Cultural Context in Mental Health
- Stigma and Misconceptions
- Myths and Facts about Mental Health

### Chapter 2 Life Challenges and Social Issues Impacting the Mental Health of Chinese Americans

- Immigrants and Acculturation
- Life Transitions
- Racial Stereotypes, Discrimination and Anti-Asian Hate Crimes
- Mental Health Challenges and Coping Strategies Across Life Stage
- Building Resilience
- Counseling and Coaching

### Chapter 3 Major Mental Health Disorders

- What Is a Mental Health Disorder?
- Major Mental Health Disorders
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Bipolar
  - Substance Use Disorder
  - Schizophrenia Spectrum
  - Other Mental Health Disorders
- How Are Mental Health Disorders Treated?
- Misunderstandings and Questions about Mental Health Treatments



# Table of Content

## Part II | Enhancing Emotional Well-Being

### Chapter 4 **Managing Stress and Anxiety**

---

- Understanding Stress
- Strategies for Managing Stress
- Special Considerations for Chinese Americans
- Understanding Anxiety
- How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods
  - Breathing
  - Mindfulness
  - Meditation

### Chapter 5 **Life Skills to Build Resilience and Strong Relationships**

---

- Managing Emotions
- Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating
- Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships
- Problem-Solving to Resolve Conflicts
- Practice Gratitude and Positive Affirmations

### Chapter 6 **Holistic Wellness and Self-Care**

---

- Holistic Wellness
- Self-Care Practices
- Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration
- Everyday Practices to Boost Mental Well-Being

# Table of Content

## Part III | Accessing Mental Health Services

### Chapter 7 Pathway for Help-Seeking

- The Importance of Professional Help
- Types of Mental Health Providers
- How to Choose a Mental Health Provider
- Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help
- Searching for Chinese-Speaking Providers and Support Groups
- Resources in the South Bay

### Chapter 8 How Family and Friends Can Help

- Ways Family and Friends Can Help
- How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health
- Support Groups and Resources
- Reliable Sources for Mental Health Information
- Mental Health Information in Chinese and Other Languages

### Chapter 9 Crisis Intervention

- What Is a Mental Health Crisis?
- Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm
- Handling a Mental Health Emergency
- 988 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Acute, Post Acute, and Community Resources

### Appendix

- Sources and References
- Resources
- Resources from Chinese Health Initiative



# Chapter 1

## Understanding Mental Health

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- What is Mental Health?
- Differences Between Mental Health Problems and Mental Health Disorders
- Factors Affecting Mental Health
- Cultural Context in Mental Health
- Stigma and Misconceptions
- Myths and Facts about Mental Health

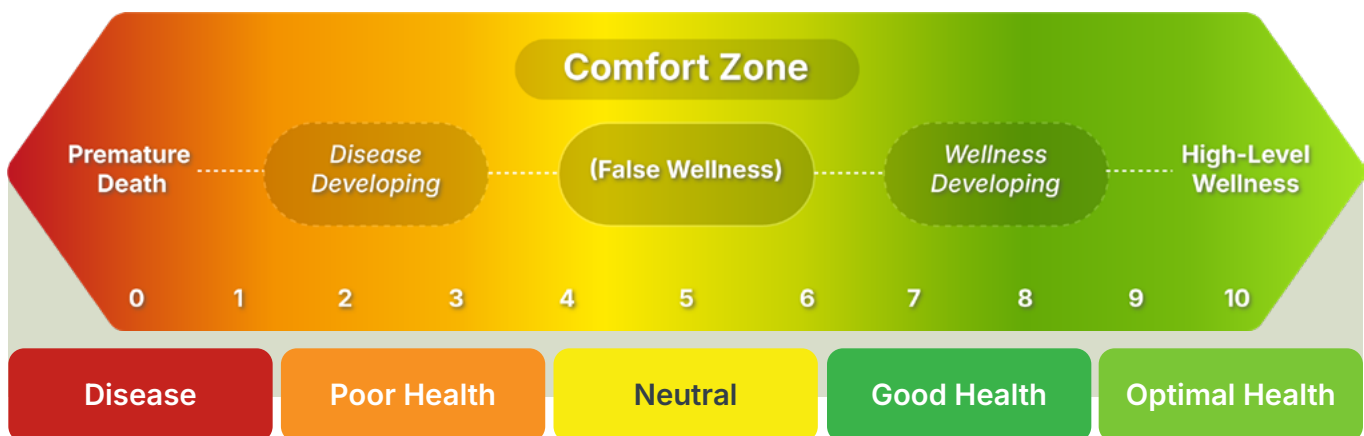


## What Is Mental Health?

According to World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It influences how we think, feel, and act as we navigate life. It plays a crucial role in managing stress, relating to others, and making decisions. Good mental health is more than the absence of mental illness — it includes effective emotional regulation, strong stress management skills, and healthy social connections.

Mental health exists on a continuum. The level of mental health fluctuates and is influenced by many factors such as culture, social norms, resources, health, and environment.

### Health Continuum Illness-Wellness Continuum



This health continuum model developed by Dr. John W. Travis illustrates that mental health is not black or white. The arrows represent the continuum, with movement in both directions, indicating that there is always the potential for a return to optimal health. Early intervention increases the likelihood of achieving optimal health and wellness.

For many Chinese Americans, mental health is an unfamiliar and often avoided topic. This does not indicate a lack of mental health problems or concerns. Despite a high prevalence of mental health issues, Chinese Americans have a low rate of mental health service utilization<sup>1</sup>.



# Differences Between Mental Health Problems and Mental Health Disorders

## Mental Health Problems

Almost everyone experiences mental health problems at some point. These include feelings, and symptoms that do not meet the threshold for a mental disorder. Mental health problems can affect various areas of life, including social relationships, friendships, physical health, work, and family. However, the degree of impact can vary.

## Mental Health Disorders

Mental health disorders involve significant disruptions in cognition, emotion, mood, or higher-level behaviors such as social interactions or planning. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mental health disorders account for more disability than any other illness, including cancer and heart disease<sup>2</sup>.

There is no clear distinction between mental health problems and mental health disorders. Only a mental health provider can do an effective assessment. Individuals with either mental health problems or mental health disorders may still function well in many areas of their life while facing difficulties in others. In most cases, it is difficult for friends and even family to distinguish whether someone is experiencing a mental health problem or a mental health disorder. It is imperative to get professional diagnosis and treatment from mental health professionals.



## Factors Affecting Mental Health

Many factors contribute to mental health, but none of these factors include “thinking too much,” “being too weak,” or being “crazy.” Many factors that influence mental health are beyond a person’s control and can be linked to the interaction of physical, psychological, and social factors. The likelihood of experiencing mental health problems or disorders is shaped by the interaction of several factors, including:



### Genetics

Just as hair color is influenced by our genes, mental health is also influenced but not solely determined by genetics. The interaction between genes and other factors plays a crucial role in determining our susceptibility to mental health disorders.



### Infections

Some infections, such as Lyme disease, Epstein-Barr Virus and PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections), can affect behavior and mood even years after the infection clears.



### Physical Health

Physical health has a strong connection to mental health. Some physical health problems can also present psychological symptoms. For example, thyroid problems may cause symptoms such as depressed mood, anxiety, or confusion. Lack of quality sleep also impacts emotions.



### Nutrition and Toxins

Poor nutrition and exposure to environmental toxins may contribute to developing mental disorders.



### Psychological Factors

Stressful life events, trauma, personality traits, and family situation can impact mental health.



### Social Factors

Family relationships, pressures due to work or financial issues, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and religious beliefs also play important roles.



### Protective Factors

Managing life events, accessing resources, community involvement, having a supportive social network, and accessing mental health care can reduce the risk of mental health problems.

**For more information about maintaining emotional well-being such as managing stress and building life skills, see [Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 5](#), and [Chapter 6](#).**

## Cultural Context in Mental Health

Chinese Americans often view health and illness through the lens of traditional Chinese cultural beliefs, which can differ significantly from Western perspectives. These beliefs may influence your ways of maintaining or improving health, beliefs about what causes illness, how illness should be best treated, and ways to interact with healthcare providers. These cultural perspectives on health and illness vary widely among Chinese Americans. Some key aspects include:

### Holistic View of Health

Chinese tradition takes a holistic approach, using a body-mind-spirit integrated model to promote overall health. This model emphasizes balance and harmony between the mind, body, and environment.

### Harmony with Nature

Life is seen as an integral part of the larger universe, interconnected with nature and society. Humans are viewed as a microcosm within the greater cosmos, encompassing biological, natural, and social dimensions. This perspective views humans as part of the unity between heaven, earth, and humankind.

### Yin-Yang Balance

Health is viewed as a balance between Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are two fundamental aspects or states of Qi (life energy) both oppositional and complementary. Blockages or imbalances in Qi are thought to cause illness. The holistic view of health is reflected in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and acupuncture.

### Mind-Body Connection

According to Chinese culture and belief, body, mind and spirits are inter-connected. Practices that foster this mind-body connection include breathing exercises, meditation, Tai Chi, and Qigong.

### Preventive Health and Lifestyle

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) places great emphasis on prevention, believing that the best doctors can stop a disease before its onset. TCM uses methods such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, and therapeutic massage to adjust or restore the body's yin-yang balance, thereby preventing the illness. TCM also emphasizes the importance of lifestyle, including maintaining balance in life, proper diet, regular physical activity, and breathing and meditation to cultivate a calm and peaceful mind.



To learn more, watch this video on [Emotional Well-Being Insights from Traditional Chinese Medicine Perspective](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.



## Cultural Context in Mental Health

### Family and Community-Oriented Care

Health decisions are often made with significant input from family members, reflecting a strong sense of responsibility to care for one another's health. Elders are highly respected, and their opinions about health and illness are valued.

### Integration with Western Medicine

Many Chinese Americans adopt a “bi-cultural” approach, integrating traditional practices with Western medicine. The older family members may be wary of Western medicine, especially regarding pharmaceuticals or invasive procedures, and prefer natural or less invasive treatments. Reluctance sometimes can delay or avoid treatment.

### Interaction of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with Western Medicine

TCM and Western Medicine each have their own benefits and applications. It is critically important to discuss interactions of these medicines and treatments with your TCM practitioner and your Western physicians and clinicians.

[For more information about Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration, see chapter 6.](#)



## Stigma and Misconceptions

Mental health issues are often denied or minimized, with emotional problems expressed through physical symptoms as discussing mental health openly may be less culturally acceptable. **For more information about the physical symptoms, see chapter 3.**



Stigma is one of the primary barriers preventing Chinese Americans from seeking mental health services. It involves negative thoughts and beliefs about mental health, leading to prejudice, fear, and discrimination. Stigma creates shame around mental health, which discourages help-seeking behaviors, limits access to treatment, and hinders recovery.

Although stigma is influenced in part by cultural beliefs, it is often perpetuated by misconceptions about mental health, such as:

- ▶ Believing mental health issues are the result of bad morals, karma, or wrongdoing in a past life
- ▶ Belief that one should resolve problems on their own
- ▶ Labeling individuals with mental health problems as “weak,” of “poor character,” or from a “bad family”
- ▶ Doubting the effectiveness of treatment
- ▶ Worrying about confidentiality

These misconceptions not only delay treatment but also exacerbate fears about receiving a diagnosis or accessing mental health resources. Chinese Americans are more likely to be concerned that a diagnosis or using mental health services might affect their job, and the perception among their peers.

## Myths and Facts about Mental Health



### MYTH

*Mental health issues can't affect me.*



### FACT

**Mental health issues can affect anyone.**

In 2020, about:

- ▶ One in 5 American adults experienced a mental health condition in a given year
- ▶ One in 6 young people have experienced a major depressive episode
- ▶ One in 20 Americans have lived with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States. In fact, it was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-24. According to CDC, suicide has accounted for the loss of more than 49,930 American lives in 2023, nearly double the number of lives lost to homicide.



### MYTH

*People with mental health disorders are violent.*



### FACT

**Most people with mental health conditions are no more likely to be violent than anyone else.**

Only 3%–5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. You probably know someone with a mental health condition and don't even realize it, because many people with mental health conditions are highly active and productive members of our communities.

*Continue reading on the next page.*



## Myths and Facts about Mental Health



### MYTH

*Mental health issues are a result of personality weakness or character flaws, and people can “snap out of it” if they try hard enough.*



### FACT

**Mental health conditions have nothing to do with being lazy or weak and many people need help to get better.**

Many factors contribute to mental health conditions, including:

- ▶ Biological factors, such as genes, physical illness, injury, or brain chemistry
- ▶ Life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse
- ▶ Family history of mental health conditions



### MYTH

*It is impossible to prevent a mental health condition.*



### FACT

Many protective factors such as reducing stress, accessing resources, learning and practicing life skills, increasing and maintaining physical health, and engaging in community can help you maintain emotional well-being and reduce susceptibility to mental health issues or mental health disorders. Using these protective factors can help create your personal mental health buffer.

**For more information about the how to enhance emotional well-being, see [Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 5](#), and [Chapter 6](#).**



### MYTH

*People with a mental health condition, even those managing their condition, cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job.*



### FACT

People with a mental health conditions can be just as productive as other employees, especially when they have the treatment and resources to manage their condition well.

## Myths and Facts about Mental Health



### MYTH

*Once a friend or family member develops a mental health condition, they will never recover.*



### FACT

**Studies show that people with mental health conditions get better and many are on a path to recovery.**

Recovery refers to the process in which people can live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. There are more treatments, services, and community support systems than ever before, and they work.



### MYTH

*If my family or friends have a mental health issue, I cannot do anything for them.*



### FACT

**Friends and loved ones can make a big difference.**

Only 47.2% of American adults received any mental health treatment. More than half of American adults with mental health problems don't receive the care they need (NAMI). Friends and family can be important influences to help someone get the treatment and services they need by:

- ▶ Reaching out and letting them know you are available to help
- ▶ Helping them access mental health services
- ▶ Help them learn self-care and coping techniques
- ▶ Treating them with respect, just as you would anyone else
- ▶ Refusing to define them by their diagnosis or using labels such as "crazy"

**For more information about how family and friends can help, see chapter 8.**



### MYTH

*Children don't experience mental health issues.*



### FACT

**Some mental health issues begin in childhood, and early detection and treatment are crucial for a child's growth, learning, health, and happiness.**

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## Chapter 2

# Life Challenges and Social Issues Impacting the Mental Health of Chinese Americans

- Immigrants and Acculturation
- Life Transitions
- Racial Stereotypes, Discrimination and Anti-Asian Hate Crimes
- Mental Health Challenges and Coping Strategies Across Life Stage
- Building Resilience
- Counseling and Coaching



## Immigrants and Acculturation

New immigrants often face severe and sudden challenges as they adapt to the culture and demands of a new country. Many struggle with language barriers when language assistance is not readily available in American systems. They also face pressures from the responsibility to provide for families back home while meeting societal expectations in the United States.

Generational differences within immigrant families often compound these challenges

*For example, an “acculturation gap” arises when children adapt to a new culture more quickly than their parents. Parents may expect children to maintain traditional values, such as filial piety, while children may adopt values like individualism and independence.*

These conflicts can lead to increased stress and impact emotional well-being.

## Life Transitions

Our emotional health can be affected when we go through transitions in life. Changes such as moving to a new city, starting a job, or becoming a parent may evoke feelings of excitement but also anxiety, sadness, or fear. Even milestones like buying a home or getting married can create stress.

Conversely, difficult transitions like dealing with a long-term illness, divorce, or grief over the loss of a loved one can lead to significant emotional challenges.

These shifts often disrupt routines, support systems, and sense of identity, making us more vulnerable to emotional challenges. Losing familiar environments and connections can also leave us feeling isolated and lonely, adding to the difficulty of adjusting. The uncertainty that comes with such changes can heighten feelings of stress, anxiety, or sadness.

Transitions can shake our sense of identity. Taking on new roles or stepping into unfamiliar environments might make us question our purpose or place in the world. This kind of self-reflection, though natural, can cause an upset in your emotional well-being.

Chinese Americans often experience these transitions through the lens of cultural expectations, balancing traditional values with the demands of their new roles and environments.

*For example, caregiving for elderly parents while raising children — a stress known as “sandwich generation” pressure — is particularly common in midlife. Similarly, seniors may face loneliness as their children leave home, compounded by language and cultural barriers that limit access to community resources.*

## Racial Stereotypes, Discrimination, and Anti-Asian Hate Crimes

Social issues like racial stereotypes, discrimination, and hate crimes significantly impact the mental health of Chinese Americans.

*The Model Minority Myth imposes significant mental health burdens on Chinese Americans. The pressure to live up to the myth of Asian American success becomes a tremendous burden for our youngsters.*

It also creates an illusion that Asian Americans are consistently successful and resilient, discouraging individuals from acknowledging or addressing their mental health struggles for fear of not living up to societal expectations.

### Discrimination and Hate Crimes

Discrimination comes in many forms. Discrimination and microaggression increase stress levels and impact mental health problems. Moreover, when being discriminated against, treated differently, being threatened, or feeling unwelcomed have been “familiar” experiences for Chinese Americans, it makes it harder for them to seek help.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, racial discrimination was linked to decreased life satisfaction and increased depression among Chinese Americans<sup>1</sup>. More broadly, perceived discrimination is associated with heightened anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among Asian Americans<sup>1</sup>.

Incidents of verbal abuse, physical assault, and vandalism, particularly during the COVID pandemic, have heightened fear and anxiety within the community. Victims may experience post-traumatic stress, depression, or withdrawal, while even witnessing such acts can cause sadness and distress. Seniors and recent immigrants are especially vulnerable, as fear of public spaces and strangers often leads to social isolation.

Experiencing a hate crime or hate-motivated act can be difficult and distressing. Emotions can include shock, numbness, fear, anger, disillusionment, and sorrow. People may have trouble sleeping, concentrating, eating, or remembering even simple tasks.

# Racial Stereotypes, Discrimination, and Anti-Asian Hate Crimes

## The Chinese Community Tends to Self-Examine First

*It is common for the Chinese community to first examine themselves when something goes wrong. Many may think, "Did I do something wrong? Why did this happen to me?" Instead of questioning those who initiate anti-Asian behavior, they may start by questioning themselves, the victim.*

The Chinese community tends to seek help less frequently for psychological harm. After experiencing anti-Asian incidents, victims might not be able to recognize their psychological reactions, but the impact on mental health can also result in physical symptoms. Support from family, friends, the community (including cultural and religious organizations), and professional medical assistance is essential in helping victims feel accepted, rebuild their lives, and regain confidence.

When it comes to psychological harm, the Chinese community often responds with silence and denial. According to Chinese psychologists, victims of anti-Asian incidents may experience a range of emotions, including anger, denial, resentment, sadness, and self-doubt, with emotions surging back and forth like waves. Some may even withdraw and isolate themselves from the outside world.

When members of the Chinese community encounter such incidents, it's important not only to address the visible physical harm but also to recognize the psychological impact these actions can have.

To counteract these challenges:

### ► **Family and Community Support**

Family members, friends, and the community play a crucial role helping the victim feel accepted, rebuild their lives, and regain confidence.

**For more information on how family and friends can help, see Chapter 8.**

### ► **Professional Help**

Seek counseling or coaching to process trauma and develop coping strategies.

**For more information on pathways for seeking professional, see Chapter 7.**

# Mental Health Challenges and Coping Strategies Across Life Stage

## Young Adulthood (Ages 19–29)

### Challenges

- ▶ Navigating college, career, and romantic relationships while Managing the pressure to “bring honor to the family” (光宗耀祖).
- ▶ **Family vs. personal priorities.** Conflicts around pursuing individual dreams versus fulfilling family expectations, such as supporting younger siblings or aging parents.
- ▶ **Relationship expectations.** Balancing personal dating preferences with family ideals for marriage.

### Coping Strategies

- ✓ Encourage setting boundaries through respectful communication.
- ✓ **Mentorship.** Connect with Chinese American mentors who understand both cultural and professional challenges.
- ✓ **Reframing therapy.** Frame counseling as a modern form of personal development, making it culturally acceptable to seek help.



To learn more, watch this video on [Bridging the Generation Gap](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Midlife (Ages 30–50)

### Challenges

- ▶ **Considering or planning to become a parent.** From planning to have a child through birth and adjusting to parenthood. This includes some serious emotional conditions such as postpartum depression.
- ▶ **Sandwich generation stress.** Balancing career, marriage, and caregiving for children and aging parents.
- ▶ **Workplace stress.** Navigating “glass ceilings” as a minority or feeling overlooked despite hard work.

### Coping Strategies

- ✓ **Family communication.** Use regular family meetings to align priorities and share caregiving responsibilities.
- ✓ **Mindfulness practices.** Incorporate culturally resonant practices like tai chi, tea-making rituals, or calligraphy to reduce stress.
- ✓ **Seek Help.** If you are experiencing serious emotional issues after the birth of a child, it is important to seek professional help quickly.



Learn more about El Camino Health’s [Maternal Outreach Mood Services \(MOMS\) Program](#).



# Mental Health Challenges and Coping Strategies Across Life Stage

## Loneliness in Later Life (Ages 60+)

### Challenges

▶ **Empty nest.**

Seniors often experience isolation when children move away for work or education. Although children are traditionally expected to care for parents (孝道), modern life often creates gaps in connection.

▶ **Language and cultural barriers.**

Limited English proficiency can hinder participation in local activities or access to mental health resources, leading to social isolation.

▶ **Loss of traditional roles.**

Retirement and reduced mobility often result in seniors feeling a loss of purpose and diminished social roles within the family and community.

▶ **Grief and loss.**

Losing a spouse, siblings, or friends can create an emotional void, especially in cultures where openly expressing grief is discouraged. Many seniors also mourn the loss of their homeland and cultural familiarity.

▶ **Physical and cognitive decline.**

Loneliness exacerbates chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, and increases the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

### Coping Strategies

✓ **Cultural expression.**

Reconnect with cultural traditions like cooking ancestral recipes or practicing Chinese painting to find meaning and joy.

✓ **Social engagement.**

Join senior groups at local Chinese community centers or volunteer to tutor Chinese language or assist in cultural festivals to regain purpose and belonging.

✓ **Storytelling across generations.**

Share family stories to foster intergenerational connection and resilience. Pass down knowledge, wisdom, or traditions to younger generations, creating a sense of purpose and continuity.

**For more information about holistic wellness, see Chapter 6.**





## Building Resilience



Resilience is important for navigating the challenges and life transition across life stages. Life transitions often disrupt stability and identity, but they also offer opportunities for growth. With effort and support, these challenges can lead to greater resilience, stronger coping skills, and a deeper sense of confidence in our ability to handle change. Embracing these moments and seeking help when needed can make all the difference in turning periods of change into stepping stones for personal development.

For Chinese Americans, addressing transitions involves balancing cultural values, family obligations, and personal aspirations. If we can be motivated by the cultural value of perseverance, it will help us build resilience and navigate life transitions.

Social connections play a key role in our well-being. Losing or changing those relationships during life transitions can feel particularly hard. Maintaining or building meaningful relationships can ease the emotional toll of transitions.

### Life Skills Workshops

Classes on conflict resolution, stress management, and emotional regulation are increasingly available through libraries, churches, and community organizations. Proactively strengthening coping skills — like mindfulness practices or journaling — can help you navigate life changes more smoothly.

The Chinese Health Initiative (CHI) offers webinars to help you maintain and manage emotional well-being through a variety of life skills, click here for [upcoming events](#) or visit the CHI's [YouTube channel](#) to watch past webinars conducted in Mandarin and/or English.

### Journaling with Gratitude

Reflect on achievements and support systems to maintain a positive mindset.

### Cultural Practices

Practices such as meditation or Qigong to calm the mind and body during stressful times.

**For more information on building resilience and life skills, see [Chapter 4](#), [Chapter 5](#), and [Chapter 6](#).**

## Counseling and Coaching

Counseling and Coaching can help you deal with life challenges and build resilience.

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

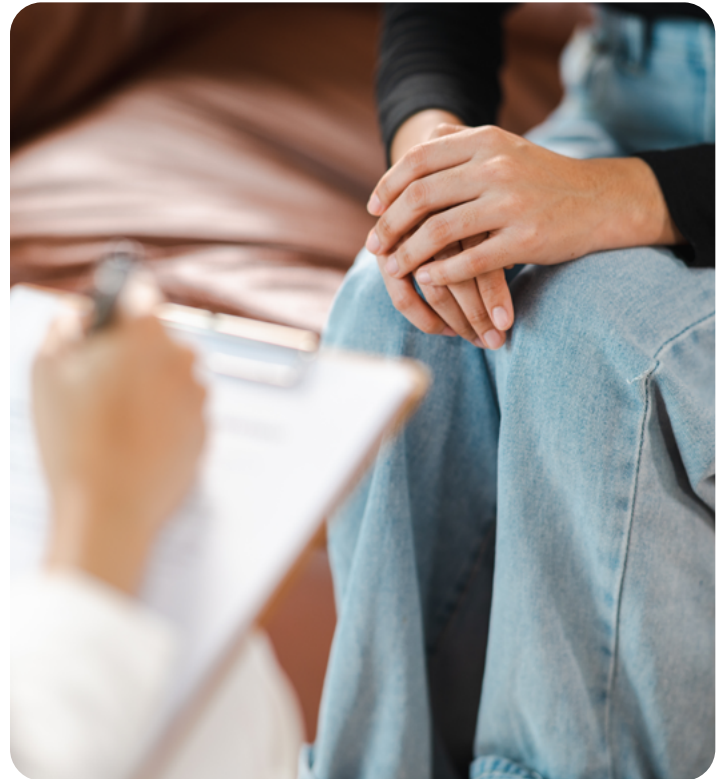
It is a benefit from your employer that can provide free counseling and coaching services. Both services build resilience and can help you deal with life challenges, relationship issues, and emotional concerns.

### Wellness Coaching

Wellness coaching is an excellent starting point for improving your health and mental well-being during life transitions. Coaches provide personalized guidance and support to help you enhance your overall health and well-being through lifestyle changes, nutrition advice, exercise planning, and stress management techniques. Essentially they assist you in achieving your wellness goals.

#### Important Notes:

Personal and wellness coaching are not yet regulated in California. Seek services through trusted organizations, such as your employer's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or healthcare provider, to ensure quality.



### Counseling

A consultation could involve talking to a professional about a specific topic with a short-term outcome in mind. Many people find it helpful to receive a "check up" and some guidance without committing to long-term counseling. However, be sure to check with your counselor or insurance to see if these services are included.

**For more information on counseling, coaching, and other mental health resources, see Chapter 7.**

# Chapter 3

## Major Mental Health Disorders

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- **What Is a Mental Health Disorder?**
- **Major Mental Health Disorders**
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Bipolar
  - Substance Use Disorder
  - Schizophrenia Spectrum
  - Other Mental Health Disorders
- **How Are Mental Health Disorders Treated?**
- **Misunderstandings and Questions about Mental Health Treatments**



## What Is a Mental Health Disorder?

Mental health disorders refer to a wide range of health conditions that involve change in emotion, thinking, or behavior, or a combination of these. According to American Psychiatric Association, mental health disorders can lead to distress and difficulty functioning in social, work, or family activities.

If you notice that you are “not yourself” or find it harder to think, act, move, react, behave, make decisions, eat, talk, concentrate, learn, relate, feel, speak, read, or reason as you normally would, it’s a good time to speak with a mental health professional to discuss potential issues. Years of professional training are required to make an accurate diagnosis, and a thorough explanation of mental health disorders is best provided by a professional who listens to you and offers the most appropriate, personalized answers.

You can use the [Mental Health America Mental Health Screening Tools](#) or the [Taiwan Institute of Psychotherapy Mental Health Screening Tools in Chinese](#).

## Warning Signs of Mental Health Disorders

If you notice several of the following symptoms, it may be helpful to consult with a mental health professional. It is especially important to pay attention to sudden changes in thoughts and behaviors.

- ▶ Talking, thinking, or joking about suicide or self-harm
- ▶ Talking or thinking about harming others
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Notable changes in:
  - Academic performance, class attendance, or work performance
  - Eating habits. Overeating, undereating, or developing problematic food behaviors
  - Personality or temperament
  - Sleep patterns
  - Relationships with others

*Continue reading on the next page.*



## What Is a Mental Health Disorder?

### Warning Signs of Mental Health Disorders

- ▶ Difficulty managing daily tasks. Examples include missing classes or work, failing to attend important activities, neglecting personal hygiene, or failing to care for oneself
- ▶ Illogical thinking. Having unusual or exaggerated beliefs about one's ability to understand hidden meanings or influence events
- ▶ Prolonged periods of depression or apathy
- ▶ Repetitive behaviors such as excessive checking and re-checking
- ▶ Excessive emotions such as anxiety, anger, hostility, fear, sadness, or elation without clear reason
- ▶ Experiencing extreme mood swings, from very high to very low
- ▶ Misusing alcohol or drugs



Individuals — including children, teenagers, and older adults — may exhibit different warning signs or symptoms of mental health issues.

To learn more about symptoms that are specific to a particular mental health disorder, visit [Mental Health America's Mental Health Information](#), [American Psychiatric Association](#) or [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).



## Major Mental Health Disorders

### Anxiety

Anxiety is common. According to National Institute of Mental Health, an estimated 19.1% of U.S. adults had any anxiety disorder in the past year. And an estimated 31.1% of U.S. adults experience any anxiety disorder at some time in their lives.

Anxiety disorders include:

- ▶ **Social Anxiety Disorder**  
Persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny by others.
- ▶ **Separation Anxiety**  
Fear being away from the people they are close to.
- ▶ **Specific Phobia**  
Intense, irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger.
- ▶ **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**  
Excessive, unrealistic worry and tension that are prompted by minor issues or nothing at all.
- ▶ **Panic Disorder**  
Feelings of terror that strike suddenly and repeatedly with no warning, often causing sweating, chest pain, choking, or heart palpitations.

### Common Misunderstandings about Anxiety Disorder in the Chinese Community

Misinformation	Fact
✗ Anxiety is caused by thinking too much.	✓ Thinking too much is likely to be a result of anxiety and other factors. Thinking is not easily controlled or stopped.
✗ Social anxiety is "shy."	✓ Social anxiety is different from being shy in many ways.
✗ Everyone worries.	✓ For people with anxiety disorders, worries can be relentless and hard to control, often feeling as though the anxiety has a mind of its own, unaffected by logic and facts.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Major Mental Health Disorders

### Common Misunderstandings about Anxiety Disorder in the Chinese Community

Misinformation	Fact
✗ If I avoid the trigger, I will have no anxiety.	✓ Avoiding may temporarily help, but will likely increase your worries, stress, and self-blaming.
✗ Bad parenting causes mental health problems.	✓ Mental health disorders are caused by extremely complex processes.
✗ Anxiety is a personal weakness.	✓ Living with anxiety requires adjustment, determination, and courage.
✗ My children do not want to go to school because they are weak.	✓ Social anxiety can begin as early as age 5 and is both painful and debilitating. Delaying treatment is likely to increase your child's anxiety.

### Anxiety Screening Tool

The [Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 \(GAD-7\)](#) is a 7-question tool that can help you assess symptoms of anxiety disorder. The second page contains instructions on how to interpret your score. The [Chinese version](#) is available.

This screening tool is not a substitute for a clinical evaluation and cannot provide an actual diagnosis. If feelings persist or worsen, please consider contacting a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.



To learn more, watch this video on [Social Anxiety: Diagnosis and Treatment](#) conducted in Mandarin and English by the Chinese Health Initiative.



# Major Mental Health Disorders

## Depression

In a recent study, about 8.3% of adults in the US had at least one major depressive episode. According to National Institute of Mental Health, the prevalence of adults with a major depressive episode was highest among individuals aged 18-25 (18.6%). That means if you have 20 friends, classmates, relatives, or coworkers, one to three of them are likely to have experienced a depressive episode.

Depression is a serious health condition. It can impact thinking, feeling, health, energy level, sleep, eating, relationships, work, self-perceptions, motivation, cognitive functioning, and personal safety (for example, risk of an accident, suicide, or substance use).

Depression can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity.

Depression symptoms and signs differ from person to person. For example, some people with depression may have problems sleeping, but others with depression may sleep a lot and still feel tired. Some may gain weight, and some may lose weight. Some may feel sad, numb, or irritable with a very foul mood and short fuse.

## Depression among seniors

Depression in older adults is common. Up to one in five older adults has depression. But depression might look different in older adults compared to children and younger adults.

Older adults with depression may find that their memory is worse. They may have problems with physical symptoms like backaches, headaches, stomach pains, and dizziness. Older adults might find themselves crying often or feeling numb. And they may also feel like a burden on others.

## Subtypes of Depression

There are also a few subtypes of depression. These involve hormonal changes and sleep cycle changes. They can require specialized treatments than those for general major depression.

- ▶ **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** is a type of depression that can occur in the gloomy winter months. Those with SAD may experience feeling listless, sad or down, losing interest in activities you once enjoyed, and having low energy and problems with sleeping too much.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Major Mental Health Disorders

- ▶ **Postpartum Depression** affects women after giving birth. Perinatal depression includes depression that occurs during pregnancy (prenatal depression) and in the weeks and months after childbirth (postpartum depression). Women with perinatal or postpartum depression experience extreme sadness, anxiety, withdrawal, and fatigue that may make it difficult to carry out daily tasks, including caring for themselves, their newborn, or others.



To learn more, watch this video on [How to Manage Emotions During and After Pregnancy](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.



Learn more about El Camino Health's [Maternal Outreach Mood Services \(MOMS\) Program](#) or other perinatal mental health resources at [Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#).

### Common Misunderstandings about Depression Disorder in the Chinese Community

Misinformation	Fact
✗ If my child is getting good grades, they do not have depression (or any mental health problems).	✓ Some people with depression can have good grades or be a strong performer.
✗ Depression is "in your head."	✓ Depression is a whole-body illness. It impacts focus, concentration, attention, pain, movement, memory, decision making, energy level, sleep, eating. etc.
✗ Older people are just grumpy and forgetful.	✓ Many Chinese seniors' depression is mistaken for "getting old" or dementia. But depression is treatable, and treatment could significantly improve their quality of life.

## Major Mental Health Disorders

### Common Misunderstandings about Depression Disorder in the Chinese Community

Misinformation	Fact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Depression is “just sad.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The “sadness” in depression is unshakable, deep, pervasive, difficult to describe, and it often isn’t constant (not “sad” 100% of the time). Depression can also manifest as anger, anxiety, physical pain, exhaustion, or irritability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Depression can be treated by having friends, going outdoors, or exercising.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ These actions may be helpful for some. They are not treatments and can be difficult to implement for people with depression, as their thinking, feelings, and physical health are impacted.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Depressed people are selfish and self-centered. “How can they get depressed when I give them everything I can.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Depression has many causes, but no study has found selfishness or self-centeredness related to depression. We may feel that the person with depression is self-centered, because they are likely using most of their strength to cope with this mental health disorder.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Depression is not a Chinese problem; Chinese people do not get depressed. “We do not have depression.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ While modern science has named and defined depression, individuals experiencing significant depressive symptoms have been described throughout Chinese history. Many culturally familiar terms closely align with today’s diagnostic criteria for depression. For example, 鬱鬱寡歡 (melancholy), 食不知味 (loss of appetite &amp; taste).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× As long as they are smiling, people with depression are OK.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Many people with depression can maintain a facade of “I am happy.”</li> </ul>

## Major Mental Health Disorders

### Depression Screening Tool

The [Patient Health Questionnaire-9 \(PHQ-9\)](#) is a 9-question tool that can help you explore whether the feelings, thoughts or behaviors you may be experiencing could be depression. The second page contains instructions on how to interpret your score. The [Chinese version](#) is available.

This screening tool is not a substitute for a clinical evaluation and cannot provide an actual diagnosis. If feelings persist or worsen, please consider contacting a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.



To learn more about depression, please read the [Ask-the-Expert: Understanding Depression article](#).



You can also watch this video on [Depression: Diagnosis and Treatment](#) conducted in Mandarin and English or this video on [What You Need to Know about Depression](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Bipolar Disorders

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that is commonly misdiagnosed, usually as major depressive disorder. Bipolar disorder is characterized by experiencing high and low periods in mood and energy. These high and low periods often are severe and seriously impact their ability to work, go to school, take care of themselves, or relate to others.

According to Mental Health America, more than 3.3 million American adults (1.7%) suffer from bipolar disorders in a given year, but an estimated 4.4% of U.S. adults experience bipolar disorders at some time in their lives. It typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood and continues throughout life. It is often not recognized as an illness and people who have it may suffer needlessly for years.

Bipolar disorder is treatable, and recovery is possible. Individuals with bipolar disorder can and do have successful relationships and meaningful jobs. The combination of medication, therapy, healthy lifestyle, and support helps the vast majority of people return to productive, fulfilling lives.

# Major Mental Health Disorders

## Substance Use Disorder

Substance use disorder (SUD), or what many people commonly refer to as “addiction,” involves an individual’s problems in controlling their use of alcohol or drugs. Addiction is a complex brain disorder that’s characterized by compulsive substance use despite harmful consequences. It causes long-lasting chemical changes in your brain.

Not everyone who drinks alcohol or uses drugs is addicted to substances. Addiction occurs when the substance becomes so crucial that you’re willing to risk important areas of your life such as relationships, career, or financial stability. Addiction causes changes to your mind and body that weaken your ability to resist alcohol or drugs.

Addiction, including chemical dependency, is a disease, but it is treatable with proper care and support.

### Warning signs include:

- ▶ A craving or strong urge to use the substance, or a great deal of time using or recovering from the effects of the substance
- ▶ Drinking or using drugs on a regular basis
- ▶ Using more of the substance than intended, and eventual need for larger amounts of substance to get the same effect
- ▶ Decline in performance, motivation or attendance at work or school, and complaints from co-workers, supervisors, and teachers
- ▶ Loss of interest in favorite activities and withdrawal from friends and family
- ▶ Legal problems, such as getting arrested for fights, disorderly conduct, domestic disputes, or driving under the influence
- ▶ Getting into dangerous situations, such as mixing alcohol and prescription medications, sexual promiscuity, or driving under the influence
- ▶ Lying about the amount or frequency of drug or alcohol use
- ▶ Changes in personality, attitude or mood, or engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- ▶ Showing symptoms of depression or expressing hopelessness or suicidal thoughts

## Major Mental Health Disorders

### The “4 C’s”

Understanding addiction more deeply can help individuals and their loved ones identify its presence and seek the right resources.

**The “4 C’s” — Craving, Compulsion, Consequences, and Control** — provides a framework for identifying, understanding addiction and its impact on your life.

- ▶ **Craving.** A strong and persistent urge or desire to use the substance, often triggered by thoughts, memories, or environmental cues.
- ▶ **Compulsion.** A feeling of being driven to use the substance, even when you don’t want to, due to an overwhelming need or habit.
- ▶ **Consequences.** Continuing to use the substance despite negative effects on your health, relationships, work, or other areas of life.
- ▶ **Control.** A loss of control over the amount or frequency of substance use, where it becomes difficult to stop even if you try.

### Substance Use Disorder Screening Tool

The [CAGE questionnaire](#) is a 4-question screening tool that mental health professionals may use. Each of the 4 questions of the CAGE questionnaire can be answered with a simple yes or no response.

- ② Have you ever felt you ought to cut down on your drinking or drug use?
- ② Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking or drug use?
- ② Have you felt bad or guilty about your drinking or drug use?
- ② Have you ever had a drink or used drugs first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (eye-opener)?

This screening tool is not a substitute for a clinical evaluation and cannot provide an actual diagnosis. If feelings persist or worsen, please consider contacting a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.



# Major Mental Health Disorders

## Local Community Substance Abuse Programs

Accessing the right treatment program is a vital step in the recovery journey. Below are local resources that can help.

▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)

Provides an evening outpatient twelve-week program that offers expert care and support for adults seeking help for a substance-use disorder or chemical dependency.

▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services:](#)

→ [South County Clinic](#)

→ [Alexian Clinic](#)

→ [Central Valley Clinic](#)

▶ [Parisi House on the Hill](#)

The residential treatment center helps to break the cycle of addiction for mothers and their children by providing counseling, education, support, child development services and a safe place to live while they rebuild their lives.

▶ [Pathway Society](#)

Provides two residential inpatient treatment facilities, each committed to providing quality care for adults who are chemically dependent.

→ **Pathway House**

→ **Pathway Mariposa Lodge**

Women only treatment facility.

When selecting a substance abuse treatment program, look for programs that are accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF is considered to be the premier accrediting body for rehabilitation programs.

[Learn more](#) and [find programs accredited through CARF](#).

# Major Mental Health Disorders

## Schizophrenia Spectrum

It isn't known what causes schizophrenia. But researchers believe that a mix of genetics, brain chemistry, and environment can play a part.

Schizophrenia is a serious mental health disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts. People with schizophrenia may have trouble distinguishing what is real and what is not, be disconnected from reality, and have difficulty expressing normal emotions in social situations.

Schizophrenia is not the same as having a split personality or multiple personalities. The vast majority of people with schizophrenia are not violent and do not pose a danger to others. Schizophrenia is not caused by childhood experiences, poor parenting, or lack of willpower, nor are the symptoms identical for each person.

### Early warning signs of schizophrenia include:

- ▶ Hearing or seeing something that isn't there
- ▶ A constant feeling of being watched
- ▶ Peculiar or nonsensical way of speaking or writing
- ▶ Strange body positioning
- ▶ Feeling indifferent to very important situations
- ▶ Deterioration of academic or work performance
- ▶ A change in personal hygiene and appearance
- ▶ A change in personality
- ▶ Increasing withdrawal from social situations
- ▶ Irrational, angry, or fearful response to loved ones
- ▶ Inability to sleep or concentrate
- ▶ Inappropriate or bizarre behavior
- ▶ Extreme preoccupation with religion or the occult

**Anyone who experiences several of these symptoms for more than two weeks should seek help immediately.**

# Major Mental Health Disorders

## Other Mental Health Disorders

### Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Frequent, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) lead to repetitive behaviors or rituals (compulsions) to control these thoughts. Without treatment, OCD can severely impact a person's ability to live, work, relate, focus, and think. OCD may occur with other mental health disorders, making professional diagnosis and treatment essential.

[Learn more from the National Institute of Mental Health.](#)

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

After living through or seeing a traumatic event, fear and anxiety continues after the danger is over. Like all mental health disorders, PTSD has a wide range of symptoms. Some studies suggest that Asian Americans may express or experience PTSD differently from non-Asian Americans. Many Asian Americans have traumatic experiences such as being a refugee, experiencing war, accidents, imprisonment, domestic violence, gang fights, cultural revolution, poverty, discrimination, hate crimes, arrests, or bullying. People of different ages can develop PTSD. Professional treatment and consultation are necessary for the person with PTSD and their families.

[Learn more from the National Institute of Mental Health.](#)

### Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are serious and may be fatal illnesses associated with severe disturbances in eating behaviors and related thoughts and emotions. Preoccupation with food, body weight, body shape and counting calories signal an eating disorder. Common eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating. Eating disorders are not a lifestyle choice. They are serious, difficult to treat, and have long-term health consequences.

[Learn more from the National Institute of Mental Health.](#)

[Learn more about other mental health disorders from the National Institute of Mental Health.](#)

## How Are Mental Health Disorders Treated?

Many effective treatments are available, and your mental health professional will work with you to determine the best one or combination of treatments for your needs. Some treatments include psychotherapy, group therapy, medication, and brain stimulation therapy. Auxiliary approaches, such as physical activity, lifestyle changes, nutrition, and traditional practices like acupuncture, yoga, breathing exercises, and meditation, can also be beneficial.



### When exploring treatment options, keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Recovery is a journey that requires time, adjustment, and rebuilding.
- ▶ There are a lot of myths and stigma related to mental health treatment. Seek accurate information from qualified providers.
- ▶ Discuss multiple treatment options and alternative approaches with your provider.
- ▶ Don't hesitate to seek second opinions or request a reassessment of your condition.
- ▶ Different courses of treatment may be tried to determine the most effective one.
- ▶ All medications have side effects.
- ▶ Your provider values feedback about your progress. If you aren't improving, share your concerns so adjustments can be made. Remember, a good provider will support you without blame.

# How Are Mental Health Disorders Treated?

## Treatment Options

A wide range of effective treatments is available for most mental health disorders, often involving a combination of psychotherapy and medication.

### Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is a form of treatment for mental health conditions provided by a trained mental health professional. There are many evidence based treatments, including:

- ▶ **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)**
- ▶ **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**
- ▶ **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**
- ▶ **Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)**
- ▶ **Brief Psychodynamic Therapy**
- ▶ **Interpersonal Therapy**
- ▶ **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

Many therapists are skilled in more than one treatment method. You are encouraged to ask your therapist questions about what approaches they are using and their plan for your situation.

Click here to learn more from the American Psychological Association about [different approaches to therapies](#).

Different types of therapy can be used depending on the specific disorder.

These include:

- ▶ **Individual Therapy**  
Involves one-on-one sessions between the client and the therapist.
- ▶ **Group Therapy**  
Two or more clients participate in therapy together.
- ▶ **Marital/Couples Therapy**  
This type of therapy can address relationship difficulties and help couples improve communication and solve problems. Couples therapy can help spouses and partners understand the mental health challenges their loved one is facing.
- ▶ **Family Therapy**  
Supports family members in understanding their loved one's condition, coping strategies, and ways they can provide help. Also, it's a way for families to improve communication, reduce conflict and resolve complex problems among family members.



## How Are Mental Health Disorders Treated?



### Tool Box: Understanding What Therapy Is

#### How Can “Talking” Therapy Help?

Therapeutic talk is a specialized skill requiring rigorous training. It’s vastly different from casual conversations, offering targeted guidance that helps individuals organize their thought process and develop coping skills to address specific life challenges.

#### Seeking a Coach

Just like athletes rely on coaches to improve their performance, therapists can act as “life coaches” to help you improve your emotional and mental well-being, regardless of where you are in life.

#### Upgrading Your “Life Software”

Just as people upgrade their computers to run efficiently, therapy can help individuals upgrade their life strategies and skills. Therapists, like programming experts, help you “debug” unhealthy thoughts and behaviors while installing new skills and perspectives.

### Support Groups

Support groups consist of individuals with similar experiences who meet regularly to share and discuss their challenges. Being in a group with others who understand your struggles can reduce feelings of isolation and provide practical advice on coping strategies.

### Self-Care/Lifestyle Changes

Research shows that exercise, meditation, and yoga can improve mood and overall well-being. Nutrition and certain supplements can also support brain function and mood. Additionally, self-care, engaging in activities you enjoy, and surrounding yourself with supportive people and environments can have a positive impact on mental health.

For more information about practicing self-care, see Chapter 6.

### Medication

The following are common medications used to treat mental health disorders:

- ▶ **Antidepressants**  
Often prescribed for depression, anxiety disorders, and trauma-related symptoms.
- ▶ **Anti-Anxiety Medications**  
Help reduce symptoms of anxiety, such as panic attacks, extreme fear, or excessive worry.
- ▶ **Antipsychotics**  
Primarily used to treat symptoms of psychosis but may also be prescribed for major depression and bipolar disorder.
- ▶ **Mood Stabilizers**  
Used primarily for treating bipolar disorder.

# Misunderstandings and Questions about Mental Health Treatments

## Common Misunderstandings about Mental Health Treatments

Misinformation	Fact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I have to take medication. Once I start medication, I will have to stay on for the rest of my life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This depends on your diagnosis and severity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I should feel better after the first treatment meeting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You may feel better, worse, or notice no change after the first treatment meeting. You may also feel informed, confused, hopeful, anxious, or uncertain. All of these are normal responses and offer valuable insights for your therapist.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Therapy is about blaming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Therapy is about identifying tools, changes, skills, and both inner and external resources that help you achieve your goals. Therapists understand that blaming does not help and will assist you in building skills and a mindset to move beyond self-blame and blaming others.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Talking does not help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Therapeutic talk is very different from regular talk. Research has provided robust support for the effectiveness of talk therapy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I will scare or overwhelm the therapist with my problems or issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Therapists are trained to handle and collaborate on complex issues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I will have to tell them everything.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Your therapist will help you decide what to share and at a pace that feels healing for you.</li> </ul>

*Continue reading on the next page.*

# Misunderstandings and Questions about Mental Health Treatments

## Common Misunderstandings about Mental Health Treatments

Misinformation	Fact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Therapy will make me change my behaviors and values as a Chinese American.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is important to find a therapist who respects and understands your culture and values without judgment. Because behaviors and values differ widely, your therapist will help you stay true to yourself while adopting new skills to enhance your mental health.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I will find out that I am not good enough or it is really my fault.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Therapists will help you learn effective thinking styles and self-compassion, which will lead to lasting changes and help you become the person you want to be.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Treatment cannot change the past.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Very true. However, through treatment, you can reduce how the past negatively impacts your present and future life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I will just think differently on my own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are likely to have tried this for a long time. Therapists can provide structured guidance to enhance your efforts so you will find ways to change your thinking through your own efforts and practice.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Therapists will just say things to make me happy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Effective therapy focuses on constructive support, not superficial comfort.</li> </ul>

# Misunderstandings and Questions about Mental Health Treatments

## Does Therapy Help Treat Mental Health Disorders?

Therapy is effective for treating a wide range of mental health conditions. In some cases, it can be as effective as, or even more effective than, medication. A combination of psychotherapy and medication is often the most effective treatment.

Research found that successful psychotherapy can help restore brain activity to levels resembling those of healthy individuals, especially in people with obsessive-compulsive disorder or depression.<sup>1</sup>

## What Happens in Therapy?

The process of therapy varies based on the professional you're working with. A good mental health professional will:

- ▶ Understand your needs and goals by actively listening
- ▶ Respect your boundaries and maintain professionalism
- ▶ Encourage questions and inform you about the therapeutic process, treatment options, and realistic expectations
- ▶ Obtain your consent regarding the treatment approach, fees, and other details

## How Soon Can Mental Health Issues Improve with Therapy?

Improvements vary depending on the issue and individual. Some people see improvements within days or weeks, while for others, it may take longer.

## Will What I Say in Therapy Be Confidential?

In most cases, yes. Confidentiality is crucial for building trust and creating a safe environment for therapy. However, there are exceptions, such as cases involving child or elder abuse, or threats to an individual where professionals are legally required to report information.



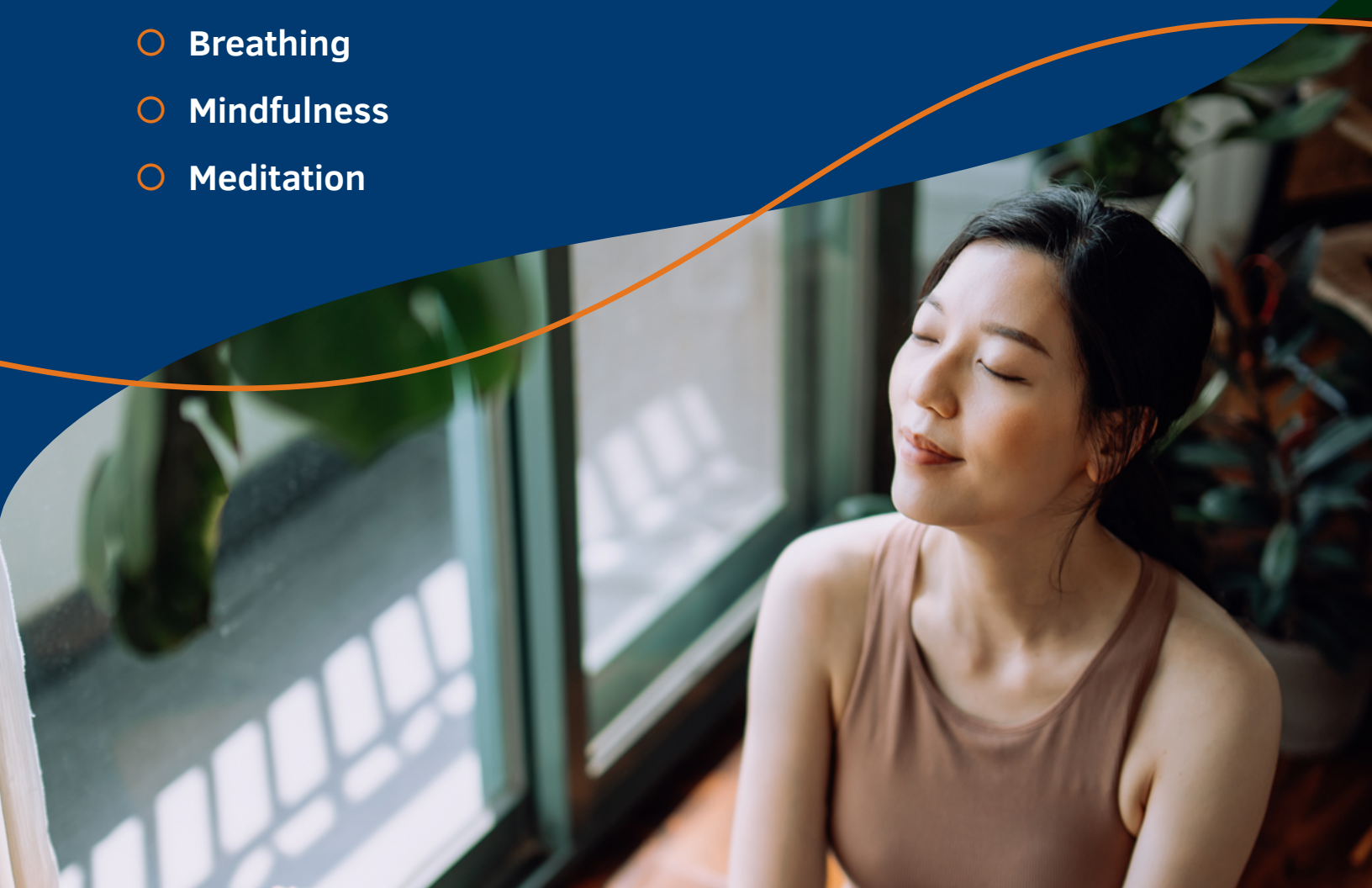
1: Etkin, A., Pittenger, C., Polan, H. J., & Kandel, E. R. (2005). Toward a neurobiology of psychotherapy: basic science and clinical applications. *The Journal of neuropsychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 17(2), 145 -158. <https://doi.org/10.1176/jnp.17.2.145>

## Chapter 4

# Managing Stress and Anxiety

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- Understanding Stress
- Strategies for Managing Stress
- Special Considerations for Chinese Americans
- Understanding Anxiety
- How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods
  - Breathing
  - Mindfulness
  - Meditation





## Understanding Stress

Everyone experiences stress. It refers to the physical and mental reactions to perceived internal or external challenges known as stressors. Any change in our environment can create stress. There are significant stressors such as worry about a sick parent, a child's problems in school, acclimating to a different culture and more. Even minor adjustments like a job promotion, a move, travel, holiday preparations, or everyday inconveniences like a jammed printer or disconnected Wi-Fi, can create stress as we adjust to the situation.

### Stress Responses Vary by Individual

Our responses to stress differ from person to person, varying in duration, intensity, and symptoms. While one person may react strongly to a particular stressor, another might barely notice it.

### Stress: A Natural Response

When we encounter stressors, our bodies and minds activate a series of responses to help us manage challenges or changes.

### Common Physical, Mental, and Emotional Stress Responses

Stress can manifest through a range of emotional and physiological symptoms, including:

- ▶ Dry mouth or chills
- ▶ Racing thoughts
- ▶ Fear, avoidance, or lack of motivation
- ▶ Difficulty focusing
- ▶ Sweating and an increased heart rate
- ▶ Fluctuations in blood pressure
- ▶ Muscle tension
- ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Headaches or body aches
- ▶ Digestive discomfort

### Is Stress Good or Bad?

Stress, whether caused by positive or negative events, impacts us depending on its duration, nature, severity, and context.

#### ▶ **Short-term stress**

Research suggests that brief periods of stress can sometimes enhance performance.<sup>1</sup>

#### ▶ **Chronic stress**

Prolonged stress disrupts nearly all bodily functions. The American Psychological Association identifies chronic stress as a risk factor for numerous physical and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and memory impairment.

Given these risks, managing stress effectively is crucial for overall well-being.



To learn more, watch this video on [Stress-Reduction](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Strategies for Managing Stress

Here are some strategies to help manage everyday stress.

### Identify Triggers and Responses

Identifying your stressors, which can be people, changes in your surroundings, work issues, or too many demands (stressors may be different for each person) can help you either avoid them or develop strategies to reduce their impact. Paying attention to and recognizing signs of “stressing out,” such as reaching for comfort foods or excessive phone use, can prompt you to take steps to reduce that particular stressor.

### Step Away and Take a Break

When feeling stressed, it may be helpful to step away from the situation when possible. This could be done both physically and psychologically, such as engaging in another activity or exiting the conversation or situation.

### Count to Ten

Slowly counting from one to ten in a calm voice can help you regulate your reaction to stress. Pairing this with deep breaths or visualizing the numbers can be especially grounding. This simple act can help you assess if your reactions change and regain control. See [How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods](#) to learn other breathing techniques such as box breathing.

### Move Your Body

There's a strong connection between your emotional and physical condition. Stretching and moving your body helps relieve tension and improve mental clarity.

### Shift Your Perspective

Sometimes stress stems from how we interpret situations. Shifting your perspective can help you avoid unnecessary stress. Reframe your perspective by asking yourself, “How will I feel about this in 10 hours, 10 days, 10 months, or 10 years from now?” This can help you focus on what truly matters. Strategies such as cognitive reappraisal or reframing can help shift your perspective, enabling you to view life's challenges differently — not by expecting the worst, but by recognizing your ability to navigate these difficulties. The goal is to avoid overreacting to negative situations, instead approaching them with a more realistic and constructive mindset. This process involves replacing problematic thought patterns with more positive and helpful ones.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Strategies for Managing Stress

### Make A Connection

Building connections can alleviate stress. Connect with someone, something, or someplace that you cherish or have previously helped you reduce stress in the past. Talking to a trusted friend, journaling, interacting with pets, watering plants, or revisiting cherished memories can help restore a sense of calm.

### Build a Health-Enhancing Lifestyle

Good health is the foundation for stress management. Prioritize regular sleep, physical activity, meaningful relationships, and positive thinking habits to create a foundation for resilience.

### Incorporate Chinese Cultural Ways

Traditional Chinese practices like tai chi, qigong, calligraphy, tea-making, bonsai cultivation, and meditation align closely with modern psychological approaches. Philosophies such as “your experiences are shaped by your thoughts” (境由心生) and “accepting the natural course of events” (順其自然) can provide additional insights for stress management.

### Utilize Technology

Apps and AI tools can be valuable resources for stress management. Many health insurance plans, workplaces, and schools provide free access to premium wellness apps. Calm or the Mindfulness Coach app provided by Veterans Affairs, for example, offers evidence-based techniques for reducing stress. See [How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods](#) for other app resources.

You can also ask AI tools to help you cope with stress caused by a specific situation. For example, “I am stressed about my deadline, can you make a worksheet to guide and help me reduce stress now?”

### Deep Breathing

Research shows deep breathing activates stress-reducing hormones and provides immediate relief. Experiment with different breathing styles to find what works best for you. See [How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods](#) to learn different breathing techniques.



## Special Considerations for Chinese Americans

### Workplace Expectations

Many Chinese Americans grow up with values emphasizing hard work and personal responsibility, which can contribute to workplace stress. Open communication, such as asking colleagues or managers, “What defines a job well done?” for a task or assignment, can clarify expectations and reduce misunderstandings and stress.

### Communication Styles

Chinese cultural norms, such as avoiding questions to show respect, may differ from workplace practices in the U.S., where open dialogue and active participation are often encouraged. Adapting to different communication styles and work cultures can enhance professional and personal interactions. You can find coaches and classes that provide more guidance and tools in this area.



### Time Management

Planning and writing tasks down are the first steps to managing time. Other essential skills needed for effectively managing time include setting boundaries, reviewing and clarifying priorities, asking for support or delegating.

### Take a Break

Breaks range from taking a deep breath to a vacation. Our mind and body need breaks to regroup, recover, and adjust. Some studies show that the effects of small breaks on our health and stress reduction may have cumulative effects. Therefore, take mini breaks (e.g., take several deep breaths, practice mini-mindfulness, get some water, rotate your joints, take a 5-minute walk, do a couple stretches) when you do not have time to take a longer break. It will likely refresh your mind and body to help you to move toward your goals.

### Addressing Discrimination

Research shows that discrimination negatively impacts health, yet many Chinese Americans often chose to avoid, disengage, and ignore discrimination.<sup>2</sup> Based on current research, seeking professional help, seeking emotional support, attending spiritual or religious activities are effective ways to manage this stress. It may also help you to know what actions to take to protect yourself in different settings.

**For more information addressing discrimination, see Chapter 2.**

## Understanding Anxiety

According to the American Psychological Association, anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worry, unease, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

There are many causes of anxiety, including:

- ▶ **Stress.** Various sources of stress including family tension, workload, and worry about finances can lead to anxiety.
- ▶ **Personality.** For example, perfectionists who set very high standards for themselves are more prone to anxiety.
- ▶ **Traumatic experiences.** Resolved trauma may still cause stress and anxiety.
- ▶ **Health conditions.** Anxiety may arise due to health concerns.
- ▶ **Major life events.** Changes in the family or workplace can trigger anxiety.
- ▶ **Side effects of certain medications**
- ▶ **Genetic factors**

Often, anxiety is not caused by a single factor but by a combination of multiple factors. We may not always be able to pinpoint the exact cause of anxiety, but it's more important to continuously help ourselves face and alleviate it.

Stress and anxiety are closely related but distinct experiences. Stress typically arises from a clear source or trigger, activating the "fight, flight, fawn, or freeze" response. Its effects can mimic anxiety, such as feelings of worry or physical symptoms

like headaches. Anxiety, however, often lacks a specific trigger and may stem from various sources such as uncertainty about the future. While stress can lead to anxiety, and their symptoms may overlap, their underlying causes and physiological responses are different.

When experiencing anxiety, the following symptoms may occur:

- ▶ **Behavioral**  
Restlessness, procrastination, avoidance of social interactions
- ▶ **Physical**  
Insomnia, changes in appetite, headaches, muscle tension, or sweating
- ▶ **Emotional**  
Feelings of tension, worry, panic, and irritability
- ▶ **Cognitive**  
Worries about the future or fear of not being able to accomplish certain tasks

Among the symptoms for anxiety, behavioral and physical symptoms are the most noticeable. Every aspect of anxiety is interconnected. Thoughts, emotions, physical reactions, and behaviors are tightly linked. Releasing anxiety is often easier by addressing behaviors or thoughts. For example, by relaxing the body, changing behavioral patterns, or challenging negative thoughts, we can interrupt this loop.

**Continue reading for a method to manage anxiety by addressing its interconnected components.**



## Understanding Anxiety

### The ABC Approach to Managing Anxiety

#### Awareness

When you feel anxious, the first step is to become aware of the source for that emotion.

#### Breathing

The next step is deep breathing exercises, such as box breathing or counting breaths.

##### Box Breathing

This method has recently gained popularity and is used by U.S. special forces to maintain calm under pressure. The exercise can be adjusted by breathing duration as you become more skilled.

1. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably, with your back straight.
2. Keep your eyes open or closed.
3. Start by inhaling, 1-2-3-4 count, holding your breath, 1-2-3-4 count, exhaling, 1-2-3-4 count, and holding your breath, 1-2-3-4 count again.

Repeat the process several times, and you'll notice your body gradually relaxing. This practice signals your body that even when you feel anxious, you can relax. When we perceive a threat, the body sends tension signals, but breathing exercises can reassure us that the threat is gone, and we are safe.

See [\*\*How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods\*\*](#) for other breathing techniques.



## Understanding Anxiety

### The ABC Approach to Managing Anxiety

#### Choose

The final key point is to choose what you can control. Although the first two steps are important, research shows that real change in the brain occurs at this step — choosing the part you can control. This is the behavioral choice. Ask yourself what can be controlled and what cannot, rather than expecting or demanding others to change.

*In Chinese culture, discussing emotional issues is often less common, and admitting to anxiety might be personally perceived as a sign of weakness. However, this is a common misconception.*

Confucius, known for his teachings on balance, wisdom, and self-reflection, emphasized the importance of understanding and managing one's emotions in a thoughtful and harmonious way.

*A Chinese culturally advocated and congruent way to face anxiety is to acknowledge it and choose to react in a balanced, wise, or effective way.*

Anxiety is a normal emotion, and it signals us to take actions to manage it.

#### Anxiety Screening Tool

The [Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 \(GAD-7\)](#) is a 7-question tool that can help you assess symptoms of anxiety disorder. The second page contains instructions on how to interpret your score. The [Chinese version](#) is available.

This screening tool is not a substitute for a clinical evaluation and cannot provide an actual diagnosis. If feelings persist or worsen, please consider contacting a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.



To learn more, watch this video on [Understanding Anxiety](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.



## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

A technique to help relax your body is **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**. This method can help you relax when you are feeling anxious, which can also help with sleep. This exercise involves progressively tensing and relaxing muscle groups from your hands and arms to other parts of the body, noticing the transition from tension to relaxation.

If you feel uncomfortable during the exercise, you can stop at any time. Be mindful of your body and avoid overstretching or exerting too much force. As you relax each muscle group, you'll gradually feel a sense of full-body relaxation.

### Breathing

Breathing is the bridge between the body and mind. Breathing exercises can relax the body and mind, enhance self-awareness, and help us connect with our inner selves.

Listen to your body first. Typically, when we're tense or stressed, our shoulders tend to rise. During breathing exercises, try to relax your shoulders as much as possible. While practicing, focus on keeping your shoulders relaxed and noticing your physical and mental state.

Here are some breathing techniques to promote relaxation. You can try different methods to find what works best for you. If you feel dizzy or experience any discomfort while practicing, stop and discuss with your doctor to check your physical condition.



## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

### Diaphragmatic (Abdominal) Breathing

Most people breathe from their chest, especially when stressed, leading to short, rapid breaths. Practicing abdominal breathing can help return your body to a calm state.

**1. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.**

In abdominal breathing, the abdomen expands first as the diaphragm moves down, pushing the belly outward.

**2. Inhale.**

Slowly and gently take a deep breath, allowing fresh air to fill your lungs.

**3. Pause briefly.**

**4. Exhale.**

Slowly release your breath, imagining your shoulders sliding down and exhaling any tension or discomfort.

**5. Normal Breathing.**

After completing this, take a few normal breaths.

**6. Observe.**

Look around, noticing any new light or fresh details, and be aware of how your body feels.

For long-term benefits, practice for at least 20 minutes each day.

To learn more, watch this video on [Diaphragmatic \(Abdominal\) Breathing](#) from Headspace.

### Box Breathing

Box breathing, also known as 4×4×4 box breathing, is a technique that promotes focus and relaxation. Imagine a box or a candle in front of you to help focus.

**1. Inhale.**

Count to 1-2-3-4, inhaling slowly and steadily.

**2. Hold.**

Count to 1-2-3-4, holding your breath, and feeling the stillness in your body.

**3. Exhale.**

Count to 1-2-3-4, slowly exhaling and releasing any tension.

### 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

The 4-7-8 breathing method emphasizes the exhale, which will activate the parasympathetic nervous system and promote relaxation. Many people use it for better sleep.

**1. Inhale.**

Count to 1-2-3-4, slowly inhaling.

**2. Hold.**

Count to 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, holding your breath.

**3. Exhale.**

Slowly exhale, counting to 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8.

# How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

## Mindfulness

### What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining focused awareness on the present moment, without judgment, by calmly acknowledging and accepting one's thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. It emphasizes living in the present and cultivating a state of active attention to current experiences, rather than being caught up in past events or future worries.

Rooted in Buddhist practice, mindfulness was brought into mainstream American culture by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist from MIT. Dr. Kabat-Zinn studied meditation under a Korean Zen master, and while working at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, he developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in 1979 to help patients manage pain and reduce stress. His approach is based on the Buddhist concept that while the body may experience pain, the mind does not have to suffer as a result.

Today, mindfulness is widely used in Western psychology as a powerful tool for promoting mental and physical well-being. At its core, mindfulness is about being aware of the present moment without judgment. By practicing mindfulness, we can change our relationship with our thoughts and emotions.

### Common Misconceptions about Mindfulness

- ▶ Mindfulness is not positive thinking. Positive thinking adds an extra layer of judgment to thoughts, labeling them as positive or negative. Mindfulness, on the other hand, involves stepping away from judgment altogether; it's not about thinking.
- ▶ Mindfulness is not about clearing your mind. It doesn't require you to have no thoughts. While mindfulness can lead to relaxation, its purpose isn't simply to relax. Just relaxing doesn't necessarily mean you're practicing mindfulness.

### How to Practice Mindfulness

**Meditation or Mindful Sitting.** Choose a quiet, undisturbed space with soft lighting. Practice body scans or focus on your breathing. Read more below for how to do body scans.

- ▶ **Mindful Walking**  
Find a safe, flat path about 10-20 feet long, and pay close attention to the sensations in your feet with each step.
- ▶ **Mindfulness in Daily Life**  
Mindfulness can be practiced anywhere and anytime. Whether you're doing yoga, running, walking the dog, grocery shopping, or working, you can focus on being present and aware of the moment.



# How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

## Body Scan

### Prep Yourself

- ▶ Posture. You can sit cross-legged or in a chair. If sitting is uncomfortable, lying down is fine as long as you stay alert.
- ▶ Sit upright without leaning on the chair's back, with your feet planted firmly on the ground. Make sure your knees and toes point in the same direction and keep your hips level with your knees.
- ▶ Take three deep breaths, holding each one briefly before exhaling slowly. As you exhale, relax your shoulders and arms, letting them rest naturally on your thighs or hang loosely at your sides. Tuck your chin slightly and gently close your eyes.

At this point, become aware that your body is present in this space and that it's a living, breathing organism. Notice the natural rhythm of air entering and leaving your body.

### Start the Body Scan

- ▶ Gently shift your attention to the big toe of your left foot, then to your little toe and the three toes in between. What sensations do you feel?
- ▶ Now move your attention to the sole of your foot, feeling the raised and sunken areas, then move up to your left instep, ankle, and heel.
- ▶ Pay attention to each body part, asking if it feels tight or relaxed. As you leave each area, invite it to relax. If relaxation doesn't happen, simply acknowledge the tension and move on.
- ▶ Continue moving your attention up your left calf, knee, thigh, and hip. Then shift to your right foot and scan up your right leg.
- ▶ Eventually, scan the pelvis, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, neck, arms, fingers, face, and head, using the same approach — acknowledging each area without judgment and inviting relaxation where possible.

Once you've completed the body scan, observe how your body feels as a whole. Does any part feel particularly light, heavy, cold, or warm? Are these sensations pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? Simply notice them without judgment.

## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

### End the Body Scan

- ▶ Gently bring your attention back to your breath. Observe the natural rise and fall of your breathing, feeling confident that your body can release tension.
- ▶ After a few breaths, gradually shift your focus back to your surroundings. Rub your palms together until they're warm, then place them over your eyelids, allowing the warmth to sink in.
- ▶ Slowly open your eyes and thank yourself for taking this time to care for your body and mind. This is a gift to yourself.

If you prefer, you can also reverse the body scan from head to toe.

*Adapted from the guided video by Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care (CACCC):*  
[Mindfulness - Body Scan](#)



### Additional Resources for Practicing Mindfulness

#### ▶ Mindful Self-Care Series

The Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care (CACCC) and the Zen Caregiving Project (ZCP), developed a six-week workshop to help individuals experience how to improve overall physical and mental health. The series covers mindfulness, cultivating compassion, self-care, mindful communication, maintaining healthy boundaries, and building resilience through sharing. This training is conducted in Mandarin.

For registration and more information, visit the [CACCC website](#).

- ▶ To learn more, watch these guided videos (in Mandarin) by Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care (CACCC):

[Mindfulness - Body Scan](#)

[Mindfulness - Observing the Breath](#)

[Mindfulness - Cultivating Loving-Kindness](#)

[Mindfulness - The Path to Happiness](#)

# How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

## Meditation

The origins of meditation trace back thousands of years, deeply rooted in various ancient religious and spiritual traditions, primarily in Asia. In Buddhism, which emerged in India around the 6th century BCE, meditation was central to the teachings of the Buddha, who taught meditation as a path to achieving mindfulness, wisdom, and liberation from suffering. Meditation practices also developed independently in China, particularly within Taoism, where meditation aims to cultivate the balance and harmony between body, mind, and spirit, as well as with nature and the universe.

In the West, meditation remained relatively unknown until the 20th century, when Eastern philosophies gained global recognition, leading to a modern, secular approach. Today, meditation is widely practiced around the world, often focusing on mindfulness and mental well-being rather than its original spiritual purposes.

## Scientifically Proven Benefits

Scientific research has documented various benefits of meditation, especially in areas of mental and physical health. Here are some key benefits backed by scientific studies

### Reduce Stress and Anxiety

Meditation can lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce anxiety and help people cope better with stress by promoting a state of relaxation.

### Improve Focus and Attention

Studies indicate that meditation can enhance attention and improve the ability to concentrate. Meditation practices like mindfulness and focused attention help train the brain to maintain focus for longer periods.

### Enhance Emotional Well-Being

Regular meditation can help improve self-image and foster a more positive outlook. Practices such as loving-kindness meditation, which focuses on fostering compassion, are associated with greater feelings of empathy and happiness.

### Promote Cardiovascular Health

Meditation may contribute to heart health by reducing blood pressure, as it activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which relaxes the body. This effect helps reduce strain on the heart and improve overall cardiovascular function.

## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

### Support Immune System Function

Research suggests that meditation may boost immune responses, potentially by reducing stress, which can lower inflammation and improve the body's ability to fight off infections and illnesses.

### Reduce Symptoms of Depression

Some types of meditation, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), are shown to help individuals manage depression symptoms. Meditation can decrease the recurrence of depressive episodes, helping people develop resilience.

### Manage Pain

Meditation has been found to alter the perception of pain by reducing the brain's emotional response to it. People who meditate may experience a decrease in chronic pain symptoms, though they may still be aware of the sensation.

### Slow Aging of the Brain

Regular meditation may help preserve brain function with age. Studies using brain imaging suggest that meditation may slow age-related thinning of the brain, particularly in areas associated with memory and attention.

### Improve Sleep Quality

Meditation can help with falling asleep faster and improving sleep quality by promoting relaxation and reducing insomnia. Meditation techniques focused on breathing or guided imagery can ease tension and promote restful sleep.

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Source: [https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858\\_\\_\\_!!Ljw3zIE-Fw5odGwP!LDztGch2Zvr1x7eL\\_5EhNzzZHEqt7L44oKYu1crk mBtlshOR3qe9qeiE144mNIOuV SXNiSSzM6fI ZZ2mvpI\\$](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858___!!Ljw3zIE-Fw5odGwP!LDztGch2Zvr1x7eL_5EhNzzZHEqt7L44oKYu1crk mBtlshOR3qe9qeiE144mNIOuV SXNiSSzM6fI ZZ2mvpI$)



## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

### Common Misconceptions About Meditation

Many people think meditation is difficult because they believe it requires completely clearing the mind and having no thoughts. However, thinking is a natural function of life, and it's impossible to have no thoughts at all.

In practicing meditation, we train our focus and awareness, allowing us to observe and clearly understand the thoughts and sensations that arise in the body. This way, our body and mind are in harmony with each present moment, naturally leading us to experience the inner joy of life.

### How to Practice Meditation

There are many different methods of meditation. You can use the body scan in the mindfulness section as a meditation method. Another common method of meditation is counting the breath or watching/following the breath.

Although methods and forms vary, they all emphasize first bringing the body and mind to a relaxed, calm, and natural state, then moving from calmness to stillness. It is only in this still, unmoving state that we can truly experience and become aware of our physical and mental condition.

To start meditating, find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. Sit in a relaxed position with your back straight, hands resting gently on your lap or knees.

- ▶ Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths to center yourself, and bring your attention to your breath, noticing the sensation of air moving in and out.
- ▶ As thoughts arise, try not to judge or engage with them. Simply acknowledge them and gently return your focus to your breath.

Begin with a few minutes a day, gradually increasing the time as you become more comfortable. The goal is to develop a habit of bringing awareness and calm to the present moment, which can help you feel more centered, reduce stress, and improve your overall well-being. Remember, meditation is a skill that improves with consistent practice.



To learn more, watch this video of a [Guided Meditation](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.



Here are some offerings of Meditation Classes for Beginners in Mandarin and English:

- ▶ [Dharma Drum Mountain Chan Meditation Center](#)
- ▶ [Chung Tai Zen Center of Sunnyvale](#)



## How to Practice Stress Reduction Methods

### Other Resources

Apps for mindfulness and meditation practice. Some popular options include:

- ▶ [Headspace](#). Offers guided mindfulness and meditation sessions, which can be particularly helpful for those dealing with anxiety.
- ▶ [Insight Timer](#). A free app with a Chinese version, perfect for timing and guided meditation.
- ▶ [Calm](#). Offers guided meditations, soundscapes and stories to help reduce stress, anxiety, and insomnia.
- ▶ [Relax Lite](#). Offers guided breathing and meditation exercises that use calming music to promote relaxation.
- ▶ [Mindfulness Coach](#). A self-guided training program designed to help you understand and adopt a simple mindfulness practice.

### Related Books

- ▶ *Feeling Good and When Panic Attacks* by Stanford psychiatrist Dr. David Burns explore the concepts of mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). These books can help you better understand and accept your thoughts.
- ▶ *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook* by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ [Hoofprint of the Ox by Master Sheng-Yen with Daniel B. Stevenson](#), (Chapter 2: Meditation and the Principles for Training Body and Mind). Available in Chinese.

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## Chapter 5

# Life Skills to Build Resilience and Strong Relationships

- **Managing Emotions**
- **Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating**
- **Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships**
- **Problem-Solving to Resolve Conflicts**
- **Practice Gratitude and Positive Affirmations**



## Managing Emotions

Many of us grew up learning that emotions are bad, irrational, or useless. However, this is far from true. High emotional intelligence (EQ) has been linked to happiness, financial success, and healthier interpersonal relationships.

### Emotions Are Signals

Our body has built-in alarms designed to prompt actions that protect our health. For example, when we touch something hot, we feel pain (the body's signal), we quickly move our hand away (the reaction), and then we may examine the area and apply ice or a soothing cream (individual response). Sensations like pain, itchiness, pressure, heat, or cold serve as signals, alerting us that "something is happening" and urging us to "pay attention."

Emotions are our mind's signals, urging us to notice and address something important. They act as messengers, saying: "There seems to be an obstacle ahead. How should we proceed?"

### What is Emotion Management?

Often, people manage their emotions through denial, withdrawal, substance use, shopping, social media, or overeating. While these strategies provide temporary relief, they can impact your life, relationships, and health.

Managing emotions is like learning a new language: it requires self-awareness, practice, patience, and reflection. The process involves three key steps:

1. **Recognize the signals/emotions.**
2. **Gain skills to appraise the signals.**
3. **Choose and practice responses that enhance health and relationships.**

For example, if someone yells at you in an airport:

1. **Recognize.** Notice an increased heart rate and tense muscles, signaling irritation, anger, or confusion; e.g., "I feel angry, disrespected, and confused."
2. **Appraise.** Take a deep breath and survey the situation: "Do I need to engage further? What outcome do I want? Do I know how to respond constructively?"
3. **Choose How to Respond.** You might choose to walk away, communicate boundaries ("Please lower your voice; loudness distracts me from understanding you."), or take calming breaths.

For Chinese Americans, managing emotions can significantly impact career growth and family dynamics. Many find it challenging to express positive emotions such as love, respect, and support, or to manage less desired emotions. The model minority myth can also impact how Chinese American's emotions are perceived and interpreted by others when expressed.<sup>1</sup>

# Managing Emotions

## Common Myths About Emotions



### MYTH

*Having emotions means I'm not mature.*



### FACT

Having emotions is natural. How we choose to manage our emotions reflects and enhances our emotional maturity.



### MYTH

*Emotions are irrational.*



### FACT

Emotions serve as signals and the intensity is influenced by the situation, past experiences, and physical/mental health.

Effective management requires thoughtful appraisal, such as: "Why am I angrier with Kelly than with my sister for similar behavior?" or "I know I will be more irritated when I am hungry or didn't get enough sleep."



### MYTH

*Emotions always reflect how I truly feel.*



### FACT

Just like a smoke alarm can be triggered by a fire or the aroma of delicious popcorn chicken, emotional signals often arise from a combination of thoughts, feelings, past experiences, and current health.



### MYTH

*There are "right" or "wrong" emotions.*



### FACT

Every emotion is a signal, and different people react in different ways. No emotion is inherently right or wrong.



To learn more, watch this video on [Emotion Management](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating

Everyone talks, but it takes knowledge, learning, and self-awareness to truly “communicate.” In a multicultural society, adaptive communication skills are essential for building relationships, navigating life, and functioning effectively. Below are key mindsets and actions for becoming an adaptive communicator.

### Focus on the task and objective, avoiding personal attacks or dwelling on past incidents

For example, instead of saying, “Why are you so lazy? I’ve told you three times, and you still don’t get it!” consider saying, “This needs to be completed by Wednesday at noon, or I will need to escalate/leave/make the decision on my own.”

### Communicate to understand, not to advise, criticize, or judge

In Chinese cultures, behavior like comparison, giving advice, and evaluation are often motivated by a desire to help others. However, in today’s context, a more effective way to support and uplift those around us includes:

- ▶ Avoiding comparisons
- ▶ Offering advice only when asked or with permission
- ▶ Listening to understand, not to debate

For example, instead of saying, “Sam’s wife earns more money than you; you should learn from her” (a comment likely to spark conflict), you might say, “I feel sad seeing you being treated unfairly” or “I know how hard you work.”

### Communicating appreciation, interest, and validation is needed for building relationships

In Chinese cultures, agreement and support are often conveyed through silence, while asking questions might be perceived as disrespectful or as challenging the speaker. However, in many contexts, “not talking” can be misinterpreted as protest, disapproval, disinterest, or judgment — especially among friends, colleagues, or across generations.

To strengthen connections and communication skills, practice expressing appreciation and gratitude, asking questions respectfully (rather than in an interrogative manner), and using active listening to show interest. Additionally, acknowledge areas of agreement, even if they are small. These practices will help you broaden your ability to connect and communicate effectively with others.

*Continue reading on the next page.*



## Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating

### Communicate your intention and objectives

Cultures evolve, so what we consider normal may be interpreted differently in various contexts. For example, a Chinese parent may ask, "Have you eaten?" to express care, but their child might respond, "I'm upset, and all you care about is whether I'm hungry!" Similarly, at work, you might smile out of nervousness, but a coworker may interpret it as a smirk.

Therefore, it's important to practice clearly communicating your intentions. While it may feel awkward at first, doing so is essential for building trust and connection in our multicultural society.

### Practice the "15-second rule"

In appropriate situations, after speaking or asking a question, pause for at least 15 seconds before responding. This moment of silence can convey respect, trust, patience, and care, especially in challenging conversations. It also provides space for the other person to share their thoughts.

### Check for accurate understanding

In community-oriented cultures, people often avoid asking clarifying questions or interrupting others during conversations. However, taking the time to verify understanding demonstrates respect such as the Chinese saying "孔子入太廟，每事問。"



### Practice clear and concise communication

A common misconception about clear and concise communication is that it's "not nice." While being nice is important, it should come after ensuring communication is respectful, clear, easy to understand, and accurate.

### Exercise additional caution when using digital communication

Research shows that email communications can often come across as "meaner" than verbal exchanges. Digital communication is more prone to misinterpretation compared to verbal communication.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating

### When possible, choose to communicate when we are in a “good enough” state

Making decisions, showing empathy, listening, and communicating all require physical and mental effort. Therefore, we are more likely to make communication mistakes when we are tired, emotionally overwhelmed, unclear about the situation, or uncertain in our responses, compared to when we are centered, clear-minded, calm, and confident in our answers.

### Set boundaries with abusive, aggressive, and discriminatory communication

Chinese cultures often emphasize the value of reflecting on what we might have done to contribute to another person’s behavior. While this may be suitable in a community-oriented culture where that is the norm, in today’s society, behaviors that are abusive, aggressive, or discriminatory are boundary-crossing, hurtful and disrespectful. See [Healthy Relationships Start with Boundary Setting](#) to learn more.



### To build relationships, maintain the 5:1 relationship ratio

In Chinese cultures, as in many other cultures worldwide, there is a belief that complimenting children or others might bring bad luck, encourage laziness, or make them self-centered. People also avoid being seen as insincere or overly flattering. A culturally congruent alternative may be the concept of “嘉勉” identifying strengths and offering encouragement, replacing “稱讚” compliments with a 5:1 magic ratio. According to relationship researcher John Gottman, this means that for every negative feeling or interaction between people, there must be five positive feelings or interactions.



To learn more, watch this video on [Effective Communication](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

### Useful Resources

- ▶ [30 Questions to Ask Your Kids Instead of “How Was Your Day”](#)
- ▶ [How to Say No to Taking on More Work](#)
- ▶ *4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication* by Bento C. Leal III
- ▶ *Just Listen* by Mark Goulston
- ▶ *The Relationship Cure* by John Gottman

## Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships

In Chinese cultures, the concept of “boundary” often carries a strong connotation of “rejection,” such as the saying, “the water in a well does not invade a river.” (井水不犯河水). Combined with community-oriented values, the idea of setting boundaries can be unfamiliar and challenging for Chinese Americans.

### What Are Interpersonal Boundaries and Why Are They Important?

Boundaries are essential for maintaining a sense of self, ensuring safety, and preserving our well-being. Setting boundaries is not about rejection. It is about respecting our own limitations and preferences at a given time.

For instance, if a store tells us they are out of eggs, we don’t interpret it as the store “rejecting” or “disliking” us. Similarly, when we say, “I don’t have the capacity to help you right now,” it isn’t rejection; it’s simply communicating our current capacity and resources.

Having healthy boundaries is a foundation for healthy relationships. It helps us determine if those around us can hear, understand, and respect our needs and limitations. Setting boundaries also allows us to assess our capacity (e.g., “What is my capacity at this moment?”) and practice advocating for our needs, such as space, rest, support, respect, understanding, and resources.

### What are Healthy Interpersonal Boundaries?

Healthy boundaries have the following core characteristics:

- ▶ Dynamic, contextual, self-respecting, communicated, self-aware, evolving and clear. They foster healthy relationships.
- ▶ Acknowledging that each person has different definitions and expectations of boundaries and healthy relationships does not necessarily mean that having a healthy relationship is “conflict-free” or “close.”

### Additional Considerations for Healthy Boundaries for Chinese Americans

- ▶ **Respect Among Family Members.** Maintaining family ties while expressing individual needs without guilt or fear of rejection.
- ▶ **Emotional Interdependence.** Recognizing that personal emotions and choices are valid, even if they differ from cultural or familial expectations. Support and resources are available, but individuals are encouraged to prioritize self-care. Blaming should be avoided.
- ▶ **Clear Communication.** Openly and respectfully discussing needs and expectations with family members to avoid misunderstandings.
- ▶ **Self-Care.** Prioritizing mental and emotional well-being while balancing responsibilities.

# Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships

## Key Steps in Building Healthy Boundaries

### Recognize and Communicate that Boundary Setting is the Foundation for Caring and Building Connection

- ▶ Healthy boundaries are tools to prevent burnout, build trust, and establish and maintain relationships.
- ▶ View boundaries as agreements, capacity, temporary principles, and mutual respect.

### Self-Awareness

- ▶ Understand your capacity, stressors, needs, and limits.
- ▶ Reflect on personal values and how they may differ from social and cultural expectations.
- ▶ Use emotions and feelings as signals to adjust your boundaries.

### Communicate Your Needs

- ▶ Consider cultural nuances when expressing boundaries.
- ▶ Communicate with compassion.

### Set Boundaries Gradually

- ▶ Start with small, manageable boundaries to build confidence and trust.

### Seek Support

- ▶ Talking to others can be helpful.
- ▶ Consider consulting with a culturally informed mental health provider, as many other skills are needed to develop, set, and maintain healthy boundaries.





# Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships

## Common Concerns about Boundaries

**“If I set boundaries, people will think I am selfish.”**

Boundary-setting is about communicating our limits to others, not demanding they do what we want. Just like road dividers guide traffic and ensure safety, clear boundaries help maintain relationships and protect well-being, without being considered selfish. Setting and expressing your boundaries is the foundation for building healthy, respectful connections.

**“People may think I am high-maintenance or have high expectations.”**

Remember, setting boundaries is not about demanding others meet your standards; it's about stopping boundary-crossing. This involves clearly communicating your preferences and deciding what you will do (rather than expecting others to change) when your boundaries are not respected. Setting boundaries demonstrates that you are principled, not demanding.

**“People may see me as unfriendly, antisocial, not flexible, too sensitive, or too serious.”**

Yes, no matter what we do, there will always be people who judge or criticize us. However, others may see you as principled, self-respecting, helpful, genuine, or assertive.

By setting boundaries, you gain insight into your relationships. For instance:

- ▶ Does person A only approach you when they need something?
- ▶ Does person B react negatively to a reasonable “no”?
- ▶ Does person C respond positively and respect your boundaries?

**“I don't want to be a mean person by setting boundaries.”**

Boundary-setting is a spectrum of actions that involves various skills. For example, many people learn to say “no” in a warm and friendly manner or set boundaries by gently disengaging.

At times, however, being clear, firm, and assertive may be necessary and this is not mean; it's part of effective boundary-setting.



# Setting Boundaries for Healthy Relationships

## Common Concerns about Boundaries

### **“But I don’t want to make others feel bad.”**

You are not responsible for others’ emotional reactions to reasonable boundaries. Emotionally mature individuals may temporarily feel embarrassed or disappointed but will view your boundary-setting as helpful information rather than a personal attack. For example, if you’re already committed to an event and don’t want to add another to your calendar, you can simply say, “I’ve already accepted another invitation, and I’m sorry I can’t attend.”

### **“If I do it right, I only need to set boundaries once. Or, if people don’t respect my boundaries, I must have done it wrong.”**

This is unlikely. People often need multiple repetitions to learn and remember new things. It may take even more time for them to adjust their behavior and consistently respect your boundaries.

### **“But I can’t set boundaries at work!”**

There may be situations at work where you can’t establish your ideal boundaries. However, you can start in areas where you do have some control. Boundaries can include psychological, personal, spatial, or interactional aspects. For instance:

- ▶ If you cannot decline a project, you might say: “Would you mind reviewing the seven projects I’m currently handling and help me prioritize to make room for this new one?”
- ▶ If checking emails during vacations is unavoidable, you could let your team know you’ll check emails only between specific hours.

Remember, boundary-setting is a skill that takes time and practice to master. Consulting with a coach or mental health provider can help you develop and refine these skills.



To learn more, watch this video on [Boundary Setting](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Problem-Solving to Resolve Conflicts

Resolving conflicts requires awareness, knowledge, and the practice of a specific set of skills. For Chinese Americans, cultural heritage beliefs about “conflicts” and the appropriate ways to resolve them can significantly influence conflict management approaches. Below are some key skills to consider. However, please note that in workplace settings, certain skills may be less effective or more challenging to apply.

### Focus on the goals

The objective is to resolve the conflict. Often, people remain entrenched in conflict because they may not recognize that their underlying goals could include one or more of the following: proving they are wrong, changing the other person, doing things my way because it's better, finding the best solution, letting you know how much you hurt me, making the other person agree with me, or proving I'm smarter.

### Be mindful about cultural contexts

For Chinese Americans, understanding a broad spectrum of communication styles and cultural nuances is essential for conflict resolution. For instance, values like harmony (和) and face-saving (面子) might be pivotal in one situation but not in another. The degree of directness in communication often depends on the specific context.

### Active listening

This is fundamental to resolving conflicts. Demonstrate attentiveness through nonverbal cues such as nodding or maintaining appropriate eye contact. Paraphrase or summarize what the other person has said to ensure understanding and avoid interrupting.

### Manage emotions

If your emotions start overwhelming your thoughts and logic, take a moment to pause. Use techniques like deep breathing to recenter yourself and approach the conflict with a calm and clear mindset.

### Be kind, but set boundaries

Communicate empathy and understanding, but firmly establish boundaries against behaviors like blaming (“You did this.” “This is your fault.”), name-calling (stupid, idiot, etc.), or threatening behaviors.

### Focus on the issue, not the person

Shift statements from personal blame to address the issue at hand. For example, instead of saying, “You broke the desk,” try “The desk is broken; what can we do?” Similarly, replace “You always forget to lock the door” with “The door is often unlocked; what can we do?”

### Use mediators

If direct resolution feels uncomfortable, consider involving a trusted third party, such as a family elder, mentor, professional mediator, or mental health provider, to facilitate the discussion.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Problem-Solving to Resolve Conflicts

### Choose the right time, place, and length

None of us enjoy lengthy meetings or lectures, and resolving conflicts is even more challenging. Be thoughtful about when, where, and for how long you engage in conflict resolution conversations.

### Start with small agreements

Rather than attempting to resolve everything at once, begin with a manageable agreement. Making significant changes or commitments can be daunting, and our understanding of conflicts often evolves over time. Starting small and scheduling follow-up discussions can ease the process.

### Avoid counterproductive communication styles

Steer clear of the following during conflict resolution and everyday interactions:

- ▶ "You should" statements
- ▶ Comparisons
- ▶ Mind-reading (assuming you know what someone else is thinking)
- ▶ Judgmental language
- ▶ Absolutes such as "always," "never"



## Problem-Solving to Resolve Conflicts

### Special Notes for Chinese American Parents

Family dynamics play a significant role in the mental health of Chinese Americans. Below are specific actions parents can take to reduce generational conflicts.

- ▶ Stop saying *"You should"* and try saying *"I prefer/hope..."*
- ▶ Avoid comparisons, focus on effort and practices
- ▶ Stop saying *"I am disappointed in you."* and try saying *"It must be really difficult for you..."*
- ▶ Stop saying *"I sacrificed everything for you."* and try saying, *"You are very important to me."*
- ▶ Stop predicting the future or assuming thoughts; instead, start being curious and listen actively.
- ▶ Build the "relationship bank." Make deposits instead of withdrawing from the "relationship bank" by increasing positive interactions (validation, laughter, active listening, acts of kindness) and minimizing negative ones (criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling).
- ▶ Remember, physical punishment teaches fear and anxiety, while guidance, encouragement, and problem-solving teaches love, courage, and support.
- ▶ Use text or emoji to communicate *"I love you," "I am proud of you,"* or *"I am sorry."*



To learn more, watch these videos conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative on

- ▶ [Pitfalls to Avoid in Parent-Child Communication](#)
- ▶ [Bridging the Generation Gap](#)
- ▶ [Nurturing Adolescent Emotions: A Parent's Guide](#)



## Practice Gratitude and Positive Affirmations

### Why Practice Gratitude?

Practicing gratitude has positive effects on mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It can enhance focus, foster positive emotions, improve relationship satisfaction, and sleep.

Gratitude holds significant value in Chinese culture, as reflected in phrases like “thank the sky, thank the ground” (謝天謝地) and “when you drink water, think about where it comes from” (飲水思源). However, in today’s consumer-driven “more, more” culture, practicing gratitude can be challenging.

### How Do I Practice Gratitude?

You may already practice gratitude in your own way, as it is a deeply personal experience. Regardless of how you approach it, key components of gratitude include a grateful attitude, meaningful reflection, shifting perspective, and consistency.

There is no right way or wrong way to do it, but remember that change takes time, consistency, and practice. Here are ways to build your daily gratitude practice.

### Use a gratitude app, stickers etc

Starting a gratitude journal or practice can feel daunting because you are developing a new habit and mindset. Apps, pre-made gratitude stickers, or AI tools can help you start your journey!

### Start a gratitude journal

Each day, write down 3–5 specific things you are grateful for. For example, instead of writing “food,” write, “I am grateful for this apple I can eat today.”

If you are already engaging in religious or spiritual gratitude practices, consider increasing their consistency or depth.

If you think this sounds too simple, try it for a few weeks alongside the other ideas.

Worried you’ll run out of things to list? It’s okay to repeat. It will take time and effort to identify other things for which you are grateful. You may start by being grateful for the things you have and what you are able to do, etc.

### Create visual reminders

Use tools like a gratitude jar, sticker book, or journal to make your practice fun, visible, personal, and enjoyable.

### Shift to a grateful perspective

Reframe difficult moments. For example, replace “I don’t have XYZ” with “I am grateful I’ve learned to stay calm when someone took credit for my work.”

### Express gratitude to others

Use voicemail, notes, social media, texts, or emails to communicate your gratitude.

*Continue reading on the next page.*



## Practice Gratitude and Positive Affirmations

### Practice mindful gratitude

Pause during the day to notice and appreciate simple joys. Take deep breaths to fully immerse yourself in the experience, observing your surroundings, what you see, hear, smell, and feel. Take a “mental picture” of the moment and give that moment a grateful caption such as “Feeling grateful for a peaceful day with my cat watching the clouds,” or “Grateful to see my child’s smile when they found the dog.”

### Reflect on gratitude’s meanings

When you are feeling grateful and being mindful in the present through noticing what you see, do, feel, smell, and reflect on what led to this moment. Practice acknowledging both the positive and negative experiences that contributed to it. Hold these feelings without judgment. For example, “I am grateful for the tears we shed during our losses and that we had people support us.” Notice and reflect on what it means to you to be able to practice gratitude in this moment.

### Why Practice Positive Affirmation?

Positive affirmations often have a poor reputation in pop culture and are not commonly practiced in Chinese cultures. For example, Chinese cultural values include “I criticize myself three times a day” or “avoid self-centeredness.”

Research on positive affirmations has shown mixed results. Depending on the context, affirmations can have positive, neutral, or even negative effects on mental health, mood, and behavior.

However, strong evidence supports the use of specific, personal, believable, and direct self-affirmations to challenge unhelpful thinking patterns or internalized negative self-talk effectively.

Positive affirmations can help remind us of our goals, redirect our focus, adopt more factual and constructive ways of self-talk to replace outdated beliefs, and navigate challenging situations.



# Practice Gratitude and Positive Affirmations

## How to Practice Positive Affirmation

- ▶ **Be specific and personal.** What you say needs to align with your values and goals.
- ▶ **Be positive.** Focus on what you want to grow and achieve, rather than what you aim to reduce or avoid.
- ▶ **Use present-tense.** Frame affirmations as they are happening now.
- ▶ **Avoid using should/could, absolutes, labeling, or relying on external criteria.**
- ▶ **Make it believable to you.** Start small and realistic. For instance, "I can write 10 more sentences" can help you whenever you want to give up or feel discouraged.
- ▶ **Practice mindfulness.** When saying it, fully experience the meaning of the positive affirmation.
- ▶ **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Just like sharpening a tool, repetition is the key. You are changing your inner reflex. It will take time and practice to re-write your mental reflexes.
- ▶ **Consult with a trusted mental health provider, a mentor, or someone who cares about you.** It is difficult for us to see our blind spots, and it is helpful to have support in this process.

## Examples of Positive Affirmation

Instead of this...	Say this
× "I am stupid."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ "I am capable of learning."</li> <li>✓ "I am learning."</li> <li>✓ "I am good at XYZ."</li> </ul>
× "I am fat."	✓ "I choose to nourish my body with healthy choices."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× "I can't say no."</li> <li>× "I am a doormat."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ "I find ways to set boundaries."</li> <li>✓ "I prioritize my well-being at this moment."</li> </ul>
× "I can't control my anger."	✓ "I take deep breaths and listen to my emotions."
× "I am an anxious person."	✓ "I use my skills to regain my balance."
× "I am a failure!"	✓ "I have both successes and failures."
× "I don't know how to do it!"	✓ "I am taking steps to find the solutions."
× "I am not worthy."	✓ "I am worthy."

# Chapter 6

## Holistic Wellness and Self-Care

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- Holistic Wellness
- Self-Care Practices
- Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration
- Everyday Practices to Boost Mental Well-Being



# Holistic Wellness

## What is Holistic Wellness?

Holistic wellness recognizes the interconnectedness of various wellness areas. Embracing holistic wellness involves leading a life that is not only physically healthy but also mentally and emotionally sound.

Wellness is a process that requires effort, knowledge, plans, skills, support, and resources to manage and sustain. Doing what is aligned with your cultural preferences, with what is environmentally accessible, and using available resources and guidance is essential to improve and maintain wellness.



## Is Self-Care Different from Wellness?

Self-care is an integral component of wellness. In the context of community-oriented cultures, such as the Chinese culture, self-care is a necessary action to reduce other's burden, strengthen our relationships, and enable us help others.

Self-care could be defined as "actions I can take with the resources I have, to increase my wellness."

Holistic Wellness includes the following areas. They are inter-connected and mutually influence the wellness of other areas.



### Intellectual Wellness

How we improve and maintain our brain health, thinking, and learning.

#### Aspects

Lifelong learning: doing or appreciating creative activities, practicing critical thinking, being open-minded, listening to different perspectives; and practicing self-reflection and self-awareness.

#### Example Activities

Read a book, try being in a different environment (travel, new driving route, new event), sign up for a class, try something new, find ways to improve your recipes or other skills, share something you enjoy with another person.



# Holistic Wellness



## Emotional Wellness

How we nurture, understand, guide, and use our emotions to support overall wellness.

### Aspects

Having skills to recognize, manage, and communicate emotions and feelings that are congruent with our goals; exploring ways to communicate, or channel emotions; practice managing stress; practicing effective and healthy boundary setting and asserting your needs effectively; being able to connect, build, and maintain desired level of intimacy; practicing interdependence; continue finding effective ways to cultivate preferred emotions (e.g., joy, calm, centered, stoic).

### Example Activities

Express how you feel, laugh, play, practice self-compassion, journal, cuddle with a pet, engage in daily gratitude practice, identify affirmations and practice saying them out loud, take time to reflect and notice how you're feeling.

**For more information about managing emotions, see Chapter 5.**



## Physical Wellness

How we move, maintain, and improve our body to support overall wellness.

### Aspects

Healthy habits to maintain or improve our body's function (e.g., mobility, stability, strength, balance, and endurance), having knowledge and skills related to our nutritional needs, medical awareness and disease prevention, knowing how to prevent injury.

### Example Activities

Get enough sleep, exercise, eat healthily, take a walk, dance, turn off your cell phone, pay attention to the physical sensations you experience, enjoy a cup of tea, listen to music. Regular checkup with PCP (primary care physician).

*Continue reading on the next page.*



# Holistic Wellness



## Career/Professional Wellness

How we cultivate meaningful, productive, satisfactory, and fulfilling careers.

### Aspects

Purposeful and rewarding career or work. Having clear goals, continue developing new skills, networking, actively seeking feedback, working toward a desired level of work-life balance.

### Example Activities

Regularly review and set career goals; seek mentoring, consultations, and coaches; gain both soft and hard skills for careers; be aware of and adjust work-life balance when possible; take actions to prevent burnout; attend conferences, book clubs, or gathering to network and learn from others; read professional journals (not social media) and publications.



## Financial Wellness

How we manage finances to support our needs, goals, stability, and future.

### Aspects

Have the skills and ability to effectively manage financial resources; have financial means to ensure stability, meet current and future needs, and minimize financial stress; have wisdom, knowledge, and skills to make financial decisions for planning, living life, investing, spending, and saving for rainy days.

### Example Activities

Gain skills to set, review, and revise budgets; establish plans to reduce debts; learn skills to make financial decisions, acquire skills and knowledge for saving, investing, and debt management to ensure long-term security; take financial management classes from libraries and other adult learning centers.

*Continue reading on the next page.*

# Holistic Wellness



## Environmental Wellness

How we cultivate understanding, appreciation, respect, and connection with nature and create surroundings that support our well-being.

### Aspects

Awareness of and connection to surroundings; safety enhancement; consider the impact of personal usage of public and natural resources; have the skills to stay informed about safe environments (e.g., air pollution); arrange and organize spaces that enhance health, productivity, relationships, and mental health.

### Example Activities

Go into nature; feel your feet on the grass; watch the sunset; volunteer to pick up trash or repair nature trails.



## Spiritual Wellness

How we explore the meaning of life and understand our personal beliefs.

### Aspects

Encompasses a variety of belief systems that contribute to a sense of purpose, hope, optimism, and belonging. Understand the differences between spirituality, faith and religions. Explore a set of beliefs and values that help you define meaning (life, life events, world suffering, life and death, etc.); understand the world, and maybe a sense of purpose, belonging, hope, peacefulness.

### Example Activities

Attend religious or spiritual gatherings, practices, or lectures; discuss and reflect on how your beliefs and values impact your way of life and your overall well-being; participate in the celebrations, rituals, gatherings of different beliefs; practice activities from different cultures that improve or enhance spiritual well-being (e.g., meditation, acts of service, pilgrimage, yoga, Qigong, chanting).

*Continue reading on the next page.*

# Holistic Wellness



## Interpersonal or Relational Wellness

How we build, maintain, and end relationships to support our wellness.

### Aspects

Have an adequate level of self-understanding about relationship needs; have the skills in communication, emotion management, boundary setting, and self-reflection to initiate, cultivate, and maintain good interpersonal interaction in various settings; have a support system; have desired quality and level of friendships, network, and family relationships that support wellness goals; have the skills to form and sustain meaningful relationships, navigate conflicts constructively, and foster supportive connections in both personal and professional contexts.

### Example Activities

Spend time with people who positively influence your well-being; participate in different group activities (e.g., club, volunteer, class, conference); develop active listening skills; learn from feedback and have a constructive, growth-oriented mindset when receiving feedback; practice empathy and compassion; gain adaptive and effective communication skills; gain skills to resolve conflicts.

## Importance of Fostering Friendships and Relationships

Social are essential to wellness. Genuine friendships have a profound impact on our lives providing obvious benefits like making us happier, supporting us through challenges, providing a sense of security and belonging, and nourishing our minds and souls.

Science has long supported surprising connections between strong social relationships and overall well-being.

### ▶ Physical

Quality friendships can reduce risk factors that affect long-term health, like blood pressure, inflammation, and even our waist size.

### ▶ Emotional

Friends boost endorphins and self-esteem, minimize the impact of stress, and help us bounce back from tough emotions like grief and anger.

### ▶ Mental

Supportive and engaged conversations with friends improve brain function and may even offer protection from cognitive decline as we age.

# Holistic Wellness



## Cultural Wellness

How we connect with our heritage and navigate in a multicultural society with a sense of autonomy and self.

### Aspects

Have the awareness that cultures and their practices are always changing; cultivate a healthy sense of curiosity and experimental-mindset about other cultures; actively gain knowledge and awareness about history, challenges, values, and cultural-related activities; have the skills and awareness to navigate through other cultures and build connections with people from different cultures; have the confidence to choose, adapt, practice, and enjoy values and activities from other cultures.

### Example Activities

Participate in local Chinese American cultural events and activities. Learn about and participate in activities from different cultures (e.g., go to a Russian or Mexican supermarket; say yes when invited to a Ramadan celebration, attend a Diwali celebration); volunteer to serve people from different cultures; mingle with locals when traveling.



## Community Wellness

How we connect with and contribute to our communities to enhance our well-being and our community's well-being.

### Aspects

Develop a sense of belonging with the local and larger community; gain understanding about different communities, build various degrees and types of connections, using your strengths, and contribute to the community in your way: encourage active participation in local politics and community advocacy to influence issues affecting the Chinese American community; volunteer for local advocacy groups or community service organizations; engage in community planning meetings or local government to represent and voice the needs of the Chinese American community.

### Example Activities

Vote, serve on community boards, sign petitions, join a committee; be a mentor; volunteer at local animal shelters; join big-brother big-sister programs; volunteer to help people do their taxes (if you are a CPA, for example), complete medical forms, learn life skills; testify for causes.

## Self-Care Practices

Self-care is what you do to take care of yourself to stay physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. It is a spectrum of behaviors, from a few minutes (brushing our teeth, taking a couple of deep breaths when feeling stressed, doing a couple of stretches) to maybe weeks or months (taking classes, retreat, sabbatical, travel).

Research suggests self-care promotes positive health outcomes, such as fostering resilience, living longer, and becoming better equipped to manage stress. Several self-care principles to keep in mind:

- ▶ **Be patient.** Self-care activities take time to build up and to refine. Start with something accessible, easy to do, that you will enjoy.
- ▶ **Acknowledge self-care activities you are already doing.** We are motivated to do more when we feel we have a head start, so things you already are doing can help ignite your self-care motivation. For example, acknowledge that “I am doing things to take care of myself” when brushing your teeth, drinking water, taking deep breaths, saying no, spending time with pets, caring for your body... and see the motivation for self-care increasing.
- ▶ **Note how you feel after the activity.** It helps to reflect on what you just did. For example, some people go shopping as self-care. After shopping, some find their sense of satisfaction is reduced and anxiety has increased, which gives a strong signal that shopping is not an appropriate or enjoyable self-care activity for them.
- ▶ If you find it difficult to start on your own, try a self-care app, find a wellness coach or a credible organization like a senior center to make suggestions based on your time and resources.





## Self-Care Practices

Here are self-care suggestions to get you started.

### Be present

Live in the moment. Take real breaks, not “just doing something different” (e.g., social media, angry cleaning, watching shows for hours, etc.)

### Engage in activities that are meaningful to you and generate positive emotions and feelings

Experiment with a variety of ways to relax and de-stress. **For more information about how to reduce stress, see Chapter 4.**

### Sleep better

Your behavior during the day, especially before bedtime, can have a major impact on the quality of your sleep. Check out the CDC’s good sleep habits. Even a few slight adjustments to your routine can mean the difference between good sleep and a restless night.

### Eat to live

Good nutrition is essential to self-care. When we eat certain foods, it can be immediately comforting or uplifting, but can leave us feeling down, regretful, or queasy fifteen minutes later. Rather than living to eat, learn to eat to live by focusing on choices that support body and brain health, saving comfort and empty-calorie foods for special occasions only.

### Try moving more often

Movement is one of the most accessible and powerful tools for boosting both physical and mental well-being. Try for consistency over intensity. Even mild exercise will help calm your mind and lower stress levels. Aim for 20 minutes several times each week. If you’re not up for a high energy workout, find a leisure activity that you enjoy, like working in the garden, washing your car, or taking a bike ride. For a bonus, get moving outside for an extra endorphin boost from nature.

### Connect with nature

Spending time in nature can have a calming and restorative effect, helping to reduce stress and improve mental clarity. Whether it’s walking through a park, hiking in the mountains, or simply sitting by the ocean, being in natural surroundings encourages mindfulness and a deeper connection with the environment and world around us. Try to regularly spend time outside, observe the changing seasons, or tend to a garden.



*Continue reading on the next page.*

## Self-Care Practices

### Do something you enjoy every day

That might mean listening to music, getting lost in a good book, dancing, or watching your favorite TV show. It doesn't need to be complicated. Self-care covers a wide range of things from the most basic, like making sure you're eating healthy foods, to practicing mindful movement.

### Practice gratitude

When negative thoughts threaten our state of happiness, we can offset them by practicing gratitude exercises. That involves thinking about the things in your life you're grateful for, and maybe reaching out to those people who matter most and telling them "thank you." You might be surprised at how much impact this has on your happiness, and theirs.

### Schedule time with friends or family

Maintaining social connections helps build your sense of belonging and is an integral part of self-care. Make time for regular catchups, shared activities, and longer conversations. Definitely book the time in advance. Better yet, make a recurring appointment on your calendar with reminders.

### Foster friendships

Building stronger friendships requires consistent effort and investment. Like everything else in life, the more attention we give our friendships, the stronger they'll grow.



To learn more, watch this video on [Self-Care](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration

We ask a lot of our minds. They run constantly to sift through thousands of bits of input and information; categorize concepts, thoughts, and feelings; and keep us focused and moving forward.

The human mind is truly a powerful and miraculous thing. We rely on it for absolutely everything, yet we tend to take it for granted. Maybe because it's difficult, to try to understand and appreciate everything our mind does.

*Western medicine and psychology have traditionally viewed the mind and body as separate entities. In contrast, Chinese tradition has taken a holistic approach, using a body-mind-spirit integrated model to promote overall health. This model emphasizes balance and harmony between the mind, body, and environment.*

At the core of Chinese philosophy lies the concept of Qi Monism (氣一元論), which asserts that all things in the universe are formed by the fundamental element known as "Qi." Qi is both a material and immaterial force, encompassing all phenomena in the universe. Whether in the tangible, physical world, or the invisible realms of spirit, emotions, and energy, everything is either composed of or operates through Qi.

The constant movement and transformation of Qi drive the creation, destruction, and cyclical renewal of all things in the universe. The flow and convergence of Qi generates the formation, change, and transformation of all things. Consequently, natural phenomena, such as seasonal changes, and human life activities originate from the operation of Qi.

The theory of Qi underscores the importance of balance and harmony, particularly as expressed through Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are two fundamental aspects or states of Qi that are both oppositional and complementary. Together, they sustain the equilibrium of the universe.

### Harmony Between Universe and Humans

Through Qi, humans resonate with the universe. Qi serves as the vital link between humans, universe, and all living things, enabling individuals to connect with the universe through Qi. From the concept of Qi Monism, the philosophy of harmony between human and the cosmos (天人相應) emerged in ancient China.

*This perspective views humans as microcosms of the universe, inherently interconnected with nature and subject to its laws. This philosophy has become the foundation of Chinese medicine and profoundly influenced Chinese culture, providing a key framework for understanding traditional Chinese thought and worldview.*



# Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration

## Principles of Chinese Wellness

Qi not only connects humans with the universe but also integrates the body, mind, and spirit. Although these aspects may seem independent, they are unified through the presence and movement of Qi. On a deeper level, they interact to form a harmonious whole. Since both the body and mind are manifestations of Qi, they influence one another in dynamic ways. As stated in the classic Chinese medical text "Huangdi Neijing," 《黃帝內經》 "Qi forms the body; when Qi gathers, life begins, and when Qi disperses, life ceases."

By observing the patterns of nature and aligning human life with them, the Chinese established foundational principles for health and wellness. The "Huangdi Neijing" 《黃帝內經》 integrates Qi Monism with yin-yang theory and the five elements and lays out a comprehensive system for Chinese traditional medicine and wellness. Key principles include:

### Viewing Life Holistically

Life is seen as an integral part of the larger universe, interconnected with nature and society. Humans are viewed as a microcosm within the greater cosmos, encompassing biological, natural, and social dimensions. This perspective sees humans as part of the unity between heaven, earth, and humankind.

### Understanding Life Through Change

The I Ching (Book of Changes), a cornerstone of Chinese thought, teaches that the only constant in the universe is change. All things are in perpetual transformation. From this perspective, yin-yang balance is a dynamic and ongoing process. Achieving true health requires maintaining this dynamic equilibrium.

### Yin-Yang Perspective on Disease

Human life is sustained by the movement of Qi, which follows natural patterns of rising, falling, entering, and exiting. These rhythms reflect the harmony of yin and yang. Health is defined as the balance of yin and yang within the body, while disease results from their imbalance. As expressed in the "Huangdi Neijing" 《黃帝內經》, "Yin and yang are the way of heaven and earth, the framework of all things, the source of transformation, the root of life and death, and the dwelling of spirit and clarity."



*Continue reading on the next page.*

# Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration

## Traditional Chinese Medicine

Any imbalance to Qi can cause disease and illness. This concept is central in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Its treatment seeks to restore this balance of Qi flow within the body through treatment specific to the individual. To regain the balance of Qi, TCM uses a holistic approach including diet, exercise/posture, breath exercise, in addition to acupuncture, acupressure massage (Tui Na) and herbs.

Traditional Chinese Medicine places great emphasis on prevention, believing that the best doctors are those who can stop a disease even before its onset (上醫治未病). TCM can use methods such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, and therapeutic massage to adjust or even restore the body's yin-yang balance.



To learn more, watch this video on [Emotional Well-Being Insights from Traditional Chinese Medicine Perspective](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Chinese Herbal Medicine

Works by delivering essential energy, which may come from one herb or a combination of several natural ingredients, to various energy channels (meridians) to bring along the benefits of addressing physical, emotional, or even mental issues.

## Acupuncture

Involves inserting fine needles into specific points along the meridians to unblock or stimulate the flow of Qi. This method helps restore balance within the body, addressing various health issues, from pain relief to stress reduction, to other remarkable recovery from challenging ailments, by rebalancing energy and promoting natural healing processes.

## Acupressure Massage (Tui Na)

A therapeutic practice that combines pressure, stretching, and other hand techniques to improve Qi circulation, relieve tension, and stimulate healing. By manipulating Qi, acupressure massage therapy can assist in releasing blocked energy, thus alleviating pain and promoting a harmonious flow of energy through the body.

## Diet

Maintain a balanced diet by reducing meat/high-fat dishes and favoring whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables.



To learn more, watch the videos series on [Nutrition and Food Therapy from Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective](#) conducted in Mandarin:

- ▶ [Series 1](#)
- ▶ [Series 2](#)
- ▶ [Series 3](#)



# Chinese Wellness Practice for Body-Mind-Spirit Integration

## Exercise

Exercise in moderation, following the principle of “exercise to mild strain without exhaustion” — not too much, not too little, and with regular, sustained activity.

## Posture and Breathing Exercise

Chinese have practiced Qigong and Tai Chi to adjust posture, breathing and Qi flow to enhance health.

## Qigong and Tai Chi

Rooted in Qi theory, Qigong and Tai Chi primarily aim to cultivate and regulate Qi through posture, movements, and breathing. The human body is seen as a microcosm, with the flow of Qi within it following natural laws. Through regular practice, Qigong and Tai Chi help one reach a calm, relaxed state, activating the body’s natural regulatory and healing functions.



To learn more, watch this video on [Dayan Qigong Demo](#) conducted in English by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Meditation for Mind Cultivation

The traditional Chinese philosophy developed systems of theory and methods about how to practice meditation to cultivate awareness of our mind. From the early Confucian and Taoist thinkers, with integration of the Buddhism, Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties, meditation has been a core aspect of understanding and cultivating the mind. It focuses on self-cultivation through meditation to reveal the clarity and calmness from one’s inner true nature.

The aim of meditation is to cultivate the mind. Although methods and forms vary, they all emphasize first bringing the body and mind to a relaxed, calm, and natural state, then moving from calmness to stillness. It is only in this still, unmoving state that we can truly experience and become aware of our physical and mental condition.

**For more information about how to practice mindfulness and/or meditation, see Chapter 4.**



## Everyday Practices to Boost Mental Well-Being

Good mental health — or mental well-being — isn't about being perfectly happy all the time. Rather, it's about doing what we can to keep our minds running smoothly so that we can function day to day, and:

- ▶ Pursue activities that we enjoy.
- ▶ Nurture healthy relationships with people who matter to us.
- ▶ Build the resilience we need to deal with life's ups and downs.

Mental and emotional challenges are unavoidable, but when we pay proper attention to our mental well-being, we're better equipped to deal with them when they happen.

### 30-Day Challenge

Start practicing self-care by doing one of the challenges below every day. They don't have to be completed in order or within a month. Before doing any self-care, rate how you feel on a scale from 1-10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best).

Challenge	Rating	Challenge	Rating
1. Take a mindful walk		16. Take yourself on a date	
2. Clean up a bit		17. Read a book or a magazine	
3. Drink more water		18. Write a gratitude list	
4. Go to bed early		19. Relax at a local park or beach	
5. De-clutter and donate		20. Try guided meditation	
6. Listen to music		21. Update your budget	
7. Take an aromatic bath/shower		22. Watch the sunset or stargaze	
8. Journal how you feel		23. Take a social media break	
9. Write a self-love list		24. Color or paint	
10. Watch a movie		25. Have a spa day at home	
11. Start a vision board		26. Make your own affirmation	
12. Practice deep breathing		27. Re-organize 1 area	
13. Stretch for 10 minutes		28. Try out a new hobby	
14. Call someone you love		29. Try a random act of kindness	
15. Try a new recipe		30. Schedule a check-up	

## Everyday Practices to Boost Mental Well-being

### 30-Day Challenge Q&A

After taking the 30-day challenge, answer the questions below to get a better understanding of which self-care strategies work best for you.

- ② On a scale from 1-10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how did I feel after practicing self-care activities?
- ② On a scale from 1-10 (1 being didn't help at all and 10 being helped the most), how would I score each of the self-care activities I did?
- ② Which self-care activities will I do tomorrow?
- ② What time of day is best for me to practice self-care?
- ② What can I do to make my self-care experience more fulfilling?
- ② What do I need to do to make sure I continue self-care daily?

Source: <https://survivingmomblog.com/printables/daily-self-care-worksheet-bundle-printable/>





## Chapter 7

# Pathway for Help-Seeking

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- **The Importance of Professional Help**
- **Types of Mental Health Providers**
- **How to Choose a Mental Health Provider**
- **Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help**
- **Searching for Chinese-Speaking Providers and Support Groups**
- **Resources in the South Bay**



## The Importance of Professional Help

Professional help refers to evidence-based treatment provided by trained and licensed professionals in a safe and confidential setting. Your privacy is protected by laws when you seek care from licensed providers. Professional help can include assessments, diagnoses, counseling and psychotherapy, education, emotional support, and skill-building.

- ▶ From enhancing your well-being and preventing issues from worsening to addressing mental health conditions, professionals can assist with a wide range of challenges. Many individuals also use professional help to support personal growth and improve life skills.
- ▶ Mental health services provided by licensed professionals are often covered by insurance. In California, health plans are required by law to cover certain mental health conditions. Similarly, federal law under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) designates mental and behavioral health services as essential benefits that must be covered.
- ▶ Professional healthcare providers, such as primary care physicians, can offer basic assessments and effective recommendations tailored to your needs.
- ▶ This process is collaborative; professionals work with you to create a plan that aligns with your goals and that you agree with.





## The Importance of Professional Help

### When Should I Seek Professional Help?

Determining when to seek professional help can be complex, as each person's resources, definition of well-being, and health perceptions are unique.

Here are some questions to consider. If you answer "yes" to any of these, taking the first step, such as scheduling an appointment, could help you address your concerns:

- ✦ As a Chinese American, have you been wondering whether you need to talk to someone about how you feel? Chinese Americans often delay care until symptoms worsen.
- ✦ Do you experience physical symptoms like persistent pain, stomachaches, sleep problems, chest heaviness, difficulty breathing, weight changes, or trouble concentrating that don't have an apparent medical cause?
- ✦ Do you find it takes more effort than before to complete daily tasks or maintain your routine?
- ✦ Are feelings of sadness, worry, fatigue, mood swings, or numbness becoming harder to manage?
- ✦ Do you engage in impulsive behaviors you normally wouldn't, such as reckless shopping, yelling, dangerous driving, cleaning obsessively, or throwing objects?
- ✦ Do you struggle to stop certain thoughts or behaviors you want to control?
- ✦ Do you feel like you're no longer "yourself"?
- ✦ Are you avoiding people or situations more often than you'd like?
- ✦ Are self-blame, guilt, fear, and anger affecting your thoughts, feelings, relationships, or daily life?
- ✦ Do you see, hear, or feel things others do not seem to perceive?
- ✦ Do you feel trapped in an unsafe situation or unable to escape?
- ✦ Do you have thoughts about harming or killing yourself or others?
- ✦ Have you thought things like, "It would be okay if I died," "Death would be a relief," or "I hope something bad happens to me"?
- ✦ Are you finding it difficult to maintain or build relationships with others?



**And remember, the earlier, the better! Early intervention can result in a better outcome.**

**Seek help immediately** if you are experiencing thoughts of harming yourself. Call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

## Types of Mental Health Providers

While mental health providers have many similarities, there are differences in education and training as well as types of services they provide. It is necessary to ask your mental health provider if they have the experience and training to provide care to meet your needs.

In California, there are psychiatrists (MD), Licensed Clinical Psychologists (PhD, PsyD), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (NP). These providers are all qualified and approved by California State Licensing Boards to provide mental health services. However, life coaches are not licensed by the State of California.

### Differences Between Mental Health Providers in California

	Psychiatrist	Licensed Clinical Psychologist	LMFT, LCSW, LPCC	Psychiatric NP
Regulated by California law?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Need to pass licensing exams?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minimal degree required?	MD	PhD or PsyD	Master's	Master's
Provide psychotherapy?	✓	✓	✓	
Prescribe medications?	✓			✓
Order medical tests?	✓			✓
Provide psychological testing?		✓		
Required to follow ethics codes?	✓	✓	✓	✓

# How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

You may need to try several mental health providers before finding the one who meets your needs. The following steps are recommended.

## STEP 1

### Be Prepared.

Get information from credible sources such as:

- ▶ [How to choose a psychologist.](#) Online guide by American Psychological Association.
- ▶ [For Your Peace of Mind - A Consumer Guide to Psychological Services.](#) Booklet published by California Board of Psychology.
- ▶ [Let's Talk Facts About Choosing a Psychiatrist.](#) Easy-to-read document by the American Psychiatric Association on what a psychiatrist is, where a person can start, and what therapies a psychiatrist uses to treat mental health problems and mental disorders.

#### Assess Your Needs

- Identify what you need help with, such as depression, anxiety, relationship problems, substance use/overuse, eating disorders, and trauma. Then look for a mental health provider trained and experienced in those areas.
- If unsure, have a conversation with your mental health provider to assess your needs.

#### Find Provider Names

- Ask people you trust for their recommendations, including your health care providers.
- Conduct an online search using third-party sites, such as local, state, and national professional associations, and insurance company directories of approved providers
- Contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or your insurance provider for a list of approved mental health providers in your area.

Source: [https://www.psychology.ca.gov/forms\\_pubs/consumer\\_guide.pdf](https://www.psychology.ca.gov/forms_pubs/consumer_guide.pdf)

Continue reading on the next page.

## How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

### STEP 2

### Getting the right provider makes a difference.

Here are some tips:

- ▶ Check status of mental health provider's credentials, training, and license can be verified on the [Department of Consumer Affairs website](#) where you can view license status, and prior public administrative or disciplinary action, if any. To verify your psychiatrist's status (e.g., Board Certification) use [www.abms.org](http://www.abms.org) or call toll-free at 1.866.ASK.ABMS (1.866.275.2267).
- ▶ Talk to several providers before you make your decision. Most providers welcome questions.
- ▶ Be prepared with your questions before the appointment. Your questions might include:

- ✎ Are you accepting new patients?
- ✎ How many years have you been in practice?
- ✎ What experience do you have helping people with these types of problems?
- ✎ What are your areas of expertise? (e.g., working with children, working with couples, trauma, relationships)
- ✎ What types of insurance do you accept? Are you affiliated with any managed care organizations? Do you accept Medicare or Medicaid?
- ✎ What are your fees? Fees are usually based on 45- to 50-minute sessions. Do you have a sliding-scale fee policy? What are your payment policies?
- ✎ Do you offer in-person, virtual, or sessions by phone?
- ✎ How much experience do you have dealing with issues like mine?
- ✎ What is your clinical approach to care?
- ✎ What kinds of approaches do you use? Have they been proven effective for \_\_\_\_\_?

## How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

### STEP 3

#### Listen to yourself during the counseling process.

Ask:

- ▶ Does my mental health provider respect me?
- ▶ Does my mental health provider try to understand me?
- ▶ Am I comfortable talking to my provider?
- ▶ Am I making progress? Am I getting better at managing my mental health issues/symptoms?
- ▶ Does my mental health provider listen to my concerns and welcome my questions?
- ▶ How is my mental health provider helping me, specifically?

### STEP 4

#### Sometimes a mental health provider isn't a good fit.

Even the most skilled mental health providers aren't a perfect match for everyone. When you feel that the care provided by your mental health provider isn't working for you:

- ▶ **Please do NOT conclude that therapy or medication does not work for you.** It could be a poor fit with this specific provider.
- ▶ **You are encouraged to discuss your concerns with the provider.** Providers focus on your well-being; they want to know if they are helping. You show respect and trust when you discuss your dissatisfaction and concerns with them. Being open and honest is seen as a sign of strength, motivation, and trust.
- ▶ **Try another mental health provider.**



## Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help

### Where to Start

#### Primary Care Physician (PCP)

If you have a health plan, a good first step is to have a conversation with your PCP. Your PCP can assess your problems and symptoms and may prescribe medication to manage anxiety or depression. They may refer you to a mental health professional to provide counseling and support. Your PCP can also help differentiate between physical and emotional health symptoms. If you do not have a PCP, you may want to select a [Chinese-Speaking Physician](#) from the Chinese Health Initiative Network.



#### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

If you or your spouse are employed, you may have access to an EAP. This is a benefit offered by your employer for you and your eligible dependents to receive free services for a broad range of issues such as relationship problems, financial or legal concerns, stress and anxiety, alcohol or substance misuse, and job stress. Services include counseling, coaching, legal and financial consultations, and resources for parenting and eldercare. EAP providers include Concern, Lyra Health, Spring Health, ComPsych, and more.

#### School Counselors or Counseling and Psychological Services

Nearly every college has a counseling center (or at least counseling staff on site) to help students overcome challenges adjusting to college life. These services are usually included in the tuition fee. Some elementary and high schools also have mental health counselors. Check with the school's administrator.

## Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help

**If you have public insurance such as Medi-Cal or Medicare, or no insurance, you can access mental health services through the county behavioral health department.**

In Santa Clara, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services is the primary resource. You can ask for emergency services as well as ongoing support services.

▶ [\*\*Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Call Center\*\*](#)

800-704-0900

It is available 24/7 in more than 200 languages. When you contact the Call Center, you can choose **Option #4 for Behavioral Health Navigator Program** where a peer navigator will assess your needs and identify the right service for you. This includes verifying your medical insurance type, providing information and resources, and referral to a county mental health, substance use treatment program, or a community-based organization.

### Undocumented-Safe Services

According to a [recent report](#) by the American Immigration Council and Santa Clara County Office of Immigrant Relations, undocumented individuals made up 17.5% of the immigrant population in Santa Clara County. 11% of undocumented immigrants were from China.

- ▶ [\*\*Gardner Health Services\*\*](#) offers behavioral health counseling, specialty mental health, and substance use/abuse services. Their enrollment specialists can help you, whether you are documented or undocumented, understand your health care options by determining eligibility through the enrollment process, and help determine whether you qualify for low or no cost health insurance.
- ▶ [\*\*Momentum for Health\*\*](#) offers a wide range of behavioral health services to those who are underinsured, with no insurance or undocumented. Check their website for more details about locations and details of service.

### For People with Private Insurance

You can check your insurance and request a list of mental health providers included in your health plan.

## Searching for Chinese-Speaking Care Providers and Support Groups

### Chinese-Speaking Care Provider

▶ [Upward Counseling Center](#)

650-417-3675

21710 Stevens Creek Blvd, Suite 105,  
Cupertino, CA 95014

Offers individual, couples, and family therapy conducted by licensed psychotherapists. Clinicians are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. By appointment only.

▶ [Chinese American Counseling Service](#)

Includes a directory of therapists. Use the filter function for language capacity.

### Other websites to search for a Chinese-speaking care provider:

▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities \(MHACC\)](#)

Includes links that show how to search for bilingual mental health professionals.

▶ [Psychology Today](#)

Includes a directory of clinical professionals, psychiatrists, and treatment centers providing mental health services. Use the filter function for language options.

▶ [American Psychological Association Psychologist Locator](#)

Use the filter function for Languages Spoken.

▶ [Bay Area Psychological Association](#)

Find a Psychologist. Select the language to filter for language options.

### Support Groups for the Chinese Community

▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities \(MHACC\) Support Groups](#)

are currently held online or in-person. For more information, call 800-881-8502. Check their website for current dates and times.

→ **NAMI Connection-API English Peer Support Group**

Meets in-person 2nd & 4th Saturday of every month 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Meets online 1st & 3rd Saturday of every month 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

→ **NAMI Connection Cantonese Peer Support Group**

Meets online 2nd Saturday of every month 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

→ **NAMI Connection Mandarin Peer Support Group**

Meets online 3rd Saturday of every month 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

→ **NAMI Family Cantonese Support Group**

Meets online 2nd Saturday of every month 3:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

→ **NAMI Family Mandarin Support Group**

Meets online 3rd Saturday of every month 3:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

## Resources in the South Bay

▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities](#)

800-811-8502

3100 Capital Avenue, Suite E,  
Fremont, CA 94538

**MHACC Mental Health Warmline:**

If you experience fear, anxiety, or distress, you can call the MHACC Mental Health Warmline Mon-Sun, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. Pacific Time. Available in Mandarin, Cantonese, English.

▶ [Mental Health and Addiction Services at El Camino Health](#)

Call 650-988-8468 to inquire about the different services.

→ [Adult Mood Program](#)

Provides treatment for people experiencing significant mental health mood symptoms, such as anxiety and depression.

→ [Older Adult Transitions Services](#)

Intensive outpatient behavioral health program specifically designed for older adults who can benefit from psychiatric treatment in a multidisciplinary setting.

→ [ASPIRE](#)

After-School Program Interventions and Resiliency Education® (ASPIRE) helps children, teens and young adults with anxiety, depression or other symptoms related to a mental health condition.

▶ [Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub, Chinese Health Initiative, El Camino Health](#)

A bilingual hub offering tips and tools to help you maintain and manage emotional well-being with tipsheets, videos, resources and more.

▶ [Bill Wilson Center](#)

408-850-6145

3490 The Alameda,  
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Family and individual counseling is for all ages residing in Santa Clara County. Offered in multiple languages including Chinese.

▶ [Asian American Community Involvement \(AACI\) Behavioral Health Services](#)

408-975-2730

2400 Moorpark Avenue, Suite 300,  
San Jose, CA 95128

Offers linguistically and culturally sensitive services that help clients overcome barriers to care including individual, group, and family counseling for all ages.

▶ [Momentum for Health](#)

650-617-8349

1922 The Alameda,  
San Jose, CA 95126

Offers outpatient and residential behavioral health programs for adults, and supportive services, including community programs to detect signs of mental illness.

## Resources in the South Bay

### ▶ [Pacific Clinics](#)

408-379-3796

Offers mental health services, including counseling, evidence-based treatments, medication management, support groups, and more. See website for locations.

### ▶ [Peninsula Healthcare Connection \(PHC\)](#)

650-853-0321

Opportunity Center, 33 Encina Avenue, #103, Palo Alto, CA 94301

Offers free healthcare and wellness services for people experiencing homelessness and low-income households.

## Mental Health Services by County

### Santa Clara County

#### ▶ [Behavioral Health Call Center \(BHCC\)](#)

800-704-0900

Serves as the centralized entry point for Santa Clara County residents seeking behavioral health services who receive Medi-Cal or Medicare benefits or have no insurance. and seek behavioral health services. You can call for a referral to a county mental health or substance use treatment program, or a community-based organization. Translation services are available.

When contacting the Call Center, they will do a brief screening, verify your Medi-Cal or Medicare insurance, and provide you with a referral during the call. If you require a Chinese-speaking provider, the wait time will depend on provider availability.

#### ▶ [Behavioral Health Urgent Care \(BHUC\)](#)

408-885-7855

2221 Enborg Lane, San Jose, CA 95128

BHUC is a walk-in outpatient clinic for Santa Clara County residents who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis and need help. You can visit this clinic for screening, assessment, crisis intervention, referral, and short-term treatment. They are open every day from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and provide services to anyone experiencing a behavioral health crisis, regardless of insurance or immigration status. Translation services are available.



For those with public insurance, watch this video on [Connecting with Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services and Support](#) to help a friend or loved one conducted in Mandarin & English by the Chinese Health Initiative.



## Resources in the South Bay

### Mental Health Services by County

#### San Mateo County

▶ [Behavioral Health & Recovery Services](#)

→ ACCESS Call Center: 800-686-0101

→ Local crisis line: 650-579-0350

▶ [San Mateo County Health Resources](#) including Chinese-Speaking Mental Health Practitioners in San Mateo County.

#### Alameda County

▶ [Asian Health Services](#)

510-735-3900

Offers mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

▶ [ACCESS Program](#)

800-491-9099

Provides information, screening and referrals for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for Alameda County residents.



## Chapter 8

# How Family and Friends Can Help

This section can help you involve your family or friend in dealing with mental health issues. It may be helpful to share this with your friend or family member.

- 
- **Ways Family and Friends Can Help**
  - **How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health**
  - **Support Groups and Resources**
  - **Reliable Sources for Mental Health Information**
  - **Mental Health Information in Chinese and Other Languages**



## Ways Family and Friends Can Help

In Chinese culture, the family is seen as a whole and the basic unit of the society. When a family member faces an illness, it's not just their personal concern — it impacts the entire family, often prompting everyone to come together and mobilize resources to help. Seeking help, especially for mental health, is usually a collective decision involving the family rather than an individual choice.

When we or our loved ones consider reaching out for mental health support, it's common for a family member to initiate that first step. In fact, that first visit to a mental health professional might even follow phone calls from one or more family members, who are actively involved in the process and care deeply about the well-being of the individual — and the family as a whole.

If your loved ones are struggling with mental health problems, there are many ways that you can help:

### Be Informed About Mental Health

Learn about the symptoms of different mental health problems from credible sources. Family members often wonder why their loved one cannot overcome their struggles. Understanding these issues is a fundamental aspect of providing effective support. A lack of understanding can lead to misconceptions and hinder family members from effectively helping their loved ones.

### Practice Listening, Empathy, and Boundary Setting Skills

It might be challenging for Chinese Americans to practice active listening and empathy with family members. In Chinese tradition, it is common for a family member to share knowledge and provide suggestions as a way of support, while listening and empathy might be considered “not helping.” It's also important to note that boundaries are defined differently in various cultures (e.g. South Asian, East Asian, Mainstream California). It would be beneficial to learn about emotional, and personal boundaries so you can help your loved one without “taking over” or appearing disrespectful.

**For more information about these life skills, see Chapter 5.**



## Ways Family and Friends Can Help



### Seek Professional Support

Early intervention is key to addressing mental health concerns effectively. For Chinese Americans, seeking help from mental health professionals can align with cultural values. Consulting experts is often seen as a sign of wisdom, and therapy provides privacy, helping to preserve family “face.” It can also reduce the emotional “burden” and “guilt” of relying solely on family and friends for support.

However, mental health stigma may still pose a barrier to seeking support. While “family first” remains a core value in Chinese American culture, it is essential to emphasize: “Our family’s ‘face’ or feelings of shame are not as important as your health and well-being. You are family, and your life and health matter more than appearances, money, or societal judgment.”

### Participate in the Treatment Process

Family and friends are essential support during the counseling or treatment process. There is a wide range of ways to provide support and participate in helping your family member such as:

- ▶ Find information about insurance
- ▶ Assist scheduling the first appointment
- ▶ Accompany them to their initial visit
- ▶ Remind them of appointments or medications to take
- ▶ Listen to their concerns about counseling and treatment

When possible, ask if you can receive some advice from the mental health provider to improve your understanding and support as a family member.

### Offer Support, Understanding, and Patience

Reassure your friend or family member that you care about them. Remind them that they are not to blame. Frequently encourage them and bring them hope by validating their efforts and connections. You would not blame people who do not get better when they are being treated for physical health problems. You would focus on finding better ways to support them, talking to their healthcare provider, with their permission and being informed about their condition. Do the same for your loved one with mental health issues.

Source: [https://www.myhealthmylife.com.my/-/media/Project/Common/MyHealthMyLifeComMY/Home/Mental-Health-Handbook-2024\\_EN.pdf](https://www.myhealthmylife.com.my/-/media/Project/Common/MyHealthMyLifeComMY/Home/Mental-Health-Handbook-2024_EN.pdf)

# How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

## Prepare for the Conversation

Talking about mental health is difficult, and most of us are unfamiliar with and have anxiety about discussing emotional problems. Preparing and rehearsing what you want to say is highly recommended. This can be done by attending a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) workshop or consult with your health providers.

The section below provides guidance on how to have this conversation.

**1**

### Choose an Appropriate Time and Place

Mental health topics can be sensitive and emotionally charged. It's important to choose a quiet, private, and comfortable environment for both you and your family member or friend to have a conversation. This ensures that the other person feels safe and able to express themselves freely.

Before starting the conversation, remember that mental health problems impact the whole person, including the individual's thinking, feeling, and judgments. Do not take their reactions personally and remember to be patient with them and yourself. Review the "Instead of this...Do this" table in this chapter. It can help you see the differences between "having a conversation" and "blaming."

**2**

### Start by Sharing Your Observations

When starting the conversation, try to base it on specific observations and avoid interpretation or being judgmental. This communicates your care, and that you are paying attention to their well-being. For example,

*"I noticed that you have been crying (not sleeping, not going to classes, drinking, yelling at people) more than before."*

*"I've noticed you haven't been taking your dog for walks lately. I see that the plants you love have all withered, and it seems like you've been crying in secret."*

*"It seems like you are going through a difficult time. I noticed that you are watching a lot of k-drama and scrolling on your phone a lot more."*



## How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

**3**

### Express Concern, Not Blame

Express your worries in a sincere and supportive way, such as:

*"I'm worried about you because these changes are different from the person I know. Can you tell me how you've been doing lately?"*

This approach can reduce defensiveness and encourage the person to share openly.

**4**

### Listen Fully, Without Rushing to Solve Things

Listening and empathy are more helpful than providing solutions that the individual did not ask for. When they're sharing their feelings and experiences, focus on listening with empathy. Avoid jumping in with advice or solutions — just try to understand, saying something like:

*"I see that you're really struggling, this must be so difficult for you."  
"I do not know what to say. I appreciate you."*

Such responses help the person feel understood and respected.

**5**

### Provide Encouragement and Support

After they have shared, offer some words of encouragement, such as:

*"Thank you for sharing this with me. Is there anything I can do to help?"*

Suggest seeking professional help together, such as:

*"Maybe we can discuss this with an expert. I can help contact a family doctor or help you find a counselor."*

# How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

## Core Skills for Having Conversations

Communication skills are difficult to learn or practice. Even the most effective communicators can sometimes offend people. Here are some principles in having a conversation about mental health.

- ▶ Avoid saying **“should,” “need,” and “why.”** This will reduce the chance of sounding judgmental or disrespectful.
- ▶ Avoid analyzing the situation. Saying things such as **“You are this way because you have no self-confidence”** is condescending, over simplifying, and disrespectful. You can describe what you hear or see, such as **“I heard that you said lack of self-confidence made you anxious, is that right?”**
- ▶ Provide solutions only when invited or by inviting them to share with you what might be helpful, such as **“Have you thought of anything that might help you feel better? I’m here to support you.”**
- ▶ Avoid taking things personally. Not taking things personally is a difficult concept for many Chinese Americans. Here are some examples of responses when taking things personally: **“Why did you yell at me?” “Why can’t you listen to me?” “You did this to make me look bad.”**
- ▶ Do not label someone as lazy, ungrateful, stupid, selfish, or a failure.
- ▶ Do not diagnose unless you are a licensed health provider.
- ▶ Do not expect a big change will happen after one conversation. Having conversations is the key.
- ▶ Keep your mind on the objective: **Having a conversation.**



## How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

### What if the other person says, “I’m fine, I don’t want to talk about it.”

- ✓ Do not take it personally.
- ✓ Tell them you understand.
- ✓ Ask them if you could check in with them later.
- ✓ Tell them that you are willing to listen and talk when they want to.
- ✓ Tell them that they are important to you.
- ✓ Ask them if there is someone else that they feel they can talk to.
- ✓ Offer them resources (such as lifeline, warm line).

### The next step you can take:

- ✓ Consider taking a “Mental Health First Aid” class to learn these skills.
- ✓ Look at the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) websites for more suggestions and actions.
- ✓ Talk to your own health care provider or a counselor about how to approach the situation.



Do this	Instead of this...
<p><b>Inviting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I wonder if I may ...</li> <li>✓ I would like you to know...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ordering:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ You need to listen to me.</li> <li>✗ We need to talk.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talking about observable behaviors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I noticed some changes in you (e.g., not laughing as much, staying in your room most of the time, stopped playing games, changes in appetite, sleep, or mood).</li> <li>✓ I have known you for some time, and these changes make me worry about how you are doing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Diagnosing/interpreting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ You have a problem/illness.</li> <li>✗ You are not doing well.</li> <li>✗ You need help.</li> <li>✗ I think you are depressed.</li> </ul>

## How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

Do this	Instead of this...
<p><b>Talking about observable behaviors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You seem sad to me.</li> <li>✓ You have not played your guitar for a long time.</li> <li>✓ You did not go to your classes for a month.</li> <li>✓ I noticed that you have been throwing up after dinners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Judging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ You are not dealing with your issues.</li> <li>✗ You are not coping well.</li> <li>✗ You need to face the problem.</li> <li>✗ You should not play computer games all day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Being there and sharing your thoughts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I worry...</li> <li>✓ I care about...</li> <li>✓ I have been thinking about what I can do for you; are there some things I can do for you.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Suggesting solutions &amp; teaching:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ I think you should think less.</li> <li>✗ You need to try harder.</li> <li>✗ Can't you just snap out of it?</li> <li>✗ You need help.</li> <li>✗ You need to seek counseling.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Focusing on what makes you concerned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This behavioral change worries me.</li> <li>✓ How/what can I do for you to...?</li> <li>✓ I have dealt with issues too, and am happy to help you, how can I help</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unintentionally focusing on yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ 'I' know exactly how you feel...</li> <li>✗ 'I' want to do something for you.</li> <li>✗ 'I' need to talk to you.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stick with facts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It may be difficult to see a counselor; people have doubts about counseling.</li> <li>✓ People who sought counseling often wish they had done it earlier.</li> <li>✓ Attending counseling takes effort and courage.</li> <li>✓ Mental health providers are trained professionals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Glossing over:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Seeing a counselor is not that big a deal.</li> <li>✗ Everyone has a therapist.</li> <li>✗ Everyone can talk.</li> <li>✗ It's just talking.</li> </ul>



To learn more, watch this video on [Breaking the Silence: Opening Conversations on Mental Health with Loved Ones](#) conducted in Mandarin by the Chinese Health Initiative.

## Support Groups and Resources

### Support Groups for the Chinese Community

▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities \(MHACC\) Support Groups](#)

Currently held online or in-person. For more information, call 800-881-8502. Check their website for current dates and times.

→ **NAMI Connection-API English Peer Support Group**

Meets in-person 2nd & 4th Saturday of every month 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Meets online 1st & 3rd Saturday of every month 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

→ **NAMI Connection Cantonese Peer Support Group**

Meets online 2nd Saturday of every month 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

→ **NAMI Connection Mandarin Peer Support Group**

Meets online 3rd Saturday of every month 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

→ **NAMI Family Cantonese Support Group**

Meets online 2nd Saturday of every month 3:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

→ **NAMI Family Mandarin Support Group**

Meets online 3rd Saturday of every month 3:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

▶ [Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub, Chinese Health Initiative, El Camino Health](#)

A bilingual hub offering tips and tools to help you maintain and manage emotional well-being with tipsheets, videos, resources and more.

▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities](#)

800-881-8502

3100 Capital Avenue, Suite E,  
Fremont, CA 94538

Services for Chinese families and individuals affected by mental illness. Available in Mandarin, Cantonese, English. If you experience fear, anxiety, or distress, you can call the MHACC Mental Health Warmline Mon-Sun, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. Pacific Time.

- ▶ An **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is a benefit offered by employers that provides free counseling and coaching services. Whether you're supporting a loved one or managing your own mental health issues, EAP services can offer guidance and resources to help you navigate challenges.

**For more information about searching for a Chinese-speaking mental health provider and other resources, see Chapter 7.**



## Reliable Sources for Mental Health Information

- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)
    - Easy-to-read information on mental health disorders (symptoms, related factors, treatment options)
    - Join clinical trials on mental disorders
    - Searching for low-cost health clinics
  - ▶ [Medlineplus \(U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institute of Health\)](#)

Provides comprehensive and most up-to-date information on various health-related topics (physical and mental disorders, drug information, effectiveness of supplements, etc).
  - ▶ [JED Foundation: Crisis and Support Services](#)
  - ▶ [JED Foundation: Mental Health Resource Center](#)
  - ▶ [American Psychological Association](#)
    - Easy-to-read information on various psychology-related topics
    - Psychology glossary
    - Search for psychologists
  - ▶ [American Psychiatric Association](#)
    - Easy-to-read information on mental health related issues
    - Search for psychiatrist
  - ▶ [American Counseling Association](#)
    - Easy-to-read information on counseling
    - Find a counselor
  - ▶ [Mental Health & Substance Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

Find information and resources for mental health concerns and substance use disorder treatment.
  - ▶ [The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards](#)
    - Consumer information, consumer rights
    - Verify mental health provider's license
  - ▶ [California Department of Education](#)

Coping with tragedy. Resources to assist schools in helping students to cope with tragic events.
  - ▶ [California Department of Mental Health](#)

Consumer information, consumer rights, verifying mental health providers' license
  - ▶ [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Provides info for suicide prevention.
  - ▶ [American Association of Suicidology](#)

Provides info for suicide prevention.
  - ▶ [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Provides info for suicide prevention.
- For more information about crisis intervention, see Chapter 9.**

## Mental Health Information in Chinese and Other Languages

▶ [Information about mental health and stress in many different languages](#)

Provided by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the largest mental health teaching hospital in Canada

▶ [Mental Health Information & Resources in Chinese](#)

Provided by Multicultural Mental Health Resource Center in Canada

▶ [Translations of mental health information in different languages](#)

Provided by Royal College of Psychiatrists in UK

▶ [Information about different types of therapies in Chinese](#)

Provided by Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre in Canada

▶ [Information about Mental health disorders](#)

Provided by WHO





# Chapter 9

## Crisis Intervention

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- What Is a Mental Health Crisis?
- Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm
- Handling a Mental Health Emergency
- 988 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Acute, Post Acute, and Community Resources



## What Is a Mental Health Crisis?

A mental health crisis is any situation in which a person's behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others and/or prevents them from being able to care for themselves or function effectively day-to-day and in the community.

It's important to be aware of how long the changes in personality or daily functioning have been occurring and how much difficulty they're causing. This level of detail can be important for a health care professional to know.

It is often difficult for Chinese Americans to assess the level of crisis because of stigma and common cultural practice of not expressing distress or emotions. If you are not certain, you should get help from mental health professionals or call the **National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988** for support.

Continue reading this chapter to learn more about 988.

## Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm

Thoughts and behaviors about self-harm, death, and suicide are mental health crises. Professional treatment is vital for the safety, recovery, and health for people with these thoughts and behaviors because they often experience overwhelming emotional pain, frustration, loneliness, hopelessness, powerlessness, shame, guilt, and/or self-hatred.

It is also necessary for you to obtain knowledge and to prepare for these crises. If you have someone in your family that expresses thoughts of suicide, the more we prepare, the more we might help someone to stay safe from suicide and self-harm.



## Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm

A key to helping someone stay safe from suicide and self-harm is knowing the signs. Common warning signs of suicide include:

### Changes (sometimes “positive” changes)

Significant shifts in appetite, sleep, habits, interests, energy levels, hygiene, religious beliefs, social interactions, mood (which could improve or worsen), temperament, personality, living situation, relationships, or health.

### Loss

Experiencing the loss of relationships, people, positions, safety, financial resources, jobs, homes, pets, health, hope, etc.

### Feelings of Hopelessness

People may express despair such as “no one cares,” “there is no future,” “too much to handle,” “I can’t take it anymore,” “I just want it to end” or “I don’t see any light at the end of the tunnel”

### Reckless Behavior

Engaging in high-risk activities, impulsivity, or increased use of drugs or alcohol.

### Preparation Behaviors

Actions like setting affairs in order, purchasing insurance (even years in advance), giving away belongings, saying goodbyes, or acquiring means for self-harm (e.g., purchasing a gun, stockpiling pills, or purchasing a one-way ticket with no reason for it, etc.) Some Chinese Americans may also prepare their family members by saying phrases such as “you do not have to feel ashamed of me soon,” “our family name will be restored soon,” “you do not have to worry about me soon.”

### References to Suicide and Death

Writing, talking, researching, studying, joking, or posting on social media about death, suicide, or phrases like “not here anymore.”

These signs are not universal. Very often there may not be a sign. Therefore, when we notice any of the warning signs or suspect someone might be thinking about suicide, approach them and talk to them.





## Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm

Below is a gentle and direct approach. These steps are based on **QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)** by Dr. Paul Quinnett.

### 1 Start the conversation by sharing what you've observed such as:

*"I've noticed that lately you haven't been sleeping well, seem to have lost interest in soccer, which you used to love, have been posting a lot of sad song lyrics online, etc."*

*"I wonder how you are doing."*

### 2 Listen to their answers.

Be extremely patient because people often need time to form their answers.

### 3 Gently ask the "swing question."

Many Chinese Americans do not want to invade privacy or be too direct and this "swing question" is a respectful and non-intrusive approach.

*"I care about you. You are important to me. I wonder if it is okay for me to ask if you are thinking about death/suicide/cutting yourself?"*

### 4 When the answer is "maybe," "I don't know," "not sure," "why are you asking?" "yes," silence or you have the gut feeling of "I want to do more," you may want to communicate the following.

#### ▶ Connection

You are grateful that this person is willing to share such personal and painful information with you.

#### ▶ Teamwork

You invite the person to work together with you to be safe for now. For example,

*"Do you mind me asking you some more questions to know how to support you to stay safe until we get some help?"*

## Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm

### ▶ Safe-for-Now

Obtain information related to safety and find ways to increase safety. Asking open-ended questions about means of suicide instead of **“do you have a gun or pills?”** Chinese Americans tend to use firearms as a means of suicide less often than other ethnic groups in the United States. For example,

*“May I ask you what you plan to kill yourself with? Could we find a way to keep you away from that?”*

## 5

### Call for professional help

*“Your safety and life are important to me. I want to have professional support and guidance to help you get through this very challenging time. Whom should we contact first?”*

- ▶ Contact a therapist, psychiatrist, physician, or another healthcare professional who is familiar with the person.
- ▶ Remove potential means of harm, such as weapons and medications, to reduce risk.
- ▶ **Call the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.** This lifeline gives you or your loved one free emotional support and connects you with a trained counselor, no matter what you are going through.

**Please remember, a suicide threat or attempt is a medical emergency that requires professional help as soon as possible.**



## Helping Family or Friends Stay Safe from Suicide or Self-Harm

What to Do	What Not to Do
<p>When talking to them, focus on being understanding, caring, and nonjudgmental. You can say things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>"You are not alone. I'm here for you."</i></li> <li>✓ <i>"I may not fully understand how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."</i></li> <li>✓ <i>"I'm concerned about you, and I want you to know that there is help available to get you through this."</i></li> <li>✓ <i>"You are important to me; we will get through this together."</i></li> <li>✓ <i>"I care about you too much to keep this secret. You need help, and I'm here to help you get it."</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Don't promise to keep it a secret.</li> <li>✗ Don't debate the value of life or argue about whether suicide is right or wrong.</li> <li>✗ Don't ask questions in a way that suggests you want a "No" answer, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>"You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"</i></li> <li><i>"You haven't been making yourself sick to lose weight, have you?"</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>✗ Don't try to handle the situation alone or attempt to resolve it by yourself.</li> </ul>

### What Not to Say

- ✗ *"We all go through tough times. You'll be fine."*
- ✗ *"It's all in your head. Just snap out of it."*

#### Caution. Common Chinese cultural sayings to avoid.

- ✗ *"If you died by suicide, you would become a forever ghost." (will not go to heaven, will not be included in the family tomb, will not be remembered)*
- ✗ *Look at your \_\_\_\_, they have a more difficult time, and they are able to cope."*
- ✗ *"I had it harder when I was your age, and I just toughen myself up."*
- ✗ *"You have already failed school/work, you are failing in killing yourself."*
- ✗ *"We sacrificed so much for you, and this is how you repay us?"*
- ✗ *"If you really want to die, you would have done it."*
- ✗ *"Think about us, why are you doing this to us?"*
- ✗ *"Haven't you brought enough trouble to me?"*
- ✗ *"You are so weak."*

## Handling a Mental Health Emergency

**When a mental health crisis arises, focus on safety and seeking appropriate treatments and support. Consider these questions first:**

- ▶ Is the person at risk of harming themselves, others, or property?
- ▶ How can they stay safe?
- ▶ Who can I call first to help with this mental health crisis? For example:
  - Emergency Department at 911 (e.g., overdosing, unconscious, bleeding)
  - Professional mental health providers who know the person in crisis
  - Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988

**If it is safe for you to try to de-escalate the mental health crisis, keep the following principles in mind:**

- ✓ Create physical and psychological space: appropriate social distance, slow and brief sentences, pause between sentences
- ✓ Maintain a calm voice and body movements
- ✓ Actively listen to the person
- ✓ Show understanding and concern

- ✓ Avoid staring or prolonged eye contact
- ✓ Inquire how you can assist
- ✓ Maintain a “low-stimulation” environment  
Provide options rather than trying to control the situation
- ✓ Avoid physical contact unless permission is granted
- ✓ Practice patience
- ✓ Communicate your actions gently before carrying them out
- ✓ Give them space and avoid making them feel cornered
- ✗ Avoid making judgmental remarks
- ✗ Refrain from arguing or trying to reason with the person

If you determine that there is no immediate safety concern to self or others, reach out to a health care provider who is familiar with the person’s history. This professional can help evaluate the situation and provide guidance on steps such as arranging an appointment or considering hospitalization. If you cannot contact someone and the situation continues to deteriorate, consider calling your county’s mental health crisis unit, crisis response team, or similar emergency services.



**Note:** You do not need consent to call a mental health provider to provide information. The mental health provider will not be able to confirm or deny if they work with or know the person, but they will take information and take appropriate follow up actions.

## Handling a Mental Health Emergency



Pay attention to your own safety and the situation. If you are unable to de-escalate the mental health crisis, seek additional support from mental health professionals, the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988, local crisis response team, or 911. It is extremely difficult to decide which is the best to call first, especially when you are dealing with a challenging situation. It is helpful to remember the objective is safety of the person, other people, and yourself.

**In cases where the situation is life-threatening or involves significant property damage, do not hesitate to call 911 for immediate assistance.**



When calling 911 to ask for support during a mental health crisis:

- ▶ Inform them that the person is experiencing a mental health crisis, describe the nature of the emergency, explain your relationship to the person in crisis, and indicate if any weapons are involved.
- ▶ Ask the 911 operator to send someone trained to work with people with mental problems such as a Crisis Intervention Training officer, CIT for short.
- ▶ When applicable, emphasize no weapon, no intention to harm others, and items the person is carrying that may be mistaken as a weapon (e.g., toothbrush, drill, cellphone).

Here is a resource for [sample scripts for 911 calls](#) regarding a mental health crisis.

**In cases where the situation is non-life threatening, please call 988, the three-digit number to call for a mental health emergency or crisis. It is the new number for the national Crisis and Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

988 is free, confidential, and available 24/7. You can also dial 988 if you are worried about a loved one who may need mental health crisis support.

**See the following section to learn more about 988.**





## 988 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline

There is a national Crisis and Suicide Prevention Lifeline called 988. You can access crisis behavioral health services through the county health department. Locally, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Call Center offers a range of crisis intervention services that are free and available to anyone, regardless of insurance or immigration status. **It is available 24/7 in more than 200 languages.** By calling 988, individuals can connect with trained professionals who can offer support, guidance, and resources to those in crisis. If you do not feel supported or understood by the 988 crisis responder, you may ask for another person or their supervisor.

### Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Call Center and Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

- ▶ **Call 988 for local 408, 650 and 669 area codes.**

You may request Chinese interpretation.

OR

- ▶ **Call 800-704-0900 and press 1 if your number is outside the Santa Clara County.**
- ▶ **Text 9-8-8** (Only in English and Spanish)
- ▶ Chat at [www.988lifeline.org/chat](http://www.988lifeline.org/chat)



988 provides direct connection to confidential and compassionate support. Calls are anonymous and confidential — information will not be shared unless in-person assistance is needed through one of the community mobile response teams.

When you call 988, you will be connected to a trained counselor who will provide support to you in crisis. They will work with you to understand what you need. Support can be given on the phone or in person if needed.

You may receive urgent support through the mobile response teams supporting various levels of risk and age groups. They provide effective and compassionate crisis intervention to individuals who exhibit mental health symptoms and may be at risk for self-harm or harm to others.

The teams are made up of different types of practitioners, including clinicians social workers (MSW), Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT), family specialists, and peer support workers with training and expertise in crisis response. They may work closely with law enforcement, crisis hotlines, the community and family members to deliver the best services possible.

## 988 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline

If urgent care support is needed, Santa Clara County residents may receive the following services through the County's Community Mobile Response Teams:

▶ **In-Home Outreach Teams (IHOT)**

Service for adults 18+ who have Medi-Cal or no insurance.

▶ **Trusted Response Urgent Support Team (TRUST)**

Activated through 988/Call Center, TRUST provides community-based support for adults 18+ without involving law enforcement. TRUST is focused on managing mental health and substance abuse concerns when no immediate safety risks are present.

▶ **Mobile Response and Stabilization (MRSS)**

For children and young adults ages 4-20, MRSS is activated through 988/Call Center or the Pacific Clinics Crisis Line (408-379-9085). This service includes a specialized response for youth and phone-based de-escalation.

▶ **Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT)**

Activated through 988/Call Center, MCRT provides services for adults 18+ with safety concerns, potentially leading to a "5150" (involuntary psychiatric hold). Teams of licensed or unlicensed clinicians respond, and law enforcement can be involved if necessary.

▶ **Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT)**

Activated through 911 for high-severity situations, PERT consists of licensed clinicians and law enforcement officers/deputies, who respond in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles to ensure a less intimidating presence.



To learn more, watch this bilingual video on [How to Access Crisis Intervention Services in Santa Clara County](#).



Learn more about [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services here](#).



## Acute, Post Acute, and Community Resources

Inpatient psychiatric hospitalization is designed to help individuals who are going through a behavioral health crisis. An acute psychiatric crisis often requires immediate care and oversight by trained mental health professionals.

### Local Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities

▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services](#)

408-885-6140

For individuals requiring psychiatric stabilization for behavior assessed as dangerous to self, to others, or gravely disabled and requires 24-hour care in a secure and therapeutic setting. These individuals may have anxiety, depression, mania, or experience altered thought processes. The length of inpatient care is determined by the continued need for such services.

▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)

650-988-8468

Designed to help people who are experiencing anxiety, depression, mania, or altered thought processes. They may be unable to care for their needs or are at risk of harming themselves or others.

After hospitalization, community mental health agencies and residential treatment centers can provide ongoing support, including:

▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)

▶ [Momentum for Health](#)

Offers Crisis Stabilization Unit, Crisis Residential Treatment, Adult Residential Treatment. For private insurance, [La Selva's Group offers a residential treatment program.](#)

▶ [Asian Americans for Community Involvement \(AACI\)](#)

▶ [Gardner Health Services](#)

**For more information about other local mental health clinics and services, see Chapter 7.**

This chapter was based on Navigating a Mental Health Crisis: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) resource guide for those experiencing a mental health emergency and adapted to the Chinese community.

To learn more about navigating a mental health crisis for yourself or your loved one, [visit the NAMI resource guide.](#)

# Appendix

## Sources and References

### Chapter 1

#### What is Mental Health?

- ▶ [Asian Health Coalition: Community Resource Guide for Mental Health](#)

#### Health Continuum Model

- ▶ [Illness-Wellness Continuum model developed by Dr John W. Travis](#)

#### Mental Health Issues for Asian Americans

- ▶ [Psychiatry Online: Mental Health Issues for Asian Americans](#)

#### Myths and Facts about Mental Health

- ▶ [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services \(SAMHSA\): Mental Health Myths and Facts](#)

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Racial Stereotypes, Discrimination and Anti-Asian Hate Crime

- ▶ [World Journal: Anti-Asian Hate Crime Interview \(in Chinese\) of Wei-Chien Lee, PhD, clinical psychologist](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Health Initiative Emotional Well-Being tipsheet: Surge in Anti-Asian Hate Crimes](#)

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Symptoms of Mental Health Disorder

- ▶ [Mental Health America: Mental Health Information](#)
- ▶ [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- ▶ [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

Depression

- ▶ [Depression: Diagnosis and Treatment. By Alison Hwang, MD, psychiatry. Video conducted in English & Mandarin.](#)

Schizophrenia Spectrum

- ▶ [Mental Health America: Schizophrenia](#)

Other Mental Health Disorders

- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health: Obsessive-compulsive disorder](#)
- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health: Post-traumatic stress disorder](#)
- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health: Eating Disorders](#)
- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health: Other Mental Health Disorders](#)
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## Chapter 4

### Understanding Stress

- ▶ [Stress-Reduction. By Wei-Chien Lee, PhD, clinical psychologist. Video conducted in Mandarin.](#)

### Managing Stress: Strategies and Approaches

- ▶ [Psychology Today: Cognitive Reappraisal](#)

### Anxiety

- ▶ [Understanding Anxiety. By Yu-Ping Huang, PhD, clinical psychologist. Video conducted in Mandarin.](#)

### Benefits of Meditation

- ▶ [Mayo Clinic: Meditation: A simple, fast way to reduce stress](#)

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## Chapter 5

### Managing Emotions

- ▶ [Emotion Management. By Wei-Chien Lee, PhD, clinical psychologist. Video conducted in Mandarin](#)

### Article Related to Adaptive Communication: Connecting and Relating

- ▶ [30 Questions to Ask Your Kids Instead of "How Was Your Day"](#)
- ▶ [Harvard Business Review: How to Say No to Taking on More Work](#)

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## Sources and References

### Chapter 6

#### Holistic Wellness Areas

- ▶ [County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Service: Wellness Workbook for Adults](#)

#### Principles of Chinese Wellness

- ▶ [王洪圖教授《黃帝內經》 \(“Huangdi Neijing”\) Available in Simplified Chinese.](#)

#### Traditional Chinese Medicine

- ▶ [Emotional Well-Being Insights from Traditional Chinese Medicine Perspective. By Victor Cheng, LAc. Video conducted in Mandarin.](#)

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### Chapter 7

#### Pathway for Help-Seeking

- ▶ [San Jose State University: Mental Health Ambassador Handbook](#)

#### Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help

- ▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services](#)
- ▶ [American Immigration Council: New Americans in Santa Clara County](#)

#### How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

- ▶ [American Psychological Association: How to choose a psychologist](#)
- ▶ [California Board of Psychology: For Your Peace of Mind - A Consumer Guide to Psychological Services](#)
- ▶ [American Psychiatric Association: Let's Talk Facts About Choosing a Psychiatrist](#)

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### Chapter 8

#### Ways Family and Friends Can Help

- ▶ [Psychiatry Online: Mental Health Issues for Asian Americans](#)
- ▶ [My Health My Life: Mental Health Handbook](#)

#### How to Open the Conversation with Family and Friends Who are Struggling with Their Mental Health

- ▶ [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

## Sources and References

### Chapter 9

Handling a Mental Health Emergency

- ▶ [County of Sonoma: Script for 911 Calls Regarding a Mental Health Crisis](#)

Mental Health Emergency

- ▶ [National Alliance on Mental Illness: Navigating a Mental Health Crisis Resource Guide](#)

## Resources

### Chapter 2

Education, counseling and evaluation for expectant and new mothers

- ▶ [El Camino Health Maternal Outreach Mood Services \(MOMS\) Program](#)
- 

### Chapter 3

What Is a Mental Health Disorder?

- ▶ [Mental Health America: Mental Health Screening Tools](#)
- ▶ [Taiwan Institute of Psychotherapy: Mental Health Screening Tools in Chinese](#)

Anxiety

- ▶ Screening Tool: [Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 \(GAD-7\)](#)
- ▶ Screening Tool: [Chinese version of GAD-7. Available in Traditional & Simplified Chinese.](#)

Depression

- ▶ [El Camino Health Maternal Outreach Mood Services \(MOMS\) Program](#)
- ▶ [Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#)
- ▶ Screening Tool: [Patient Health Questionnaire-9 \(PHQ-9\)](#)
- ▶ Screening Tool: [Chinese version PHQ-9. Available in Traditional & Simplified Chinese.](#)

Substance Use Disorder

- ▶ Screening Tool: [CAGE questionnaire](#)
- ▶ [Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities \(CARF\): Find a Provider](#)

Local Community Substance Abuse Programs

- ▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)
- ▶ Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services
  - [South County Clinic](#)
  - [Alexian Clinic](#)
  - [Central Valley Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Parisi House on the Hill](#)
- ▶ [Pathway Society](#)

## Resources

### Chapter 4

#### Anxiety

- ▶ Screening Tool: [Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 \(GAD-7\)](#)
- ▶ Screening Tool: [Chinese version of GAD-7. Available in Traditional & Simplified Chinese.](#)

#### Diaphragmatic (Abdominal) Breathing

- ▶ [Headspace: Breathing Technique to Relax: Belly Breathing Exercise Video](#)

#### Local Community Substance Abuse Programs

- ▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)
- ▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services](#)
- ▶ [South County Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Alexian Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Central Valley Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Parisi House on the Hill](#)
- ▶ [Pathway Society](#)

#### Mindfulness

- ▶ [Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care \(CACCC\)](#) has guided videos in Mandarin to practice mindfulness.
  - ▶ [Mindfulness - Body Scan](#)
  - ▶ [Mindfulness - Observing the Breath](#)
  - ▶ [Mindfulness - Cultivating Loving-Kindness](#)
  - ▶ [Mindfulness - The Path to Happiness](#)
  - ▶ Local Meditation Program
    - [Dharma Drum Mountain San Francisco Bay Area Center: Event Calendar](#)
    - [Chung Tai Zen Center of Sunnyvale: Class Schedule](#)



## Resources

### Chapter 4

#### Meditation

##### Books Related to Meditation and Mindfulness

- ▶ *Feeling Good and When Panic Attacks* by Dr. David Burns
- ▶ *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook* by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD. Available in Chinese.
- ▶ [\*Hoofprint of the Ox\* by Master Sheng-Yen with Daniel B. Stevenson, \(Chapter 2: Meditation and the Principles for Training Body and Mind\). Available in Chinese.](#)

##### Apps for Mindfulness and Meditation

- ▶ [Headspace](#)
  - ▶ [Insight Timer](#)
  - ▶ [Calm](#)
  - ▶ [Relax Lite](#)
  - ▶ [Mindfulness Coach](#)
- 

### Chapter 5

#### Books Related to Interpersonal Communication

- ▶ *4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication* by Bento C. Leal III
  - ▶ *Just Listen* by Mark Goulston
  - ▶ *The Relationship Cure* by John Gottman
- 

### Chapter 6

#### Self-Care

- ▶ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Good Sleep Habits](#)

#### Self-Care - 30 days Challenges

- ▶ [County of Santa Clara Behavior Health Service: Wellness Workbook for Adults](#)
- ▶ [Daily Self Care Worksheet](#)

# Resources

## Chapter 7

### Starting Points for Obtaining Professional Help

- ▶ [Chinese Health Initiative: Chinese-Speaking Physician Network](#)
- ▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Call Center](#)
- ▶ Undocumented-Safe Services
  - [Gardner Health Services](#)
  - [Momentum for Health](#)

### How do I Choose a Mental Health Provider

- ▶ [Department of Consumer Affairs website](#)
- ▶ [American Board of Medical Specialties](#)

### Local Community Substance Abuse Programs

- ▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)
- ▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services](#)
- ▶ [South County Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Alexian Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Central Valley Clinic](#)
- ▶ [Parisi House on the Hill](#)
- ▶ [Pathway Society](#)

### Search for Chinese-Speaking Care Providers

- ▶ [Upward Counseling Center](#)
- ▶ [Chinese American Counseling Service](#)
- ▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities](#)
- ▶ [Psychology Today](#)
- ▶ [American Psychological Association Psychologist Locator](#)
- ▶ [Bay Area Psychological Association: Find a Psychologist](#)

### Support Groups for the Chinese Community

- ▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities \(MHACC\) Support Groups](#)

### Local Resources in the South Bay

- ▶ [Mental Health and Addiction Services at El Camino Health](#)
  - [Adult Mood Program](#)
  - [Older Adult Transitions Services](#)
  - [ASPIRE](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Health Initiative: Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub](#)

# Resources

## Chapter 7

### Local Resources in the South Bay

- ▶ [Bill Wilson Center](#)
- ▶ [Asian American Community Involvement \(AACI\) Behavioral Health Services](#)
- ▶ [Momentum for Health](#)
- ▶ [Pacific Clinics](#)
- ▶ [Peninsula Healthcare Connection \(PHC\)](#)

### Santa Clara County Mental Health Services

- ▶ [Behavioral Health Call Center \(BHCC\)](#)
- ▶ [Behavioral Health Urgent Care \(BHUC\)](#)

### San Mateo County Mental Health Services

- ▶ [Behavioral Health & Recovery Services](#)
- ▶ [San Mateo County Health Resources](#)

### Alameda County Mental Health Services

- ▶ [Asian Health Services](#)
  - ▶ [ACCESS Program](#)
- 

## Chapter 8

### Support Group and Resources

- ▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities \(MHACC\) Support Groups](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Health Initiative: Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub](#)
- ▶ [Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities](#)

### Reliable Sources for Mental Health Information

- ▶ [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)
- ▶ [Medlineplus \(U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institute of Health\)](#)
- ▶ [JED Foundation: Crisis and Support Services](#)
- ▶ [JED Foundation: Mental Health Resource Center](#)
- ▶ [American Psychological Association](#)
- ▶ [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- ▶ [American Counseling Association](#)
- ▶ [Mental Health & Substance Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

## Resources

### Chapter 8

#### Reliable Sources for Mental Health Information

- ▶ [The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards](#)
- ▶ [California Department of Education](#)
- ▶ [California Department of Mental Health](#)
- ▶ [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- ▶ [American Association of Suicidology](#)
- ▶ [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

#### Mental Health Information in Chinese and Other Languages

- ▶ [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: Information about mental health and stress in many different languages](#)
  - ▶ [Multicultural Mental Health Resource in Canada: Mental Health Information & Resources in Chinese](#)
  - ▶ [Royal College of Psychiatrist in UK: Translations of mental health information in different languages](#)
  - ▶ [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre in Canada: Information about different types of therapies in Chinese](#)
  - ▶ [World Health Organization: Information about Mental health disorders](#)
- 

### Chapter 9

#### 988 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- ▶ [County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Service](#)
- ▶ [Chat with 988](#)

#### Local Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities

- ▶ [Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services](#)
- ▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)

#### Post-hospitalization Community Mental Health Agencies and Residential Treatment Center

- ▶ [El Camino Health Scrivner Center for Mental Health & Addiction Services](#)
- ▶ [Momentum for Health](#)
- ▶ [La Selva's Group Residential Treatment](#)
- ▶ [Asian Americans for Community Involvement \(AACI\)](#)
- ▶ [Gardner Health Services](#)

## Resources from Chinese Health Initiative

- ▶ [Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub](#)
- ▶ [Chinese-Speaking Physician Network](#)
- ▶ [Upcoming Events](#)
- ▶ [YouTube channel](#)

### Article

- ▶ [Ask-the-Expert: Understanding Depression](#)

### Screening Tools

- ▶ Anxiety
  - [Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 \(GAD-7\)](#)
  - [Chinese version GAD-7. Available in Traditional & Simplified Chinese.](#)
- ▶ Depression
  - [Patient Health Questionnaire-9 \(PHQ-9\)](#)
  - [Chinese version PHQ-9. Available in Tradition & Simplified Chinese.](#)

### Video

- ▶ [Stress-Reduction. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Understanding Anxiety. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Emotion Management. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Effective Communication. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Boundary Setting. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Self-Care. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Pitfalls to Avoid in Parent-Child Communication. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Nurturing Adolescent Emotions: A Parent's Guide. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Depression & Social Anxiety: Diagnosis and Treatment. Conducted in English & Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [How to Manage Emotions During and After Pregnancy. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [What You Need to Know about Depression. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Breaking the Silence: Opening Conversations on Mental Health with Loved Ones. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Connecting with Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services and Support. Conducted in Mandarin and English.](#)



## Resources from Chinese Health Initiative

### Video

- ▶ [How to Access Crisis Intervention Services in Santa Clara County. Conducted in English and Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Emotional Well-Being Insights from Traditional Chinese Medicine Perspective. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Nutrition and Food Therapy Series 1. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Nutrition and Food Therapy Series 2. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Nutrition and Food Therapy Series 3. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Dayan Qigong Demo. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Dayan Qigong Demo. Conducted in English.](#)
- ▶ [Guided Meditation. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)
- ▶ [Chan Meditation. Conducted in Mandarin.](#)

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華人健康促進計畫衷心感謝  
**El Camino Health Foundation**  
提供慈善捐款，讓我們能夠提供符合華人  
文化及語言需求的心理健康教育與服務。



**El Camino Health  
Foundation**

[elcaminohealth.org/foundation](http://elcaminohealth.org/foundation)

**誠摯感謝 PMP 先鋒材料科技集團的  
公益捐贈，讓華人健康促進計畫  
能夠提供華人社區所需的  
心理健康教育和資源！**

**Chinese Health Initiative thanks PMP for  
generously supporting the mental health  
literacy and emotional well-being of our  
Chinese community**



成立於 1978 年的 PMP 先鋒材料科技集團 (PMP Tech)，四十年來以製造用於消費電子產品的創新高科技彈性體和其它環保橡膠產品享譽全球，擅長異種材料、功能材料的創新和創新的表面處理工藝。公司同時還專注於全球房地產投資，並關注於回饋社區，相信教育是最有回報價值的投資。

PMP Tech has been a leader in the research and manufacturing of high-tech elastomers and other rubber products for over 40 years. PMP Tech excels in the innovation of dissimilar materials, functional materials and the innovative surface treatment process. The company is also focused on global real estate investment.

WITH GRATITUDE TO  
CHINESE HEALTH INITIATIVE  
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

誠摯感謝華人健康促進計畫  
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慷慨捐贈以支持為華人健康促進計畫  
籌集資金的喜福居 55 週年慶晚宴



*The leading culturally tailored health resource for the Chinese community in the South Bay*

華人健康促進計畫  
Chinese Health Initiative

Chinese Health Initiative was created in 2011 to raise awareness of health issues affecting the Chinese community and to provide customized, culturally appropriate programs to address them. Our offerings include:

- ✓ Free health screening and community education delivered by physicians on emotional well-being, diabetes, heart & vascular issues, cancer, stroke, and other topics
- ✓ Chinese-speaking physicians with over 120 physicians in 30+ specialties
- ✓ Health Resource Guide for Seniors to navigate the healthcare system and utilize community resources
- ✓ Culturally and linguistically tailored Diabetes Prevention Series based on the CDC's Diabetes Prevention Program that emphasizes lifestyle changes to diet, exercise, stress-reduction, and sleep.
- ✓ Emotional health workshop, Ask-a-Dietitian, Qigong classes and wellness lectures
- ✓ A selection of books on health topics published in Chinese at El Camino Health's Health Library & Resource Center
- ✓ Culturally appropriate hospital services such as interpreters, special foods, patient and family member support, and end-of-life care

## Learn more about the Chinese Health Initiative

Website: [www.elcaminohealth.org/chi](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi)

Emotional Well-Being Resource Hub:  
[www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-emotional-wellbeing](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-emotional-wellbeing)

Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/chinesehealthinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/groups/chinesehealthinitiative)

YouTube Channel: [www.elcaminohealth.org/chivideos](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chivideos)

Upcoming Events: [www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-events](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-events)

## El Camino Health 「華人健康促進計畫」

### 南灣華人社區首屈一指的健康資源

華人健康促進計畫於 2011 年成立，旨在提升華人社區對健康問題的認識，並提供量身打造、符合文化需求的健康教育與資源。我們的服務包括：

- ✓ 免費健康篩檢、由醫師主講的健康和醫療講座，主題包括高血壓、糖尿病、心血管疾病、中風、癌症、情緒健康等。
- ✓ 說華語醫生網路名單：一百二十餘位醫生，包括基本醫療科和專科等三十多種科別。
- ✓ 《華人耆英醫療健康指南》，幫助年長者了解醫療體系並善用社區資源。
- ✓ 四個月的御糖有術課程，以疾病預防和控制中心 (CDC) 科學實證有效的糖尿病預防課程 (DPP) 為基礎，根據華人飲食和文化習慣改編，分飲食、運動、睡眠、減壓四大單元，全方位建立健康的生活型態。
- ✓ 情緒與心理健康講座、請問營養師、氣功等社區保健課程。
- ✓ El Camino Health 山景城院區健康圖書館提供經專業醫療人員推薦的健康類中文圖書。
- ✓ 符合華人文化需求的住院服務，如清粥稀飯、中文口譯、病人陪伴和家屬支持、以及臨終關懷等。

## 關注「華人健康促進計畫」

專線：650-988-3234

網站：[www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-zh](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-zh)

心理健康加油站：[www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-emotional-wellbeing-zh](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-emotional-wellbeing-zh)

臉書群組：[www.facebook.com/groups/chinesehealthinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/groups/chinesehealthinitiative)

YouTube 頻道：[www.elcaminohealth.org/chivideos](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chivideos)

報名活動 / 課程：[www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-events](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/chi-events)



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