



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental Health Awareness Month was created to address the stigma of mental illness, educate the public about mental wellness, support those who need help, and advocate for policies that support mental health.

In May 2023, former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, released an advisory addressing the “epidemic of **loneliness and isolation.**”

In 2024, [San Mateo County was the first county in America to address loneliness as a public health emergency](#) with a unanimous vote by the Board of Supervisors. "We have 45% of the people who find themselves being lonely and suffer from loneliness." said Supervisor David Canepa, President of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

Having supportive relationships strongly supports one's mental health. It may be a little intimidating to take the lead, but most people are pleased to be sought out as a friend.

- **Reach out:** Haven't heard from a friend in a while? Pick up the phone. Schedule regular calls with loved ones or schedule a visit to catch up in person.
- **Take the lead:** Invite a new or long-time friend to lunch. Organize a neighborhood potluck, book group, or walking group.
- **Get out there:** Friendships can be founded on shared interests. Take a class or volunteer in your community. After you make a new friend, initiate a coffee get together.
- **Ask for help:** If you're lonely and having difficulty connecting with others or if your mental health concerns are more serious, getting professional help is recommended.

For Kaiser Permanente members, no referral is needed to connect with [mental health resources](#), and intake phone counselors and our Emergency Departments are available 24 hours a day. We provide individual therapy, group therapy, health classes, and medication. In addition, [Emotional wellness apps](#) are available to KP members at no extra cost.

Anyone in the U.S. who is experiencing a mental health crisis can call or text 988 for free, confidential emotional support 24 hours a day with a trained counselor and connect with resources. Learn more at the national [988 Suicide & Crisis National Lifeline](#).

Edward Kao, MD

Physician-in-Chief

Kaiser Permanente South San Francisco Medical Center