Behavioral Health Department

November, 2026 NEWSLETTER

November 22nd is International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

The purpose of this day serves as an opportunity for suicide loss survivors to come together, in order to be open with each other to discuss healing, hope, and grief in relation to experiencing a loss caused by suicide. If you lost a loved one to suicide, know someone who has gone through this, and/or are looking to be involved with supporting suicide prevention efforts, then consider either becoming more educated on this topic or participating in a survivor day event happening near you.

Reason for Why it was Created

Developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day was started up to be a day each year that's recognized as a time to show/offer support to those who experienced the pain of losing someone to suicide. The day itself serves as a platform, giving survivors the chance to connect with one another, openly discuss their experiences, and find support in a community who can provide compassion due to going through something similar themselves. Additionally, other actions encouraged this day include raising more awareness of its importance and promoting efforts to heal, as doing so helps put a spotlight on suicide prevention and mental health support.

Ways to Observe International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

In 2020, the number of deaths from suicide was reported to be over 45,000 deaths, this ranked as being the twelfth overall leading cause of death within the US. Despite what the statistics say, hope does exist that we can do something about this, as 93% of US adults believe suicide is preventable and want to see steps taken to support such a goal. Having International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day helps to bring awareness to suicide prevention and is when resources for suicide survivors are given the spotlight.

Here are some suggestions you can do in recognition of this important day:

- Educate yourself on suicide prevention and share what you learn with others
- Show support by joining a suicide prevention march; including for other similarly themed events as National Suicide Prevention Day and National Suicide Prevention Month
- Donate to an organization that raises awareness and provides resources for those affected by suicide like the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Honor the memory of a loved one lost to suicide by doing something that reminds you of them and reminisce on all the good times you were able to spend together
- Join a support group
- Practice self-care

Sources

"International Survivors Of Suicide Loss Day: Grief, Healing, And Resources" *betterhelp,* 26 Oct. 2026. https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/current-events/international-survivors-of-suicide-loss-day-grief-healing-and-resources/. Web. 28 Oct. 2026.

Dial 988

If you are facing a suicidal crisis or are in emotional distress, dial 988 to contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The lifeline will connect you to a local crisis center, where you'll talk to a crisis counselor who can provide emotional support and can help find crisis resources for you as well. This lifeline offers free, confidential support—24 hours a day, 7 days a week

CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST SERVICES

A Peer Specialist is an individual with lived recovery experience who has been trained and certified to help their peers gain hope and move forward in their own recovery. By sharing experiences, peers bring hope to people in recovery and promote a sense of belonging within the community (SAMSHA)

PEER SUPPORT IS..

- Delivered by individuals who have common lived experiences.
- People with mental health and/or substance use disorders have a unique power to help one another based on shared connection and deep understanding of this experience.
- Peer Specialists offer support, strength, and hope to their peers, which allows for personal growth, wellness, and recovery. (SAMSHA)
- Peer support is ongoing, available, and flexible.
- Peer support enhances other health care services by creating emotional, social and practical assistance necessary for staying healthy and managing. (Peers for Progress)

WHAT SERVICES DO PEER SPECIALSTS PROVIDE?

Peer specialists support their peers both individually and in small groups.

- Help peers create individual service plans based on recovery goals and steps to achieve those goals
- Use recovery-oriented tools to help their peers address challenges
- Assist others to build their own self-directed wellness plans
- Support peers in their decision-making
- Offer a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on…and more!

PROVIDING HOPE

Modeling recovery, engaging, and connecting are just some of the ways peers make a difference in the lives of others. The bond that is essential in peer support means that both the person giving support and the person receiving support benefit from the relationship. **(MHA)**

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Education and skill- building

- ⇒ Wellness planning
- ⇒ Crisis planning
- ⇒ Self- advocacy skills
- ⇒ Budgeting

Services that help

- ⇒ Identify strengths and use the strengths to reach goals
- ⇒ Identify and overcome barriers to participate in community resources

Connect with resources

- ⇒ Visiting community resources to familiarize
- ⇒ Teaching and modeling skills needed to utilize resources
- ⇒ Wrap around services
- ⇒ Cultural wellness and healing

Building relationships and encouraging community based activities

- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Relationships
- ⇒ Physical activity
- ⇒ Self- directed hobbies

Using SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness to guide a holistic approach to recovery, a Certified Peer Specialist will work with you to discuss meaningful goals in one or more of these important dimensions; financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and emotional. Each of the dimensions contribute to your overall wellness and individual recovery.

The Benefits of Practicing Gratitude

While it's certainly not easy to always do, putting in an effort to be grateful for the positives in your life can go on to impact who you are and how you function, as it could influence your mood, outlook, and overall well-being. In celebration of November being National Gratitude Month, in this article you will receive some insight into what goes into having a grateful attitude along with what benefits can be experienced by those who are working to cultivate gratitude; the content featured here comes from HelpGuide (https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health/wellbeing/gratitude).

Gratitude – What is it?

Gratitude is when appreciation is shown towards the things in life that you consider to be meaningful or valuable to you. Taking a moment out of your busy schedule to notice and acknowledge what things you have in your life to be grateful for can change your dampened outlook to a much more brighter one, boost your mood/feelings, and help you stay positive even during times that can be challenging get through.

Usually a jolt of joy is felt when something like winning the lottery or getting a big promotion at work is experienced; however, gratitude also consists of smaller joys in life that tend to get either overlooked or taken for granted. Small everyday experiences, such as a brief conversation with a friend, a kind gesture performed by a stranger, a cool breeze occurring on a hot day, or taking a peaceful walk out in nature, are some of the things you could find yourself being thankful for.

Whatever your circumstances in life happen to be, you are likely to find that consistently committing yourself to showing gratitude is a surprisingly difficult thing to do. Many of us easily fall victim to developing a negativity bias mindset. This is where we hold onto the bad news and unpleasant experiences, but at the same time, let moments connected to positivity fall to the wayside.

Maybe too much of your time goes to dreading the start of a new work week on Monday that you forget to fully appreciate the weekend and it disappears on you before you know it. Or perhaps your mind is so preoccupied on an embarrassing moment that you had experienced at a party that you don't register when a friend directs a compliment towards you. And if you are someone who has a mood disorder (i.e., depression), being able to see what positives there are or expressing gratitude for the small things can seem downright impossible.

Fortunately, gratitude is something that you can work towards, it's just like muscle strength where you can achieve it through hard work and dedication. The idea of increasing your gratefulness may sound a little cheesy, but you'll find that doing so can help to uplift your mood, provide you with some temporary relief from negativity, foster stronger personal relationships, and even change how you come to view yourself.

Possible Benefits seen from Practicing Gratitude

Putting in an effort to involve gratitude into your life can really help to lighten your mood. You'll find that with practicing gratitude your thoughts will stop dwelling on negative emotions and uncomfortable sensations. Instead, you begin to notice good things that you previously would have overlooked.

For example, if you happen to experience the misfortune of getting a flat tire, instead of allowing yourself to get upset over the situation, shift your focus to how having a job serves as a way to help you pay for the repairs. Or consider just how fortunate you are to have close friends that you can call and who will come right away to give you a ride home.

Through adopting this kind of thinking, it can result in a more frequent release of serotonin and dopamine, which are chemicals in the brain that cause a person to feel sensations like happiness and pleasure. Acknowledging when you feel gratitude for something also helps with decreasing stress hormones. The short-term result of this is becoming less anxious and seeing an improvement mood-wise. In the long-term, the effect of regularly practicing gratitude can lead to lasting changes within the brain, easing you into being more grateful going forward.

Because gratitude can go on to lift your mood, perhaps it's not a surprise that your mental health benefits from this too. As you practice working on gratitude, you may take notice of the considerable decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety you experience. While gratitude alone isn't the end-all solution to managing mental health issues, it can play a role in contributing to a broader treatment plan.

Pressing forward through life while maintaining a positive mindset can do more for you besides just improving your mood. There are other areas of your life it could impact for the better, such as:

More Relaxed Sleep

Research out there has found that increased feelings of gratitude equates to a higher quality of sleep. The reason might have to do with thinking about what you have to be grateful for as you go to bed as it helps you to end the day on a much more positive note.

Improved Ability to Focus

With gratitude, attempting to focus becomes a much more easier feat to accomplish. If you switch how you view the task you have ahead of you – whether it be schoolwork or job responsibilities – with a positive perspective in mind, less energy is spent feeling stressed about it. This could even change how you view challenges, such as a quickly approaching exam, where you start to see it as an opportunity instead of a hurdle. Effectively helping to improve your emotional resiliency.

Higher Self-Esteem for Yourself

Changing how you view the world, so it's done with a sense of gratitude goes a long way in helping you to improve your own self-worth. Let's say that you hang out with a friend and they treat you to lunch. As you go on to express appreciation towards them, you are hit by the realization that your friend is willingly going out of their way to spend not just their time, but their resources on you because they value and care about you. A situation such as this is what gets you to internalize the thought of you being someone who's important to others.

Increased Level of Patience

In 2016, there was research which found that people who commit to regularly expressing gratitude tend to be more patient. So, if you are looking to go about increasing self-control while reducing impulsiveness, try your hand at practicing gratitude.



Social Benefits

With gratitude there's potential for it to enhance the quality of your personal relationships. Directing what appreciation you have towards a friend or family member can go on to show them that you are someone who cares and pave the way to having more positive interactions happen in the future. For example, letting a friend know how much you appreciate them while offering up a shoulder they can lean on in tough times, showcases to your friend their importance and in return, they'll do what they can to be there for you too. Upon being the recipient of an act of kindness, it's likely you'll feel compelled to reciprocate with a thoughtful action of your own to show your gratefulness right back to the person.

Physical Health Benefits

There are physical benefits associated with gratitude as well. The effects of gratefulness like less stress and feeling closer to loved ones, might bring about a decrease in blood pressure and reduce levels of inflammation. This can go on to influence better overall cardiovascular health.

5 Ways You Can Work on Becoming a Better Listener

Hearing someone, is different compared to actually listening to them. At one time or another, you've probably found yourself on the receiving end of both: the distracted nods the other person gives to you throughout the conversation, or going on to receive undivided attention that gives you the feeling that your words truly matter and are being taken seriously. In today's distracted world, real listening is a rarity; however when it does happen, it helps to build a stronger connection and trust with the people you care about.

When you prioritize working on effective communication, not only do you experience the benefit of becoming better at hearing people out but you also see yourself being more in tune with your inner voice too – which can bring about deeper feelings of empathy, create stronger connections, and help increase your ability to be observant of the present moment.

In celebration of National Day of Listening on November 27th, this article offers a deep dive into some of the practical ways that you could pursue to become a better listener and also help pave the way towards you forming deeper connections with the people in your life; the information below comes from Calm (https://www.calm.com/blog/listening-to-others).

Why Mindful Listening is Important

In practicing mindfulness, compassionate listening is more than just an exercise – it's thought of as a way of life. You soon realize upon attempting to be more mindful that it's not completely necessary to find a solution that'll end suffering, understanding and empathy are oftentimes all that's needed.

Mastering of such techniques helps in fostering emotional intelligence that not only has you go on to understand others on a deeper level, but also sees you become better at creating meaningful conversations. It's a win-win situation overall. While this opens the door for you to explore the human psyche, the interactions you have with others lets them feel things like heard, valued, and understood. If you keep the momentum going, you'll notice an improvement when it comes to the quality of the interactions you are involved in, allowing you to forge stronger, more meaningful relationships on both a personal and professional level.

Along with putting effort towards listening intently to others, be sure to direct the same amount of attention and empathy towards yourself. It's crucial that you be willing to listen to your thoughts and emotions, as they are key in getting you to learn what it means to actually feel your feelings, which can help in being able to process them. Going out of your way to listen compassionately, both to yourself and others, makes things feel less heavy and more manageable.

What the Difference Between Hearing and Truly Listening is

Hearing is easy to do. You pick up sound and your brain registers the words that are said. Truly listening is no doubt harder, because it requires that you step away from the constant activity going on in your head to concentrate your attention towards what someone else is expressing to you.

However, there's a chance something could get in the way of this. You work on forming a reply before the person you are talking to has even finished sharing their thoughts, or a comment is made about something you hold dear and you go on the defensive. Such an issue lies with your own running commentary, a mind too busy and already at full capacity, to take much else in. Which is where practicing mindfulness can be of significant help to you. When you catch your attention starting to slip, gently do your best to reel it back to the person you are conversing with. Making sure to do a short breathing pause before the start of a hard conversation can help with quieting down the noise enough to open the door and let someone in.

5 Strategies You Could Use to Become a More Mindful Listener

Listening carefully consists of more than just hearing the words another person says. It's when you turn to using your senses, your intuition, and your intellect that you are able to understand and respond in a kind manner to others. Listed here are five techniques pivotal to becoming a better listener yourself.

1. Notice What's Going on with You

In order to fully hear someone out, taking notice of your own state is important. If you are someone who regularly gets distracted, prone to defensiveness, or rehearses responses in your head, these are all factors that take you out of a conversation right at the start.

How to practice:
Perform a quick mental check-in before giving a response. Identify if you're present in the moment or got thoughts swarming around your head. Acknowledging where your headspace is at can help temporarily quiet down your own noise, so you can focus on the other person with a clearer mind.

2. Put Yourself in Other People's Shoes

You can practice empathy through picturing yourself in someone else's shoes, as this can help you to better understand their feelings and perspectives. Try not to judge the other person. Instead, make an effort to be fully present, show support by offering a listening ear, and do your best to decipher the emotional state of the person you are conversing with.

How to practice:
Ask how the person is doing and then show empathy. Imagine what they are feeling and try to feel it yourself. Sometimes the best thing you could do to comfort someone is simply be there for them and forego trying to solve their problem. Rather than automatically resorting to fix-it mode, you can check with them on if they want you to provide comfort or solutions. This will let you know the best way you can support them, while going on to show them that you respect and value their feelings.

3. Be Sure to Listen to Your Own Thoughts and Emotions, As Well

Remember to give yourself the same attention that you would give to others. When you take the time to understand what you're feeling without rushing yourself to push past it you become better at picking up on what's going on inside someone else. Self-awareness and empathy go hand-in-hand with each other.

How to practice:
Look for a few minutes you could set aside during your day to check in on how you feel, without doing anything to change it. The more willing you are to listen to yourself, the more naturally you'll do the same for others.

4. Aim to Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions prompt a more in-depth response to be generated than simple yes-or-no questions and encourage the speaker to provide more details concerning their feelings or the situation. Questions such as these signal that you are curious about the person compared to yes-or-no questions where it seems centered on collecting facts above all else, so that's why with the open-ended question approach, more people are willing to open up and share how they feel.

How to practice:
Take notice of when you ask a question that only receives a yes or no response, and try expanding upon it. For example, asking something along the lines of "What was that like for you?" allows the other person to have control of the conversation and decide what way it needs to go in. Resist the urge to jump in with your own thoughts and opinions. Let their answer be what shapes the next question you ask.

5. Remove Distractions that Affect Your Ability to Listen Mindfully

When you are present in the current moment, you are able to listen much more effectively. In order to really listen, taking actions like silencing your phone notifications and turning off the radio or TV, allow you to better tune into the other person and what they are feeling.

How to practice:
Shut off your phone, put away your laptop, and make sure your whole attention is on the speaker. Putting forward a genuine attempt to get rid of potential distractions shows that you respect the other person and doing so, helps in creating a safe space for open, honest communication to occur.





-SHYNESS-

Name it to Tame it

If you have ever seen the cartoon series, "Dragon Tales" you probably know what "shyness" is. The show centers on two siblings who are preschool to kindergarten age - Max and Emmy, who upon moving into their new house at the start of the series, find a box containing a dragon scale and inscribed within the box's cover is the following words: "I wish, I wish, with all my heart, to fly with dragons in a land apart." They discover that when this is said out loud, they are magically transported to Dragon Land, where Max and Emmy go on to befriend dragons and an array of other magical creatures. One of the dragons they become friends with is Cassie, who despite being bright and naturally possesses a want to help others, can easily be overcome by shyness. Cassie's shyness usually happens when Cassie is either uncomfortable with something but is afraid to voice her thoughts or if she has an idea that she wants to share but holds back because she's self-conscious and afraid of receiving a negative reaction from her friends. Additionally, Cassie's shyness is showcased through her character shrinking and becoming as small as a mouse.

However, when Max and Emmy, and the rest of Cassie's friends notice that she is struggling to fight her shyness, they rally around her and see what they can do to help her get through whatever is causing her to feel distress and unease. With this support, this helps Cassie gain the confidence to try her friends' suggestions and Cassie's social discomfort soon dissipates as well.

To see what shyness looks like, you should consider watching Dragon Tales if you haven't seen it yet and observe for yourself Cassie's shy character.

To learn more about what shyness is, including strategies to deal with shyness and what parents can do to help their children better manage this feeling, visit the links below:

https://www.helpguide.org/relationships/social-connection/dealing-with-loneliness-and-shyness

And

https://www.healthline.com/health/shyness