

TAKE ONE FREE

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

Take care of  
your mental  
health

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# Prioritizing your mental wellness during Mental Health Awareness Month and beyond

BY CHIDINMA ANAMAH, MD,  
PSYCHIATRY,  
GARNET HEALTH DOCTORS

**W**hen we talk about “getting healthy,” it’s natural to assume the focus would be on our physical well-being: pledging to eat healthier foods and get more exercise—even making sure to get proper health screenings, like for breast and prostate cancer. But our mental wellness is just as important for living a full, balanced life.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to elevate conversations about emotional and psychological well-being. Mental wellness extends far beyond the diagnosis or treatment of mental illness—it reflects how we think, feel, act and cope with daily life.

No one is immune to the stress and challenges of daily life. But the habits we develop now can help us become more resilient when we do face adversity. Everyone can benefit from prioritizing mental wellness. When we take time to focus on ourselves, we improve our connections with family, friends, coworkers and community members.

## Here are five ways to promote mental wellness:

### 1. Practice Regular Self Check-ins

Make it a habit to pause and ask yourself, “How am I doing?” By identifying and naming your emotions, you build insight and resilience. It’s important to embrace your feelings without shame or judgment. Developing self-aware-

ness to recognize, label and manage emotions is a skill we can all learn and benefit from.

### 2. Build and Maintain Social Connections

Humans are wired for connection. Prioritize friendships and community—whether through regular coffee dates, family dinners or community groups. Meaningful relationships enhance well-being, reduce loneliness, and help us feel seen and supported. Equally important is having the courage to recognize unhealthy relationships and the strength to release them for your own well-being.

### 3. Explore Personal Hobbies and Interests

Work can be fulfilling, but reclaiming your time for non-work-related activities is vital. Engaging

in hobbies and creative pursuits is more than just enjoyable—it can reduce anxiety, boost mood and spark new joy. Visit your local library, sign up for a pottery class, join a book club or explore gardening. These simple acts can help you rediscover personal fulfillment outside of daily obligations.

### 4. Develop Personalized Coping Strategies

Stress is a part of life, but how we respond to it can make all the difference. Establish your own go-to toolkit for managing stress. Some effective strategies include:

- Accepting what’s beyond your control
- Reframing your perspective
- Problem-solving what you can change

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- Talking to a trusted friend or mentor
- Practicing positive self-talk and giving yourself grace
- Scheduling “worry time” to contain anxious thoughts
- Letting go, relaxing and being kind to yourself

Choose two or three strategies that feel right for you and practice them consistently until they become second nature.

#### 5. Improve Your Physical Health

The mind-body connection is real. Good physical health can directly impact mental wellness. Incorporate habits like:

- Getting adequate, restful sleep
- Eating balanced, nourishing meals
- Staying physically active throughout the week
- Attending regular health check-ups

When your body is healthy, it becomes easier to manage emotions, focus and stay resilient.

#### Supporting Mental Wellness Across Life Stages

Each stage of life brings new emotional terrain. Transition periods—like becoming a parent, retiring, grieving a loved one or adapting to a health diagnosis—can challenge even the most grounded among us. These vulnerable times call for extra self-care, patience and the support of others.

#### Nurturing the Mental Health of Young People

One of the most critical and often overlooked populations in mental wellness discussions is young people. Adolescents and young adults are in a sensitive period of emotional development, facing pressure from school, social media, family expectations and peer influence. Their ability to form a healthy self-identity depends greatly on the emotional environment around them.

#### Here's how we can actively support youth mental wellness:

- Provide Safe Spaces to Talk:

Encourage open conversations without judgment. Create environments—at home, at school and in the community—where young people feel safe sharing how they feel.

• Encourage Offline Activities: Real-life experiences such as sports, arts, reading or volunteering can help reduce screen time and foster confidence, teamwork and self-expression.

• Be a Trusted Adult: Sometimes, all it takes is one caring adult—a parent, mentor, coach or neighbor showing up with empathy and consistency—to make a difference. You don't need to have the answers. Your presence alone is powerful.

• Foster Positive Self-Esteem: Help the young people in your life by rejoicing in their strengths, talents and individuality. Remind them that they're enough just as they are, and there's no benefit or good to come from nega-

tive self-talk and comparing themselves with others.

• Recognize Warning Signs: Be attentive to sudden changes in mood, behavior or academic performance. Early support and professional guidance can prevent deeper issues from developing.

If you are having difficulty managing your mental and emotional health, seek services that can support you through the process. For immediate 24/7 crisis support in Sullivan County, dial 988 or go to your nearest emergency room. For counseling services, call Garnet Health Doctors in Harris at (845) 333-8909 to make an appointment.

This Mental Health Awareness Month, commit to checking in on yourself, supporting someone else and advocating for emotional well-being at every stage of life. Mental wellness is not just an individual responsibility—it's a shared one.

To learn more, visit [garnethealth.org/services/behavioral-health](http://garnethealth.org/services/behavioral-health).

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# The Importance of Advocating for the Older Generation

MATTHEW KLEMAN

VET 2 VET OF SULLIVAN COUNTY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

As society progresses, it becomes increasingly vital to recognize and support the needs of the older generation. Advocating for older adults is not just a moral obligation but also a reflection of a compassionate and just society.

The elderly have contributed significantly to our communities, economies, and cultures, and it is essential to ensure they enjoy dignity, respect and quality of life in their later years.

One of the primary reasons to advocate for the older generation is the recognition of their lifelong contributions. Throughout their lives, older adults have been workers, caregivers, volunteers and leaders.

They have built the foundations of our communities and economies through their labor, innovation and dedication. Acknowledging these

contributions is crucial in fostering a culture of respect and gratitude. Advocacy efforts help ensure that their achievements are recognized and that they receive the support they deserve, which in turn promotes a sense of purpose and belonging.

Furthermore, older adults often face unique challenges that require targeted support and resources. These challenges include health issues, mobility limitations, social isolation and financial insecurities. Many seniors suffer from chronic illnesses or disabilities that demand specialized healthcare and assistance. Without proper advocacy, these needs may be overlooked or inadequately addressed, leading to poorer health outcomes and diminished quality of life. Advocates play a vital role in ensuring access to affordable healthcare, age-friendly hous-



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ing, transportation, and social services that enable older adults to live comfortably and independently.

Social isolation is another critical issue affecting the elderly. As an individual ages, they may lose friends and family members, move away from familiar environments, or face barriers to social engagement.

This isolation can lead to depression, cognitive decline, and overall worsening health. Advocacy groups work to create programs and initiatives that promote social inclusion, community involvement and intergenerational connections. These efforts help older adults maintain social ties, stay mentally active, and experience a sense of purpose.

Financially, security is also a significant concern for many seniors. Retirement savings, pensions and social security benefits are vital to ensure older adults can afford essentials like housing, healthcare and nutrition. Advocacy is necessary to protect these benefits from cuts or pol-

icy changes that could jeopardize their financial stability. Additionally, advocating for fair employment practices and lifelong learning opportunities can help older adults remain active and economically self-sufficient.

Finally, advocating for the older generation reinforces societal values of compassion, dignity and respect. It sends a message that every stage of life is valuable and deserving of care and consideration. As populations age worldwide, fostering a culture of respect for older adults is essential for creating inclusive, equitable communities where everyone can thrive regardless of age.

In conclusion, advocating for the older generation is of paramount importance. It recognizes their contributions, addresses their unique needs, combats social isolation, safeguards their financial security, and upholds core societal values. By championing their rights and well-being, we build a more compassionate, respectful, and inclusive society for all ages.



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# Tallow, CBD, carrot seed oil: Where science meets the modern consumer

BY HEDY SCHNELLER ILLUMIA PRODUCTS

The modern pursuit of well-being often feels like navigating a bustling marketplace of intriguing ingredients and age-old remedies. Why this constant chase for the next “natural” wonder? Perhaps it’s the sheer volume of information we encounter daily, which can sometimes make it challenging to distinguish genuine scientific understanding from persuasive marketing. Or maybe it’s the comforting thought that simpler, more traditional solutions hold overlooked benefits, reminiscent of a time before complex formulations dominated the shelves.

We naturally seek straightforward answers in a world where separating reliable facts from fleeting fads can feel like a significant undertaking. The way we gather information has indeed shifted, with digital sources now playing

a prominent role alongside established expert guidance. So, how do we thoughtfully explore this landscape and maintain our capacity for critical evaluation?

When seeking dependable information on biology and health, prioritizing certain types of sources is key. Information that has undergone peer review, where experts in the relevant field assess the research before it’s published, offers a crucial layer of validation. Reputable organizations, such as government agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as universities and

established scientific bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO), are generally reliable sources due to their commitment to evidence-based findings.

The foundation of trustworthy information lies in its being evidence-based, supported by scientific studies and verifiable data. For those seeking such resources, organizations like the NIH and WHO offer extensive information on their websites (nih.gov and who.int). Databases such as PubMed provide access to a vast collection of biomedical literature, while MedlinePlus offers health information tailored for easier public understanding. ClinicalTrials.gov

can also be a valuable resource for understanding ongoing research.

To effectively evaluate information sources, consider the credentials of the authors – do they possess relevant expertise (e.g., MD, PhD)? Check for source citations, as credible information is typically well-referenced. Be mindful of the website domain; government (.gov) and educational (.edu) sites often adhere to higher standards of reliability. Finally, assess the objectivity of the source. Be cautious of information that heavily promotes specific products or appears to have a clear bias.

## Carrots for Sunscreen? A Crunchy Myth Gets a (Sun)Burn

Research into carrot seed oil reveals its richness in antioxidants, notably carotenoids (like beta-carotene) and vitamin E. These compounds are understood to



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play a role in neutralizing free radicals generated by UV radiation, a mechanism by which carrot seed oil may help mitigate some of the harmful effects of sun exposure on the skin. Some studies also suggest that certain components within carrot seed oil might possess the ability to absorb specific wavelengths of UV radiation, potentially contributing a degree of protection against both UVA and UVB rays. Furthermore, the potential of carrot seed oil to enhance the effectiveness of traditional sunscreens has been explored, with some research indicating that its addition to formulations might reduce the intensity of UV light penetration. However, it's important to note that the natural SPF value of carrot seed oil is generally considered low and should not be seen as a replacement for conventional sunscreen, especially during prolonged sun exposure. Current evidence suggests that carrot seed oil may be most beneficial when used in conjunction with other sun-protective measures, such as broad-spectrum sunscreens with higher SPF values and protective clothing.

### **CBD: Cure-All or Just Chill Hype?**

Cannabidiol, widely known as CBD, is prevalent in various consumer products. Its verified therapeutic benefits currently include the treatment of specific seizure disorders, with the FDA approv-

ing Epidiolex for this purpose. Preliminary research also suggests potential in managing anxiety, with some studies indicating a reduction in anxiety-related behaviors and symptoms. The anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties of CBD are under ongoing investigation for conditions like arthritis and chronic pain, showing some initial promise. Additionally, its potential to improve sleep, particularly when linked to anxiety or chronic pain, is being explored, although more research is needed.

It is crucial to recognize that research into CBD is still evolving, and the optimal uses, dosages, and long-term effects are not yet fully understood. Consumers should seek guidance from healthcare professionals and prioritize products from reputable sources that provide transparent information, such as a Certificate of Analysis (COA) from an independent third-party lab. Claims that CBD can treat conditions like alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, most forms of arthritis, autism, blood pressure issues, cancer, CTE, cardiovascular disease, chemotherapy-induced hearing loss, colitis, concussions, depression, diabetes, leukemia, liver inflammation, lupus, Lyme disease, neurological damage, Parkinson's disease, stroke, schizophrenia, TBI, and tumors are not currently supported by sufficient scientific evidence.

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**M**ental illness is a term used for a group of disorders causing severe disturbances in thinking, feeling, and relating. It can often be difficult to tell the difference between "a normal phase" someone may be going through and the sign of a more serious problem. The diagnoses are made clinically, based on thinking/feeling/behaving – there's no blood test or anything you can look at under a microscope to determine a diagnosis. Also, there are other physical illnesses that may mirror some of the early signs of mental illness that need to be ruled out before a proper diagnosis can be made.

Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adolescents and adults can include the following: excessive worrying or fear, feeling excessively sad or low, confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning, extreme mood swings – uncontrollable highs or feelings of euphoria, prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger, avoiding friends and social activities, difficulty understanding or relating to other people, changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy,

changes in eating habits – increased hunger or lack of appetite, changes in sex drive, difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations – in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality), inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality (profound "lack of insight" or anosognosia), overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs, multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing aches and pains), thinking about Suicide,

inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress, an intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance.

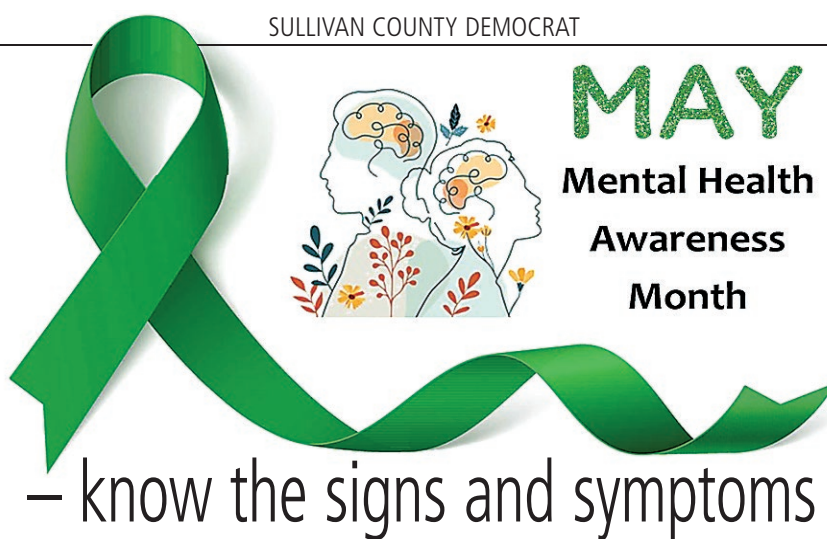
Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, children's most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include changes in school performance, excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bedtime or school, hyperactive behavior, frequent nightmares, fre-

quent disobedience or aggression, frequent temper tantrums.

Don't be afraid to reach out if you or someone you know needs help. Learning all you can about mental health is an important first step. Reach out to your health insurance or primary care doctor for more resources.

The Sullivan County Department of Community Services accepts many different insurance coverages and operates on a sliding scale for those without insurance - contact them at (845) 292-8770. If you or someone you know is struggling or in a crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Mobile Mental Health is available by calling (845) 790-0911.

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with a mental illness, you are not alone. NAMI Sullivan County can help. Primarily a family support and advocacy organization, we offer Family Support, Peer Support, and Suicide Bereavement groups – all free of charge, confidential, and safe places to share. Find us online at [namisullivan.org](http://namisullivan.org) or phone (845) 794-1029.



BY M. LORI SCHNEIDER, MS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NAMI SULLIVAN

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## Rub Beef Fat on Your Face, They Said. It'll Be Great, They Said.

The renewed interest in beef tallow for skincare often aligns with a desire for simpler, “natural” alternatives. Tallow has been shown to offer hydrating and moisturizing properties. However, comparative studies suggest that plant-based oils rich in linoleic acid may provide superior hydration. While tallow contains some compounds that could benefit the skin, their concentration can vary, especially in non-standardized preparations.

Experts often point to scientifically formulated skincare ingredients with established evidence for more predictable and targeted results, such as standardized retinol for anti-aging. Additionally, the saturated fat content of tallow may not be suitable for all skin types and could potentially worsen conditions like acne. En-

vironmental considerations related to the sourcing of tallow from the industrial meat industry and ethical considerations regarding animal-derived products are also relevant. Furthermore, research indicates that tallow is not reef-safe and can be harmful to marine life.

In today's ever-evolving wellness world—where carrot seed oil flirts with SPF status, CBD is hailed as a modern-day elixir, and beef tallow stages a curious comeback—it's easy to get swept up in the allure of the “natural next big thing.” But elegance lies in discernment. What is old may not be best, what is new may not be needed, and what's trending on TikTok may not hold water (even if it's infused with chlorophyll). Knowing the maker and the source of what you consume is a critical first step—because transparency beats trendy, every time.

Before embracing the latest miracle in a jar or dropper, take a moment to pause, probe, and

prioritize evidence over enthusiasm. Dear reader seek out credible sources, value substance over style, and remember: true well-being isn't about chasing trends—it's about making informed, intentional choices that stand the test of time (and marketing).

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# When You Need to Talk to A Loved One's Healthcare Provider

These are the two forms you'll need

BY WILLOW BAUM

**H**ealthcare can be complicated. We must understand diagnosis and treatment options, coordinate with various specialists, access and decipher lab reports on healthcare web portals such as MyChart. And if you're not comfortable with handling your business online, even setting up a web portal is a headache. Wading through these waters with a friend makes it all a little less painful. As a caregiver consultant and end-of-life educator, I suggest that people in all stages of health have a "healthcare buddy,"



a friend or family member who is somewhat informed about their healthcare matters.

This buddy can look different for each of us. For instance, they may accompany you (or join via FaceTime or Zoom) to key medical appointments, take notes, ask questions, discuss results, and explore options. It's also important that each of us assign a person to voice our healthcare preferences on our behalf should we ever lose the capacity to make our own decisions.

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agent." So why not line up a "healthcare buddy" who is also willing and capable of serving as your "healthcare proxy" or "healthcare agent"? Doing so means that this person will already be familiar with your medical conditions, physicians, treatment preferences (ideally documented in a Living Will, a subject for another article), etc. and not come in cold and clueless, should this person need to speak for you if you can't speak for yourself. To grant access to medical records and authorize your healthcare buddy and/or healthcare agent to speak to your healthcare providers -- in different circumstances -- two forms are needed:

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- **Health Care Proxy:** Grants you future decision-making power -- only if your loved one is unable to make or

voice their own healthcare preferences. Protects for the future, if your loved one can't speak or decide for herself. Each form gives you different types of powers at different times.

### HIPAA Authorization: Gives Immediate Information Access

#### What it does

- Lets healthcare providers **share** medical information with you **right now**.
- Your loved one **still makes their own decisions**.

**Example:** Your mom is ill, hospitalized, and scheduled for complicated surgery. You want to call her doctor, ask questions about risks and treatment options, and, together, help her make informed decisions.

- With the HIPAA form, you can receive immediate up-

dates, results, and explanations, even if she's fully alert.

- With only a Health Care Proxy (and no HIPAA release), you can't do this unless she is incapacitated.

### Download the NY State Form Here: [https://www.nycourts.gov/forms/hipaa\\_fillable.pdf](https://www.nycourts.gov/forms/hipaa_fillable.pdf)

### Health Care Proxy: Grants future decision-making power

#### What it does:

- Allows you to make healthcare decisions for her only if she is unable to make them herself.
- It activates when a doctor says she lacks decision-making capacity (for example, if she's unconscious, heavily sedated, confused, etc.).

**Example:** Your mother has a stroke and can't speak clearly. The doctors need consent for the in-

section of a feeding tube. With a Health Care Proxy, you are legally authorized to make decisions based on what your Mom would want (legally documented preferences for end-of-life is known as a Living Will, a topic for another article).

### Download the NY State Form Here: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf>

Once these forms are completed, provide copies of both forms to primary care physicians, specialists, and any healthcare facilities your loved one frequents. Keep copies for your records as well.

**Willow Baum** is an end-of-life educator, guide, and death doula at FriendForTheEnd.com. If you or your loved ones are navigating transitions related to aging, illness, or end-of-life, subscribe to our Substack: <https://friendfortheend.substack.com/> A paid subscription gives you access to our live, weekly "Ask Us Anything" sessions on Zoom. If you are a healthcare professional, we offer "Peer Support for Death Workers" live on Zoom weekly, plus articles and resources.



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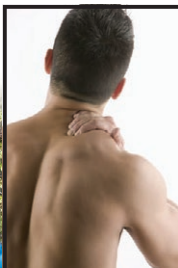
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# Two Medical Assistants graduate from WMCHC Training Program

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left to right, Jo-Ann Sames, RN, site facilitator, NIMAA and office manager, Forest City Family Health Center; Ashley Daniels; Kaitlyn Fedor and Carollee Keating, RN, site facilitator, NIMAA and care manager, WMCHC.

HONESDALE, PA – April 30 was Graduation Day for Ashley Daniels and Kaitlyn Fedor! Both women were honored for completing the eight-month National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement (NIMAA) training through Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers' (WMCHC) program. Family, friends, coworkers, preceptors, instructors and facilitators congratulated the new MAs following the virtual graduation ceremony viewed at the Hamlin Family Health Center. WMCHC partners with NIMAA by offering externships at its primary care sites and providing a hands-on skills lab to satisfy course curriculum. Students are employed by WMCHC during training. Those who pass the certification exam and remain employed by WMCHC for 18 months qualify for free tuition. For more information about WMCHC's MA Training Program, visit [chcandme.org](http://chcandme.org) or email [patukkr@wmh.org](mailto:patukkr@wmh.org).



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