



THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD

LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

About The Congressional Award Program

The Congressional Award is a public-private partnership created by Congress to promote and recognize the achievements of young Americans. The program is nonpartisan, voluntary, and non-competitive. Open to youth ages 14 to 24, the Congressional Award challenges youth to set goals in four program areas: Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and an Expedition or Exploration.

The Importance of Mental and Emotional Health

According to the [World Health Organization](#), "mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, professionals saw an increase in the number of young people who struggle with mental and emotional health issues. In our [Mental and Emotional Health for Teens Webinar](#), we learned that statistically 1 in 5 Americans face mental health issues and 1 in 3 teens experience anxiety in their daily lives.

Just like your physical health, it's so important to maintain your mental and emotional health with healthy practices. This toolkit features helpful information from Congressional Award events, such as our "On the Road" series with **Ford Motor Company Fund**, our Mental Health for Teens Webinars with **Otsuka Pharmaceutical**, and more from our partners at **Mental Health America**!

All resources can be used towards your Personal Development goals!



"Everybody, everyone walking down the street, has got stuff to deal with and there is help out there."

Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)





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Manage Stress

What is stress? It is the uncomfortable feeling you get when you're worried, scared, angry, frustrated or overwhelmed. Our friends at the [Mattie Rhodes Center](#) created a free [presentation](#) on managing your stress with easy exercises that can be used anywhere.

Grounding

Tap into your senses
See five things
Touch four things
Hear three things
Smell two things
Taste one thing

Planning

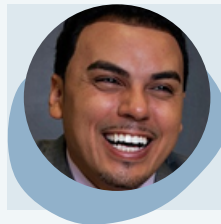
Build a stress management plan that fits your lifestyle. Make goals into manageable tasks over short or long periods of time to help you accomplish goals without being overwhelmed.

Breathing

Breathe in for 4 seconds,
hold for 4, out for 4
Repeat

Counting

Count from 1-100
Recite the alphabet backwards Z-A



"Remember the three S's. Something to do. Something to love. Something to look forward to."

Mateo Magdaleno, Cityscape Schools

Stay Active

How can exercising help my mental and emotional health? According to our partners at [Mental Health America](#), experts have found that exercise decreases stress, reduces anxiety and depression, and offers a greater sense of well-being.

How it helps:

- Relieves pent-up muscle tension
- Stimulates feel-good hormones
- Burns off stress hormones
- Increases blood flow to the brain



To begin seeing a difference in your mood, complete 30 to 60 minutes of exercise 3-5 days a week, including a combination of aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercises.



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Seek Help

Looking out for your friends. Sometimes you are not the one struggling with mental health, but you've noticed a change in your friend. It's hard to know how to help or how to ask if they are doing okay. Mental Health America recommends having an **"I" conversation** to start the dialogue. Reaching out to your friends is important and saying things like "I have noticed a change in your mood" or "I am worried for you" is the best way to let a friend know you are there for them and ready to listen.

Understanding your own feelings. If you have noticed a change in your emotions, [Mental Health America](#) has a great online resource for screening your own thoughts and emotions to help you pinpoint why you might be feeling the way you do.

GET SUPPORT

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24/7)
#988

The Trevor Project (24/7)
#866-488-7386

The Trevor Project offers support to the LGBTQ young adult community. Both of the hotlines provided offer 24/7 help.

Crisis Text Line (24/7)
Text HOME to 741-741

The Crisis Text Line extends to everyone. Their goal is "helping people move from a hot moment to a cool calm, guiding you to create a plan to stay safe and healthy. YOU = our priority."

National Alliance on Mental Illness
#1-800-950-6264

NAMI provides treatment options and programs. They wish to "raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need." The NAMI hotline is available every Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m.– 6 p.m.



"Remember, it is okay to seek help, you are not alone."
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05)





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Resources

CONGRESSIONAL AWARD EVENTS

[Tacoma Mental Health Workshop](#)

Learn about the impact Covid-19 has had on youth mental and emotional health. You will gain information on how to deal with stressors as well as how to seek help. This workshop is in partnership with **Ford Motor Company Fund** and featured **Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)**.

[Webinar: Mental and Emotional Health for Teens](#)

This mental health workshop lets you hear from Members of Congress and industry professionals about the importance of mental and emotional health for teens. This webinar is in partnership with **Otsuka** with guest speakers **Rep. Richard Hudson (NC-09)**, **Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12)**, **Mental Health America**, and **Mateo Magdaleno** from **Cityscape Schools**.

[Mental & Emotional Health for Teens During COVID-19](#)

Hear from **Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05)** and the **Mattie Rhodes Center** about the importance of mental health and understanding the stigma around it.

FROM OUR PARTNERS

[Well Beings](#)

The **Well Beings** campaign from **Otsuka** addresses the critical health needs of Americans. The documentary [Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness](#) is a great resource to use for your Personal Development goal.

[Mental Health America: Living Mentally Healthy](#)

Mental Health America provides an array of different tools and resources to help you with your mental and emotional health. This website includes tools on how to live a healthy life and how to seek help.



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Frequently Asked Questions

How can I get my hours validated?

We understand that hours related to this topic will not necessarily be monitored like other goals. For hours related to mental and emotional health, you can have your advisor validate your hours.

Can I use mental and emotional health activities for all levels of the Award?

Yes! These goals can be used for all levels of the Award. The key is to make sure that you are meeting the hour and month minimums as outlined in the program guidelines.

What program area should mental and emotional health goals be placed?

The Personal Development program area is a great place to start on your goals. This program area allows you to focus on your personal growth and self-improvement, which are important aspects of mental and emotional health. You may find that some of the activities you are doing can also be counted towards Community Service, Physical Fitness or other program areas. In this case, you can speak with your advisor to decide which program area would be more appropriate for that activity.

General Resources

[REGISTRATION](#) - Participants must register online or by mail before starting

[PROGRAM BOOK](#) - Program overview, sample activities, requirements, and FAQs

[WORKBOOK](#) - Optional fillable PDF used to map out activities before submitting online

[SUBMITTABLE](#) - Online submission platform for earning your Congressional Award

Contact The Award

If you have questions, please contact:
info@congressionaward.org

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