



# It's Up To Us<sup>®</sup>

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans



Edition Twenty-One

## About the Campaign

The "It's Up to Us" campaign is designed to empower San Diegans to talk openly about mental illness, recognize symptoms, utilize local resources and seek help. By raising awareness and providing access to local resources, we aim to inspire wellness, reduce stigma and prevent suicide.

Recovery is possible and help is available. It's Up to Us to make a difference in the lives of San Diegans experiencing mental health challenges by offering support and providing opportunities.

This campaign is developed through the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, and supports the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision to promote a community that is healthy, safe and thriving.

**Up2SD.org<sup>®</sup>**  
LINK UP FOR INFORMATION AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Access & Crisis Line  
**(888) 724-7240**

COMMUNITY RESOURCES  
**2-1-1**



## Read Up: Depression Shouldn't Dim the Golden Years

Bette Davis once said, "Old age is not for sissies." There are many versions of her quote but they all express the sentiment that aging is a process that requires courage, endurance and fortitude. We handle it best when we cope in the company of friends, family and community because, for many of us, aging may mean physical challenges, reduced income and a shrinking social circle. These factors can place some seniors—especially older men—at risk for suicide.

*Suicide.* It's a topic that's unpleasant to think about and difficult to discuss. But research shows that talking about it is

exactly what's needed. One reason that seniors are at risk is that depression is often unrecognized in older adults, where it may appear as insomnia or other sleep disturbances, loss of appetite or a lack of interest in the activities one once enjoyed. However, depression is highly treatable with effective medications and therapies, and the treated person may find a renewed interest and joy in life.

Dr. Patrick Arbore, Director of Elderly Suicide Prevention and Grief Related Services at the Institute on Aging, tells of meeting a woman at a nursing home who

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## San Diegans Making a Difference: For Others and Themselves

Senior Volunteers in Action and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) are two volunteer programs available through Aging & Independence Services (AIS) that provide opportunities for older adults to share their skills, contribute to their communities and, in the process, improve their physical and mental health. For more information, call the **AIS Call Center at (800) 510-2020**.



### Comments from senior volunteers:

- "I appreciate the feeling of being needed and useful. The assignment gives me a purpose in life."
- "I lost my wife of 50 years six months ago. I don't know what I would have done without my RSVP family."
- "It is an enriching program and makes me feel welcome because it fulfills a good feeling of being socially involved in a good group."
- "The best parts are the service, the camaraderie and because I work at the beach twice a month, an extra 6 miles of walking for exercise."

## Did You Know?

Middle-aged and older adults, especially men, are at the highest risk for suicide. Depression is not a normal part of aging and it's important to know the signs, find the words to offer support and reach out to local resources.

Source: American Association of Suicidology

# Growing Up: Is Love All Your Child Needs to Be Happy?

We know that unconditional love is critically important to ensure healthy development, and parents can express it differently from infancy to middle childhood. Let's explore what it looks like at each stage.

## Stage 1: Infancy to Early Childhood

In early infancy years, everything is about trust and safety. Consistency and stability are requirements for learning that basic survival needs will be fulfilled. Alleviating hunger, assuring physical safety and comfort, and forming an emotional connection with a dependable caregiver are all akin to survival. An infant that learns to trust that he or she is safe and well cared for will be better equipped both emotionally and in terms of brain development to learn the next set of lessons to enhance future happiness.

*Parenting strategy for Stage 1: In this first stage of your child's development, make sure that his or her basic needs are consistently fulfilled. This will establish trust between you and will teach your child to depend on you to meet his or her needs.*

## Stage 2: Early Childhood to Middle Childhood

As your child develops language, the ability to communicate through speech, reading and writing greatly facilitates his or her understanding of how things work. Love at this stage can be demonstrated through acknowledgement and letting your child know that he or she is heard, while also helping him or her learn to delay gratification.

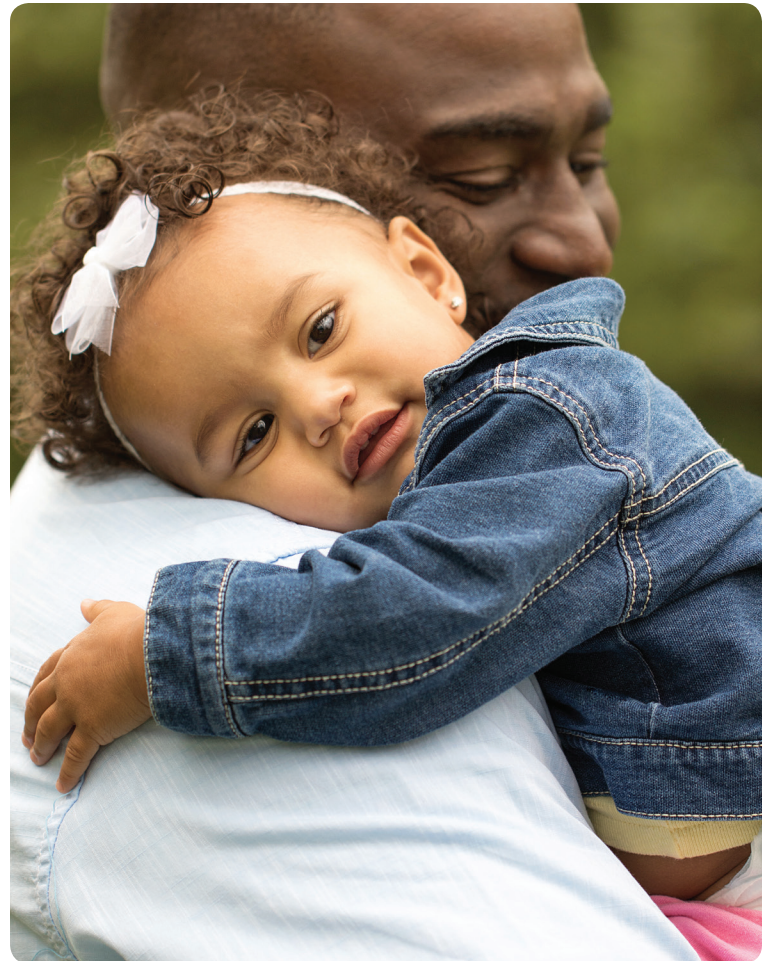
As your young child continues to grow, talking, reading and singing to your child will develop not only his or her readiness for formal education, it will also impart a sense of mastery over the world that awaits. Communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, are building blocks for emotional intelligence, including empathy, balanced relationships, self-discipline and learned optimism.

*Parenting strategy for Stage 2: In the second stage of development, acknowledge your child's needs and wants, and teach gentle lessons about delayed gratification while helping to build communication skills.*

Kids who have a positive outlook on life and believe they are valued unconditionally, not because of what they may have accomplished, are destined for greater joy and enthusiasm for life. Teaching these

lessons early on will give your child a head start on growing into a happy, healthy adult. To read additional mental health blogs, visit [eachmindmatters.org](http://eachmindmatters.org). For local resources about children's mental health, visit [Up2SD.org](http://Up2SD.org)

By David A. Young, PhD, MPH



## Get Up and Participate: Recovery Happens!

National Recovery Month honors individuals on their journey of recovery. Each September, people in San Diego and across the nation celebrate the importance of recovery and highlight the successes of millions of Americans in overcoming substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. Their stories communicate a powerful message that prevention works, treatment is effective and recovery is possible! For more information on how San Diego celebrates recovery month, visit <http://sandiego.networkofcare.org/mh> and click on **Recovery Happens**.

Whether someone is experiencing a mental illness, substance use disorder or both, they need your help and support. Learn how to support someone on their road to recovery or link up for resources. For more information, visit: [Up2SD.org/offer-support](http://Up2SD.org/offer-support)



# Read Up: Depression Shouldn't Dim the Golden Years

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had previously been a volunteer at the same facility. "When I asked her how she saw herself now at the age of 84, she replied, 'I am nobody anymore. I used to be someone but I am no one now.' As she continued to speak with me, it became clear that she was depressed. Fortunately, she agreed to a meeting with a psychiatrist who diagnosed depression. She began treatment with an antidepressant as well as meetings with a social worker. She utilized the Friendship Line, especially on weekends when she felt the loneliest. When I saw her a few months later, she was feeling much better. She said, 'Being 84 wasn't my problem; feeling lonely and depressed was.'"

Of course, we all face challenges as we age, whether we are in our fifties, sixties or nineties! Learning to cope with retirement or job loss, a smaller budget and those morning aches and pains are tasks for each of us. There are remedies available to everyone that become even more important as we grow older, including exercise, good nutrition, mindfulness and meditation, stress reduction, calming activities and cultivating an optimistic attitude. But when these aren't enough, it's good to know that further help is available.

If you're concerned about a friend, relative or neighbor, don't just stuff that worry away. Talk to your own parents or grandparents

and ask direct questions. Bring up the topic of suicide overtly.

In San Diego County, call the Access and Crisis Line (888) 724-7240 to talk with a trained counselor who can provide additional tips. The Friendship Line offers 24-hour support for people aged 60 years and older, and adults living with disabilities. To speak with a trained volunteer who specializes in offering caring conversation with older adults call (800) 971-0016. For other services offered by the Institute on Aging, visit [www.ioaging.org](http://www.ioaging.org). In addition, the It's Up to Us website has many resources that can help older adults manage and improve their health, both physical *and* mental. <http://up2sd.org/resources/older-adults>

## Speak Up: You have the power to save a life.



Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out

**Pain isn't always obvious.** Even surrounded by friends and family, someone experiencing emotional pain can feel isolated. You may sense something is wrong, but not realize how serious it is. Trust your instincts.

For a list of suicide prevention resources, visit [Up2SD.org](http://Up2SD.org) or make the free call to the San Diego Access and Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240.

## Shine a Light On... Your Rights to Mental Health Services

Did you know that approximately one in five people experience a mental illness? Yet too many San Diegans go without mental health treatment. Few are aware of their right to equal insurance coverage or how to advocate for it; this prevents people from getting what they need.

There are two mental health parity laws that apply to Californians: a state parity law and a federal parity law. Which law applies depends on the type of health plan and who provides coverage.

Mental health parity means equal insurance coverage for mental health care. State and federal parity laws require that health plans provide mental health benefits equal to those for other health benefits. For example, plans cannot make you pay more for mental health therapy appointments than you pay for physical health appointments.

The 1999 California Mental Health Parity Act applies to California's state-regulated private insurers. It does not include "self-funded" plans; nor does it include federal programs such as Medicare, Medi-Cal or Veterans Administration programs. Federal parity laws may apply to plans or programs not covered by California law.

Disability Rights California helps with mental health parity issues by providing counsel and advice, technical assistance to file complaints, and direct representation in select cases raising systemic issues.

For more information, visit [disabilityrightscalifornia.org](http://disabilityrightscalifornia.org).

By Margaret Johnson, Disability Rights California

## SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE

These signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if the behavior is new or has increased and if it seems related to a painful event, loss or change.

### Warning Signs

- ▶ Talking about wanting to die
- ▶ Looking for a way to kill oneself
- ▶ Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- ▶ Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- ▶ Talking about being a burden to others
- ▶ Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- ▶ Acting anxious, agitated or reckless
- ▶ Sleeping too little or too much
- ▶ Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- ▶ Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- ▶ Displaying extreme mood swings

### What to Do

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- ▶ Do not leave the person alone
- ▶ Remove any firearms, drugs, alcohol or sharp objects that could be used in an attempt
- ▶ For life-threatening emergencies or immediate response, call 9-1-1
- ▶ For urgent and other concerns, contact the Access & Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240

# Liven Up Your Health:

## Using Smart(phone) Ways to Improve Your Mental Health

A smartphone can be a great tool to help improve health and wellness. There are apps to help you make healthier food choices, train for a 5K or teach you to meditate and manage stress. There are even apps targeted directly at boosting your mental well-being to help you cope with symptoms of PTSD or learn and practice the behaviors and thinking patterns of happier people.

But there's another, more surprising, way you can use your smartphone for better mental health: Play more video games.

East Carolina University published a study suggesting that playing games (such as popular smartphone games Bejeweled® or Bookworm®) for 30 minutes each day can help alleviate clinical depression and anxiety. There's also evidence that playing video games in older years actually promotes a more positive aging experience and helps alleviate depression in older adults.

So go ahead, break out that smartphone on the bus ride home from work, or get a phone and download some apps for grandma. No need for it to be a guilty pleasure, because now you know that playing games (in moderation, of course!) can actually help boost your mental health.



## NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

Unsure of where to go for help? Chat online or call a counselor today!

- Free confidential support
- Crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- Referrals for mental health and drug and alcohol needs



### SAN DIEGO ACCESS & CRISIS LINE

- All languages
- 7 days a week/24 hours a day

(888) 724-7240

### LIVE CHAT

- Chat with a counselor today!
- Available Mon–Fri 4pm–10pm

Visit: [optumhealthsandiego.com](http://optumhealthsandiego.com) or [Up2SD.org](http://Up2SD.org)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES  
DIAL 2-1-1

