Minnesota Department of Health. You Matter. Talk to Us.
1-800-273-8255. Text MN to 741741

# #StayConnectedMN – Congregational Communications

mental health awareness month 2022

Connection is one of the most important things for our mental well-being; staying connected during the pandemic has been one of the greatest challenges. These messages focus on the importance of staying connected to ourselves, friends, neighbors and loved ones; and building community to survive and thrive.

These sample emails can be published as weekly communications during Mental Health Awareness Month. Please always include the Crisis Text Line and Suicide Prevention Lifeline in every communication. Additional resources are provided for each week to customize your outreach. For more on language and images to use, please view the Safe Messaging about Mental Health and Suicide guide.

**Call to Action:**

* Promote Crisis Resources; Encourage Help Seeking
  + National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
  + Crisis Text Line: Text MN to 741741

## Week 1: Build casual connections

### Email messages for Week 1

Close relationships with family and friends are important for our health and well-being. But what about the people who make up our broader social networks: the parents at school drop-off, the neighbor down the street, or that colleague in another department who always makes you laugh?

While research on the benefits of social connections has generally focused on the importance of “strong ties,” or the intimate relationships with family and close friends, a growing body of research is shedding light on the hidden benefits of casual acquaintances, too. Surprisingly, these “weak ties” (that funny colleague, for example) can serve important functions, such as boosting physical and psychological health and buffering against stress and loneliness.

Imagine a day that begins by greeting your regular barista at the local coffee shop. You get to work and run into a colleague who you have not seen for a while, and chat about your weekend. After work, you head to yoga class where you exchange pleasantries with the girl whose hair is always a different color. Walking home afterward, you stop to chat with the guy you always see walking the pug named Wilbur. None of these people play an important role in your life, yet a day without these kinds of interactions seems a little emptier.

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### Additional resources for Week 1

* [7 Practices to Increase Social Connection and Resilience in the Workplace (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-practices-increase-social-connection-workplace-dimity-podger)](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-practices-increase-social-connection-workplace-dimity-podger)
* [We Want to Have Deeper Conversations with Strangers (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/we\_want\_to\_have\_deeper\_conversations\_with\_strangers\_why\_dont\_we)](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/we_want_to_have_deeper_conversations_with_strangers_why_dont_we)
* [These Questions Can Help you Connect (Even When You're Apart) (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/these\_questions\_can\_help\_you\_connect\_even\_when\_youre\_apart)](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/these_questions_can_help_you_connect_even_when_youre_apart)
* [Why You Shouldn’t Hate Small Talk (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/small\_talk)](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/small_talk)

## Week 2: Foster close connections

### Email messages for Week 2

Connecting with others is one of the most important things we can do for our well-being. Social connection lowers anxiety and depression, helps us regulate our emotions, and improves our self-esteem and empathy. When connecting with those who are close to you, remember that it is OK to talk about how you feel. In fact, we should talk about our feelings. It is OK not to be OK. Reach out to friends, family, neighbors, a warm line, or a crisis line if you want to talk. No concern is too small. Help is available and hope is possible. For help, try these resources:

* + - Crisis Text Line: text MN to 741741
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

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### Additional resources for Week 2

* [6 Ways to Show Your Friends You Appreciate Them (https://tinybuddha.com/blog/6-ways-to-show-your-friends-you-appreciate-them/)](https://tinybuddha.com/blog/6-ways-to-show-your-friends-you-appreciate-them/)
* [Connectedness & Health: The Science of Social Connection | PlanH (https://planh.ca/resources/links/connectedness-health-science-social-connection)](https://planh.ca/resources/links/connectedness-health-science-social-connection)
* [Piedmont Organization: Benefits of showing kindness to others (https://www.piedmont.org/living-better/benefits-of-showing-kindness-to-others)](https://www.piedmont.org/living-better/benefits-of-showing-kindness-to-others)

## Week 3: Connect with community

### Email messages for Week 3

Lack of social connection is equal to the risk of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and is greater than the risk associated with obesity, excess alcohol consumption, and lack of exercise.

Loneliness can be hard. Social connection can help us heal our sorrows; feel seen and heard; offer us comfort when we are sad; move forward after a setback; improve our health; sleep better; create access to resources and information; and more. Social connectedness includes more than just our closest relationships. We also all have a need, at any age, to **connect to something bigger than ourselves.** Culture, faith, social causes, or professions often fill that role for many people. Finding something that is meaningful to you, that you are part of in a big or small way, and taking some time to appreciate your connection, is valuable to your mental well-being.

**Here are some reflection questions to help you think about ways to grow your community connections:**

* What do you like about your community (cultural, faith, work, or neighborhood)? How do others contribute to that factor? Can you help support that good thing that you love? Can you connect with others who like that same thing (e.g., hiking clubs)?
* How can you make others feel welcome in your community?
* Where do you feel a sense of community now, or where have you felt it in the past?
* What do you care about in your community?
* What are the big and little ways you can participate in your community?
* What are your personal strengths and how can you use them to support what you care about most?

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### Additional resources for Week 3

* [Find Volunteer Opportunities (https://engage.pointsoflight.org/)](https://engage.pointsoflight.org/)
* [How to Stay Socially Connected to Society: Your Life Depends on It (https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-stay-socially-connected-to-society-your-life-depends-on-it)](https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-stay-socially-connected-to-society-your-life-depends-on-it#:~:text=15%20tips%20to%20improve%20social%20connection%20Start%20with,and%20attract%20people%20you%20want%20to%20interact%20with.)

## Week 4: Finding support and help

### Key communication messages for Week 4

* **If you are concerned someone may be having thoughts of suicide, ask them openly and directly if they are having thoughts of suicide**. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) to learn about resources available to you and your loved ones.
* Warm lines and peer support can be valuable for those who are managing stress. Warm lines provide support to callers who need it, but who may not be in crisis. You do not need to be in crisis to call a warm line. Anyone seeking support can access these resources. [Minnesota Warmline - Mental Health Minnesota (mentalhealthmn.org)](https://mentalhealthmn.org/support/minnesota-warmline/) or [Home - Wellness in the Woods | Mental Health Advocacy (mnwitw.org)](https://mnwitw.org/)
* **It can be intimidating to find a therapist, or difficult to know where to start. Use your employee assistance program if you have one**. You may contact your primary care provider or health insurance company, or check out [Fast-Tracker (https://www.fasttrackermn.org/)](https://www.fasttrackermn.org/) to find Minnesota resources for help with mental health and substance use disorders. Personal referrals may help, too. You may be surprised what you learn when you start asking.

### Email messages for Week 4

Know where to find support and resources if you or a loved one need help. Give yourself grace today and every day. Take time to recognize the people in your life – your coworkers, loved ones or others – and to recognize yourself. A little recognition can go a long way. Make a special effort to connect with people in the community or workplace who may be vulnerable and do not have a lot of support. Talking about feelings can be uncomfortable, but just acknowledging that you or someone you know is struggling truly does help.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or need someone to talk to, please reach out and connect with one of the resources below.

* [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/): 1-800-273-8255.
* [Crisis Text Line (https://www.crisistextline.org/)](https://www.crisistextline.org/): Text MN to 741741.
* [Minnesota local mobile crisis response (https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/health-care/mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp)](https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/health-care/mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp): Find the phone number for your county mobile crisis response team.
* [Minnesota Day One hotline for domestic or sexual violence (http://dayoneservices.org/)](http://dayoneservices.org/): 1-866-223-1111.
* [National Parent Helpline (https://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/)](https://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/): 1-855-427-2736, operated by Parents Anonymous.
* [Postpartum Support International Helpline (https://www.postpartum.net/)](https://www.postpartum.net/): 1-800-944-4773.

## Additional Resources:

* [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)](https://mn365.sharepoint.com/sites/MDH_SuicideTaskforceProjects/Shared Documents/Communications Committee/Projects for Communications Committee/Mental Health Awareness Month/National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (https:/suicidepreventionlifeline.org/))
* [Crisis Text Line (https://www.crisistextline.org/)](https://www.crisistextline.org/)
* [Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress)](https://www.mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress)
* [Teen Line (https://www.teenline.org/)](https://www.teenline.org/)
* [The Trevor Project (https://www.thetrevorproject.org/)](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/)
* [NAMI Minnesota (https://namimn.org/)](https://namimn.org/)

Minnesota Department of Health  
Suicide Prevention Unit  
85 East 7th Pl  
PO Box 64882  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882  
[health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us](mailto:health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us)   
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us/)

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5400