**Do you know your Tools2Thrive?**

While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. The good news is there are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency - and there are ways that everyone can be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life’s challenges or their mental health.

This May is Mental Health Month Steuben Council on Addictions is highlighting #Tools2Thrive - what individuals can do daily to prioritize their mental health, build resiliency in the face of trauma and obstacles, support those who are struggling, and work towards a path of recovery.

One of the easiest tools anyone can use is taking a mental health screen at mhascreening.org when they need answers. It's a quick, free, and private way for people to assess their mental health and recognize signs of mental health problems. This May, we are also exploring topics that can help you build your own set of #Tools2Thrive - recognizing and owning your feelings; finding the positive after loss; connecting with others; eliminating toxic influences; creating healthy routines; and supporting others - all as ways to boost the mental health and general wellness of you and your loved ones.

When it comes to your feelings, it can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you’re feeling them. Most people don’t think about what emotions they are dealing with but taking the time to really identify what you’re feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations. It's ok to give yourself permission to feel. We also know that life can throw us curveballs - and at some point in our lives we will all experience loss. It may be the end of a relationship, being let go from a job, losing a home, or the death of a loved one. It is natural to go through a grieving process. By looking for opportunity in adversity or finding ways to remember the good things about who or what we’ve lost, we can help ourselves to recover mentally and emotionally.

It also is true that connections and the people around us can help our overall mental health – or hurt it. It's important to make connections with other people that help enrich our lives and get us through tough times, but it's equally important to recognize when certain people and situations in life can trigger us to feel bad or engage in destructive behaviors. Identifying the toxic influences in our lives and taking steps to create a new life without them can improve mental and physical health over time. And we know that work, paying bills, cleaning, getting enough sleep, and taking care of children are just some of the things we do each day - and it is easy to be overwhelmed. By creating routines, we can organize our days in such a way that taking care of tasks and ourselves becomes a pattern that makes it easier to get things done without having to think hard about them.

For each of us, the tools we use to keep us mentally healthy will be unique. But Steuben Council on Addictions wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is possible. Finding what work for you may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. By developing your own #Tools2Thrive, it is possible to find balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, and physical health and mental health – and set yourself on the path to recovery.

For more information, visit www.mhanational.org/may. If you are looking for resources in our area, dial 2-1-1 for information.

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**Knowledge is Power—Let us help you learn more**

Steuben Council on Addictions is available to provide community presentations on a myriad of topics relating to substance abuse, prevention, parent information, information for schools and their employees, churches, youth groups and more within Steuben County. We are capable of customizing presentations to the area of interest, timeframe requested and makeup of the audience. For further information or to schedule a presentation, please contact Prevention Educator Stacey O’Dell at Stacey.O’Dell@dor.org or (607) 776-6441 x205.

**Topics include but are not limited to:** Current adolescent drug trends, Societal drug trends, Vaping and eCigs, The Opioid Epidemic, Underage Drinking; Gambling and its effect on families and society, Substance abuse and employment, Impact of substance use on children and education, etc.
In response to the ever changing world around us, we have compiled links and resources to help families and educators address new and changing needs. We want to be sure that students, parents and teachers have plenty of information to help them out when it comes to social skills, substance abuse, conversation starters, mental health and more. Included here you will find links to age appropriate stories, activities, articles and more that can be helpful tools for you.

In our elementary section we have included a great collection of social skills story books that children can watch and keep up on important topics. Some areas include mindfulness, resiliency, asking for help, handling emotions and more.

In our middle and high school section, there are opportunities for reflection, discussion and activities that are paired with each Storyteller video when they access the Natural Highs information.

The parent section is full of information to help parents with common struggles from dealing with adolescent emotions to having conversations about tough topics.

There are resources being added, so be sure to bookmark the following link: https://www.catholiccharitiessteuben.org/services/substance-free-living/prevention-services/steuben-council-on-addictions/student-resources/
Making the connection: Mental health and substances

There is a link between mental health and addictions that often go unnoticed. Addiction changes the brain and can disturb a person’s priorities and override control impulses, similar to symptoms of a mental health illness. This link is called a co-occurring disorder or dual diagnosis.

Many people who suffer with mental disorders also suffer with regular abuse of drugs and alcohol. Since the 1980’s the link between these two has been documented in multiple national survey’s, showing individuals with anxiety or mood disorders to be twice as likely to suffer from drug use or dependence. In a dual diagnosis, both issues are present but one might be noticeable worse. In many instances, untreated mental health problems increase the substance abuse problem. This causes the mental health problem and substance abuse program to become worse. Alcohol or drugs are often used as self-medication of mental illness, which only makes the issues worse. This increases the underlying risk for mental disorders and worsens long term symptoms. Substance abuse may trigger new symptoms that were not there before.

It’s important to spot the signs and symptoms if you or your loved ones are suffering from mental illness. Mental illness can affect emotions and behaviors, varying depending on the disorder. The signs and symptoms of mental health disorders include: Feeling sad, extreme mood changes, withdrawal of activities, reduced concentration, inability to cope, alcohol or drug abuse, excessive anger, and suicidal thoughts.

The following information comes from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to help understand the connection, called comorbidity, between substance use and mental health. Substance use and addiction can contribute to the development of mental illness. Substance use may change the brain in ways that make a person more likely to develop a mental illness.

Common risk factors can contribute to both mental illness and substance use disorders. Research suggests that there are many genes that can contribute to the risk of developing both a substance use disorder and a mental illness. For example, some people have a specific gene that can make them at increased risk of mental illness as an adult, if they frequently used marijuana as a child. A gene can also influence how a person responds to a drug – whether or not using the drug makes them feel good. Environmental factors, such as stress or trauma, can cause genetic changes that are passed down through generations and may contribute to the development of mental illnesses or a substance use disorder.

Mental illnesses can contribute to drug use and substance use disorders. Some mental health conditions have been identified as risk factors for developing a substance use disorder. For example, some research suggests that people with mental illness may use drugs or alcohol as a form of self-medication. Although some drugs may help with mental illness symptoms, sometimes this can also make the symptoms worse. Additionally, when a person develops a mental illness, brain changes may enhance the rewarding effects of substances, predisposing the person to continue using the substance.
DEADLINE Extended!

2020 Steuben County Task Force on Underage Drinking Countywide Poster Contest

Students in the 6, 7, and 8th grades

Rules:
Submit design on an 8 ½” x 11” sheet of paper
Colored pencils, crayons, & paint are all acceptable.

On back top left of entry sheet, write in pencil the name(s) of designer(s), teacher name, grade, classroom number and school district.

Entries may be an individual or class/group design and you may attach a paragraph describing what the poster means to the designer(s).

Poster should capture some of the following ideas:
-Anyone less than 21 years of age should not drink alcohol
-It is not legal, safe, or healthy for teens to drink alcohol
-Parents should not provide alcohol or a location for teens to drink alcohol.
-Prevention of injuries and death in youth as it relates to alcohol

Entry Deadline (NO LATER THAN 5/15/20)

Steuben Council on Addictions
8 E. Morris Street, Bath, New York 14810 Attn: Jim Bassage, Prevention Director
Questions-call (607) 776-6441 ext. 207

Countywide Poster Contest- Classroom Prizes:

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<th>1st Prize</th>
<th>2nd Prize</th>
<th>3rd Prize</th>
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<td>&quot;T&quot; shirt</td>
<td>Pizza Party</td>
<td>Ice Cream Party</td>
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UAD reserves the right to use the winning poster design in Steuben Prevention Coalition and Task Force activities and publications