

Sample Op-Ed for May is Mental Health Month

Tips:

- 1) *Customize, customize, customize. This template is just a starting point and it's important to personalize it to your voice and to fit your community – and the majority of outlets will only accept an op-ed if it is original and has not run elsewhere.*
 - 2) *Check with your local paper re: length. Mainly op-eds have a word count limit of around 800.*
 - 3) *Unlike a Letter to the Editor, Op-Eds are longer and are not meant to respond to a specific news article. Rather, they are meant to comment on a broader timely societal or topic. Referencing the publication's coverage of the issue is relevant, but an op-ed is not meant to be a direct response to that coverage.*
 - 4) *Oftentimes with op-eds, newspapers require exclusivity – meaning you can only submit to one paper at a time. Keep in mind that outlets typically need 3-5 days to respond before you can move on to another publication.*
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Why Every Month Should be Mental Health Month

Did you know that May is Mental Health Month? Here in [fill in state/city/community] it's more important than ever that we work together to elevate the conversation about mental health – and start talking about our brain health the same way we talk about our physical health. It's not enough that we talk about it in May – we need to talk about our mental health all year long.

Because here in [fill in state/city/community] and across the country, we have an epidemic [fill in local stats on suicide or opioid addiction – make it personal to the locality]. If we don't address our overall mental health, things will only get worse. Part of the problem is that we often push our mental health aside and focus on our physical health – but it's important to do both.

It can start with taking a look at your overall health and making small changes every day to prioritize your mental well-being.

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally – it's important to pay attention to both our physical health and our mental health, which can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions. For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health. When dealing with dueling diagnoses, focusing on both physical and mental health concerns can be daunting – but critically important in achieving overall wellness.

There are things you can do that may help.

Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals— can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives. And whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mind-body connection.

[ADD DETAILS OF ANY LOCAL INITIATIVES/PROGRAMS THAT ARE APPLICABLE.]

Living a healthy lifestyle is not always easy, but it can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing on your overall health. And that will benefit everyone.