

# *The ME WE Family Education & Support Program*

## **Newsletter Volume 8**

Making a difference,



now that you know.

### ***Journaling for Mental Health and Wellness: Tips and Prompts to Start a Journal***

#### **What is journaling?**

*Journaling is a self-care exercise that involves recording your life events and related feelings and thoughts. It can be a way to declutter your mind and cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. As you put your experiences into words, you can begin to organize thoughts, express and process emotions, identify patterns, and reflect on ways to improve your well-being.*

*There are many types of journaling practices and many ways to express yourself. In expressive writing, for example, you free-write without stopping for several minutes. The focus is on recording your thoughts and emotions surrounding an upsetting or traumatic event in your life. In other styles, such as gratitude journaling, you focus more on recounting positive experiences. In studies on journaling, participants seem to reap both physical and mental health benefits, such as a boost in mood, reduced feelings of distress, and improved immune function. Journaling may help to enhance well-being in several different ways:*

- Keeping things in or suppressing thoughts and feelings about events, including traumatic experiences, can be stressful, increasing your heart rate and making you more susceptible to illness.

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### ***How 'laughing gas' became a deadly - but legal - American addiction***

**Nitrous oxide** – known colloquially as "laughing gas" – has many uses, from a painkiller during dental procedures to a whipping agent for canned whipped cream. While its euphoric side effects have long been known, the rise of vaping has helped create a perfect delivery vehicle for the gas - and a perfect recipe for an addiction, experts warn.

Meg Caldwell's death wasn't inevitable. The horse rider from Florida had started using nitrous oxide recreationally in university eight years ago. But like many young people, she started to use more heavily during the pandemic. The youngest of four sisters, she was "the light of our lives," her sister Kathleen Dial told the BBC. But Ms Caldwell's use continued to escalate, to the point that her addiction "started ruining her life".

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*"Your mental health is a priority. Your happiness is an essential. Your self-care is a necessity."*  
-- Melody Beattie

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## *Addiction programs that helped drug deaths plummet in 2024 now face Trump cuts*

(NPR | By Brian Mann Published May 15, 2025 at 5:29 PM EDT)

**AILSA CHANG, HOST:**

Street drug deaths in the U.S. plummeted by 27% last year. That's according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's an unprecedented decline that translates into tens of thousands fewer fatal overdoses across the country. Of course, this comes at a moment when the White House and Republicans in Congress have proposed deep cuts for addiction programs that many experts say are saving lives. NPR addiction correspondent Brian Mann is here to catch us up. Hi, Brian.

**BRIAN MANN, BYLINE:** Hi, Ailsa.

**CHANG:** OK, so a 27% drop - that's more than a quarter in a single year. I mean, that seems really substantial. Have we seen anything like that before?

**MANN:** Wow, no. This drop in deaths from all street drugs, it's huge. The CDC, which tracks fatal overdoses, called this moment remarkable. Doctors, researchers, people living with addiction that I've been talking to say there's just been a massive positive shift from the fentanyl crisis that once seemed unstoppable to this moment, when more and more people are surviving. It's important to say a lot of people are still dying from drugs - roughly 80,000 lives lost to street drugs in 2024. But that is a massive drop from the roughly 105,000 people who died the year before.

**CHANG:** Wow. But let me ask you - I mean, fentanyl, it's been so deadly. Do we know why so many more people are surviving now?

To continue reading or to listen to the entire interview (4:20),

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## *Doing Something New Is Good for You*

Routine can be so comforting. And easy. I can eat the same thing for breakfast every day—whole grain English muffin with plant based butter and blueberries and nuts. If it's Monday, I exercise at 9, start my work day at 10:30, and end by 6:30. In the evening I'll read, play games, spend time with friends or watch television. Other days are pretty similar, with the main variations being in my exercise routine. Is today strength training or pilates? This routine has been especially true since the pandemic. While hundreds struggled and are struggling with too much to do, my life got simpler during the pandemic, mostly because it became much more limited. I'm grateful that I don't have days filled with too much to do, too many demands, and extreme worry about loved ones. And I'm also aware that there may be others who are getting stuck in isolated comfort or discomfort. Staying in a restricted routine may have come from the pandemic, but the lack of novelty is limiting to our mental wellness.

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## *Smoking weed and consuming THC-laced edibles linked to early heart disease, study finds*

Healthy people who regularly smoked marijuana or consumed THC-laced edibles showed signs of early cardiovascular disease similar to tobacco smokers, a new small study found. “To my knowledge, it’s the first study looking at THC’s impact on vascular function in humans,” said senior study author Matthew Springer, professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

“We’re looking at a window in the future, showing the early changes that may explain why smoking marijuana has been linked to later heart disease,” Springer said. “It appears the act of smoking and the THC itself both contribute to those changes in different ways.” Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the component of marijuana that provides a high. Prior research on mice found damage to blood vessels that supply oxygen to vital organs after exposure to marijuana smoke, Springer said. Whether marijuana smoke would impact the human vascular system, however, was unknown. We found that vascular function was reduced by 42% in marijuana smokers and by 56% in THC-edible users compared to nonusers,” lead study author Dr. Leila Mohammadi, an assistant researcher in cardiology at the University of California, San Francisco, said in an email. The research only shows an association, Springer said. “We can only state that the cannabis users have poor vascular function, not that cannabis use causes poor vascular function,” he said via email. The findings on THC-laced edibles was surprising, said Dr. Andrew Freeman, director of cardiovascular prevention and wellness at National Jewish Health in Denver. “Could it be that other forms of marijuana — teas, tinctures, edibles — are perhaps not as benign as we once thought?” said Freeman, who was not involved in the study. “We need larger studies to make a better conclusion about this finding.”

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### ***Did you know?***

*Nearly **19 million children** in the United States have at least one parent with a substance use disorder according to a new study published in *Jama Pediatrics*, and a significant number of those children have a parent who’s addiction is moderate or severe, as opposed to mild, the study finds.*



*“Self-care  
means giving  
yourself  
permission to  
pause.”*

*---Celilia Tran*

## 5 Types of Self-Care for Every Area of Your Lifel

### How are you caring for yourself today?

All the stress-relief activities in the world won't help if we aren't taking care of ourselves. Self-care has been defined as "a multidimensional, multifaceted process of purposeful engagement in strategies that promote healthy functioning and enhance well-being."<sup>1</sup> In simpler terms, self-care is all about caring for yourself—as the name suggests—to ensure your physical and emotional needs are met.

Good self-care can take on many forms. It could be ensuring we get enough sleep every night or stepping outside for a few minutes for some fresh air. It can also mean taking the time to do what we enjoy.

Sometimes, you might need more self-care in one specific area to restore balance or find relief from a stressor in your life. To care for your health and well-being, it's important to find a balance that allows you to address each of these areas.

#### At a Glance

Self-care is a conscious act people take to promote their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health. It is vital for building resilience toward life's stressors that we can't eliminate. When you've taken steps to care for your mind and body, you'll be better equipped to live your best life. Unfortunately, however, many of us view self-care as a luxury rather than a priority. Consequently, we're left feeling overwhelmed, tired, and ill-equipped to handle life's inevitable challenges. It's important to assess how you're caring for yourself in several different domains so you can ensure you're caring for your mind, body, and spirit.

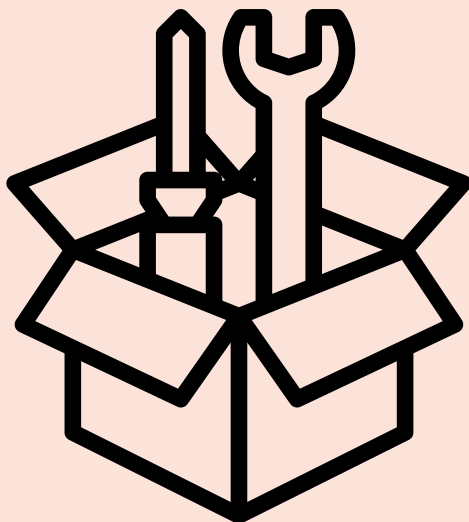
#### Physical Self-Care

We need to take care of our bodies if we want them to run efficiently. Remember that there's a strong connection between our body and our mind. When we care for our bodies, we'll think and feel better, too.

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Family Groups

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First Call for Help

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## *What To Know About Music Therapy*

Music therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses the naturally mood-lifting properties of music to help people improve their mental health and overall well-being. It's a goal-oriented intervention that may involve:

Making music  
Writing songs  
Singing  
Dancing  
Listening to music  
Discussing music

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