




MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT

Newsletter

SPRING 2025 | 56TH EDITION

May is Mental Health Matters Month!




The Continuum of Mental Health: Exploring the Range of Mental Health

Your emotions exist on a continuum, shifting and changing over time. All feelings — from joy to sadness, calm to worry — are part of this range, and they're all valid. Take a moment to reflect on where you are today without judgment. You are invited to reflect on where you currently fall within the spectrum of mental health. Feel free to draw, doodle, write, or simply name what you feel.

Where am I on the mental health continuum today?
Our mental health is fluid. You may feel multiple things at once — joy and sadness, calm and worry. Take a moment to sit with those feelings and name them without judgment. This is part of the continuum.

What emotions or thoughts are coming up for me right now?
If words feel hard, try drawing or doodling as you think.

What would support me in this moment?
This could be a great time to reach out to a friend or a loved one. Or perhaps support right now looks like taking a nap, pausing to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, practicing breathing activities or moving your body.



From Crisis to Community: Michael's Journey Toward Healing, Art, and Purpose

Michael's story begins in darkness—but like the best stories, it doesn't end there. Over a decade ago, he found himself in a place of isolation, heartbreak, and racing thoughts so intense they nearly took his life. A moment of crisis led to hospitalization in Los Angeles County, setting off a painful cycle of institutionalization that repeated more times than he can count. But even in the lowest moments, what saved him were the kindnesses—small and large—offered by a few people who never gave up on him. Those connections became lifelines.

"The entire time, what saved my life was the kindness and love of a handful of people, who I am fortunate to still call friends and family today."

One of the most pivotal parts of Michael's healing was the hard crash that forced a restart. After losing his job, home, and many relationships, he landed back at his mom's house with nothing. That nothingness became a strange kind of freedom: space to slow down, breathe, and begin again.

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"There began a process where I had nothing to do but begin to relax from the maddening thoughts, and put myself back together."





Want to learn more?
Click [HERE](#) or scan QR code on the right to learn more about your emotions, increase self-awareness, enhance emotional communication, and boost your wellbeing.

Need to talk? Connect with 988. There is hope. Call or text 988 or chat at [988Lifeline.org](#), available anytime.



CELEBRATE MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS MONTH!


May is Mental Health Matters Month, a time for Sonoma County to collectively raise awareness about mental health and take action! We've put together a community calendar of events, activities and trainings to encourage people to take action for their mental health or inspire learning more about the resources, and services available.

Click [HERE](#) or scan QR code to access Sonoma County's May 2025 Mental Health Matters Month Community Calendar.





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MICHAEL'S STORY — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

But even then, Michael never gave up. There was always a belief—however faint—that he could push himself toward the life he wanted. Today, that belief is paying off. He's not only surviving—he's creating, connecting, and giving back.

A significant part of his recovery came from the people who showed up, even when it was hard. Friends and family were instrumental, but one person stands out: Rebecca, his best friend.

"She gave all she could, and at many times more than she could, or I had the right to ask for. I can confidently say I wouldn't have the life I have today...if not for her determination to save me."

Now, Michael defines "doing well" in a simpler, more meaningful way—working on projects he's passionate about and staying close with people he loves. His days are filled with art, a form of expression that anchored him during his crisis and continues to help him stay grounded. He's also learned to ask for help, reaching out with a simple "I'm struggling" when things get hard.

When asked what he would say to his past self at the lowest point, Michael doesn't offer a cliché. He imagines sitting with him—walking, drawing, just being present. Healing, after all, isn't always about fixing; sometimes it's about patiently guiding someone back to themselves. Michael also carries a message for those who don't understand mental health recovery:

"Someone at their lowest point isn't trapped there forever... if we had a better community net in place to catch people before they fall too far, we wouldn't lose so many people to an avoidable mental health spiral."

His advice to anyone currently struggling? Recognize that the people who are showing up—even if it feels like they don't get it—are doing their best. Patience and forgiveness go a long way in those complex, emotionally charged moments.

Michael is now turning his pain into purpose. He's actively involved in Sonoma County's mental health community, including the Life Worth Living Suicide Prevention Alliance, where he volunteers his time, experience, and creativity. He designed both the Alliance's logo and Sonoma County's Behavioral Health's new Resource Map for those in need of services.

"When you're looking for mental health resources, you actually needed them a week ago... The Behavioral Health Resource Map... will serve the community at large with the ambition of cutting clearly through the clutter."

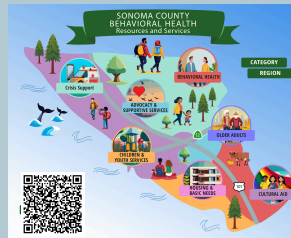
He's also exploring personal creative projects—drawing constantly and writing a Substack called The Other Side of Sanity, where he reflects on mental health, art, and life. Looking forward, Michael is hopeful—not just for himself, but for the broader mental health movement. He sees Sonoma County as a model of how grassroots efforts and compassionate leadership can make a real difference. His dream is for more inter-county collaboration, more outreach, and ultimately, a system that meets people where they are. He reminds those who may be carrying heavy burdens to

"Give yourself a break. You're working too hard."

Michael's story is not just about survival. It's about the transformation that happens when love, art, and community intersect. He's proof that even after the deepest lows, healing is possible—and that sometimes, starting over is the beginning of something remarkable.

NEW Interactive Behavioral Health Resource Map!

Sonoma County Behavioral Health has launched an Interactive Behavioral Health Resource Map to help the community navigate through a crisis or time in need of resources.



The map (pictured above) was designed by Michael Johnson (read about his story of transformation in this newsletter). The fundamental resources were gathered by an intern with Latino Service Providers and Sonoma County's CAPE team. This map was not designed to encompass every resource, but rather a place that individuals can go to get started on finding help.

Visit the map [HERE](#). Resources are still being added, please feel free to send suggestions to: mhsa@sonoma-county.org

Your voice matters, we want to hear from YOU!

Help shape the future of Sonoma County's Behavioral Health services by taking a few minutes to respond to the survey linked below. Your input will help us decide how to allocate BHS funding and to improve services.

Click [HERE](#) for survey or scan QR code with your phone. Thank you, we value your input!



Sonoma County's MHSA Annual Update & Report!

Read Sonoma County's MHSA Annual Plan Update for FY 2025-2026 and Program Report for FY 2023 - 2024, which is posted on the DHS-BHD webpage [HERE](#).

This publication is brought to you by the County of Sonoma Department of Health Services Behavioral Health Division (DHS-BHD). It was posted for 30 days during the public comment period and presented at Sonoma County's Behavioral Health Board meeting on April 15th.

It is scheduled to go to the Board of Supervisors for review and approval on May 6, 2025.

For questions email: Melissa.ladrech@sonoma-county.org

