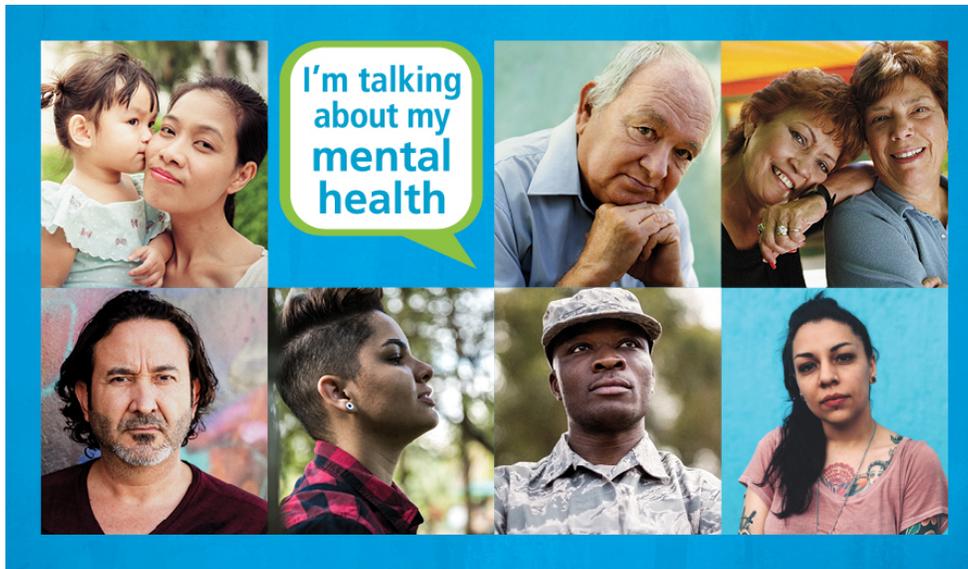


# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 19 • May 2021

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month



Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. And this year, more people than ever before are dealing with emotional challenges associated with the pandemic and the social upheaval experienced across our country. These stressors have amplified the need for public awareness and discussion of mental health as a key component of overall health. So, in conjunction with the national “May is Mental Health Awareness Month”, Ventura County Behavioral Health has launched a new countywide campaign, “I’m Talking About My Mental Health.”

This campaign was developed with de-stigmatization as a critical goal. By showing relatable people facing relatable challenges, reaching out for help and making positive changes in their lifestyles, we make the goal of improved mental health feel approachable and achievable.

By personalizing the message - talking about “my” mental health - the campaign allows viewers to see others talking about, thinking about, and working on their mental health and fitness, and demonstrates this as normal and life-affirming behavior.

There are now billboards and posters in the community, public

service announcements on the radio, and colleagues inviting discussion by wearing buttons or even using the themed Zoom background.

Please take a minute to get familiar with the campaign, and join us in promoting the discussion of mental health in the weeks ahead.

**Learn more:**

I'm Talking About My Mental Health

[www.talkingaboutmymentalhealth.org](http://www.talkingaboutmymentalhealth.org)

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## NAMIWalks Your Way Ventura County

### Join us for a United Day of Hope

Our NAMIWalks event will be a little different than what you might expect from a walk event— while



making a lot of difference. It's going to be "your way," meaning you choose what you want to do on event day. Our collective mental health needs are at their greatest now. One in three U.S. adults reported experiencing depression or anxiety since the pandemic began. NAMI's programs and advocacy are needed more than ever, and with your help, we are pleased to present NAMIWalks Your Way on Saturday, May 22.

#### **What is NAMIWalks Your Way?**

On May 22, NAMIWalks will be a virtual experience, united with NAMIWalks across the country. NAMIWalks Your Way means instead of putting one foot in front of the other, you get to put one feat in front of the other: participants get to use their creativity, with the main rule that we continue to advance towards our goal by leaps and bounds. The choice is yours on how you want to make this spring's event fit into this spring's reality.

We will have two team captains from VCBH, Esperanza Mata and Vince Franco. Join Us!

[Join Our Team](#)

[Support Me](#)

[Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI](#)

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## Words from Erika:

### The Stigma of Mental Health

Growing up in a Mexican household, we rarely talked about mental health. If you were depressed, then you were lazy and if you had anxiety you were probably on drugs. People would say things like “you are too young to be depressed,” or “kids do not get anxiety,” and even “just get over it.” Mental health problems were simply not spoken about. When I went to college and majored in Psychology, I realized that the emotions I experienced were normal and learned that mental and emotional challenges affect everyone.

As I learned more about mental health, I became aware of what I was going through and how to help myself. Dealing with the difficulties and stress of everyday life taught me the importance of having good mental health habits. I learned that positive practices reduce anxiety and depression, improve mood and self-esteem, and can give a greater sense of calm. This has been extremely helpful during these uncertain times.

Being aware of one’s mental health and learning to cope with emotions in a healthy way can help you and the people you care about become more resilient. Awareness of one’s mental health struggles and being about to talk about it can help eliminate stigma, increase the chances for early intervention, and reduce misconceptions about getting help. Awareness is key for understanding what mental health is, and how families can receive the help they need. Getting informed is the first step. More informed means more able to help those that are close to us and be okay with sharing our mental health struggles. Take a minute now for yourself, and click the link below.

**Learn more:**

I’m Talking about My Mental Health

[www.talkingaboutmymentalhealth.org](http://www.talkingaboutmymentalhealth.org)

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## National Prevention Week - May 9-15



Visit the SAMHSA website to learn more about participating in National Prevention Week in your community and find ideas, activities, and resources to make prevention happen every day.  
[www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week](http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week)



SAMHSA's National Prevention Week (NPW) is a public education

platform that promotes prevention year-round through providing ideas, capacity building, tools, and resources to help individuals and communities make substance use prevention happen every day.

NPW culminates in May recognizing the important work that has been done in communities throughout the year to inspire action and prevent substance use and mental disorders.

Each year around this observance, communities and organizations across the country come together to raise awareness about the importance of substance use prevention and positive mental health.

**Learn more:**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week](http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week)

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## Words from Alma:

### Looking Forward

Here we are, one year after COVID-19 started and I am remembering about all that has happened. The community was so afraid and started buying water and toilet paper in excess, and diapers were in short supply for my grandson. I remember being more nervous about the reaction of people than the actual virus.

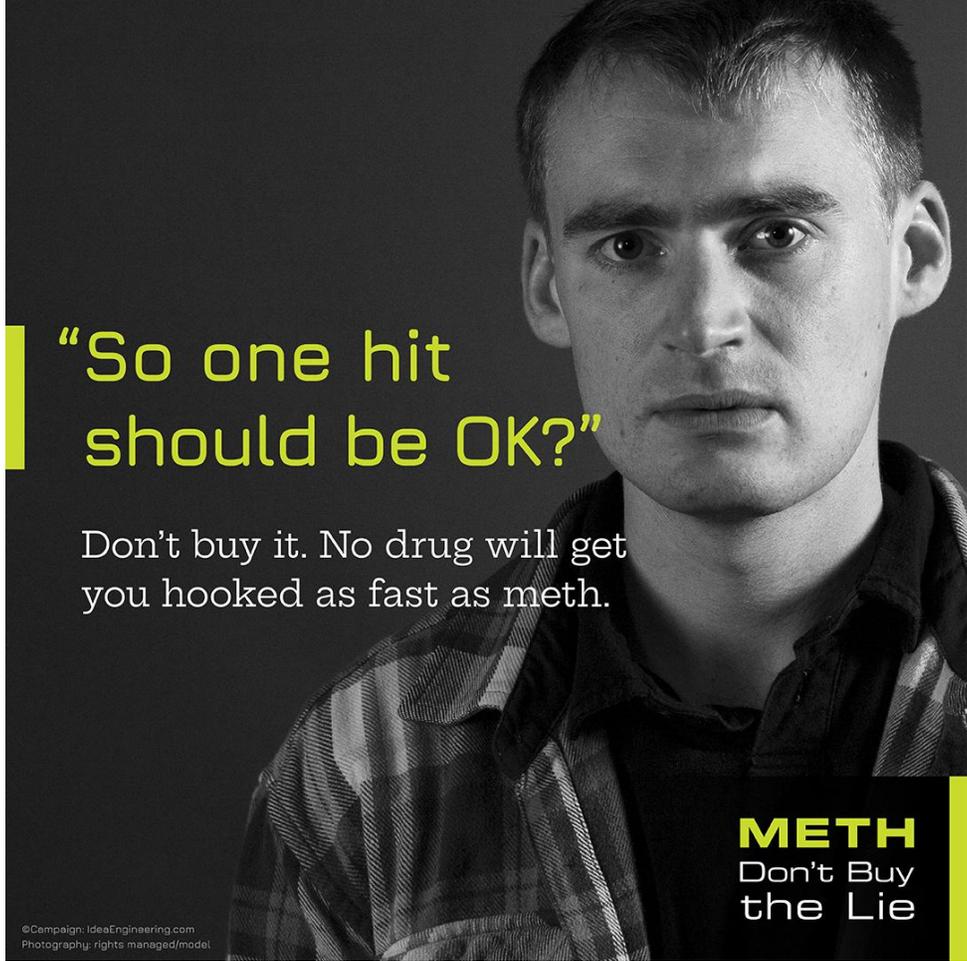
Like many of us, we lost several friends and family members to this virus. Most of my family was infected with COVID-19, including my parents. Thankfully they survived and we are happy to still have them with us. It was a very difficult year, but we are resilient, and we are getting through this together.

Upon reflection, it is hard to describe my feelings, sadness at not sharing special moments with family, happiness that my family survived, and fear of the unknown of the virus. Regardless of all the mixed feelings, pain, and suffering that I experienced this past year, I am grateful that I have my family and my job and was recently vaccinated.

I look forward to working in the community and doing what I love the most - interacting with people and educating the community about substance use prevention.

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**Featured Campaign:  
Meth - Don't Buy the Lie**



“So one hit  
should be OK?”

Don't buy it. No drug will get  
you hooked as fast as meth.

**METH**  
Don't Buy  
the Lie

©Campaign: IdeaEngineering.com  
Photography: rights managed/model

The “Meth - Don't Buy the Lie” campaign is targeted to young adults who may be at risk for trying meth. The goal of the campaign is to provide the truth about meth without preaching nor invoking the reflexive opposition which comes easily to people in this age range.

**Learn more:**

Meth - Don't Buy the Lie

[www.TalkingAboutMeth.org](http://www.TalkingAboutMeth.org)

[HablandoDeMeth.org](http://HablandoDeMeth.org)

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## Snapshot: BRITE World Health Expo for Ventura County Youth and Families

### Educating Parents & Youth



BRITE World is a super fun and exciting virtual environment giving users the chance to interact authentically vs. traditional distance learning platforms. BRITE World is another option to provide prevention education, youth development programs and events to students.



Participants-as-avatars are immersed in vibrant game-like landscapes and interact and learn just like in-person. Organized and hosted in collaboration with schools and youth-serving community organizations, the Health Expo provides diverse worlds and activities to explore. Using fantastical scenes as backdrops, the Health Expo is full of fun and engaging learning and prevention education activities.

The virtual Reality Party experience, adapted to BRITE World in lieu of the in-person live event, features multiple scenes depicting unsafe and risky behaviors that can happen in a house party situation. There are interactive items and characters with information on drinking games, party drugs, vaping, impaired driving, and recognizing the signs of drug use. You can find tips on keeping teens safe and ways to engage in meaningful conversations.

BRITE is available to engage youth, young adults, caring adults and youth-serving organizations in Ventura County on prevention, health and wellness topics.

**Learn more:**  
[www.brite.link/expo](http://www.brite.link/expo)

*Below: Health Expo Participants-as-Avatars ready to explore the Tropical Island Paradise; Friends and family meet in discussion after completing a social emotional learning activity; Avatar-led yoga is relaxing.*

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**New Resources from SAMHSA  
on Underage Drinking  
The Facts about Alcohol**

These resources help teens and parents understand the risks of underage drinking.

### **Tips for Teens: The Truth About Alcohol**

This fact sheet describes short- and long-term effects and helps dispel common myths.

#### **Learn more:**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[Tips for Teens: The Truth About Alcohol](#)



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## Calendar

We will keep you posted on upcoming events in each newsletter. If your agency is planning any online meetings, please send us the information so we can post it.

### **Preventing Underage Alcohol Use Part 2: Addressing Use Among Younger Youth**

May 12, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM, ET  
Central East PTTC

[Register](#)

### **The Role of Preventionists in Accelerating Health Equity and Communities of Wellbeing**

May 13, 11:00 AM, PT  
Great Lakes MHTTC and PTTC

[Register](#)

### **Protect Your Brain: Addressing Adolescent African American Males and Substance Use**

June 9, 12:00 PM, PT  
NAADAC

[Register](#)

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## Helpful Resources

If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, tips, latest research, blogs, publications and more.

### **Ventura County Limits**

This website is a portal to help learn about our efforts to address substance use challenges in our communities.

[www.venturacountylimits.org](http://www.venturacountylimits.org)

### **Ventura County Responds**

This website tracks what is being done in Ventura County to address the opioid crisis and provides the latest information for prescribers and community members.

[venturacountyresponds.org](http://venturacountyresponds.org)

### **Marijuana FactCheck**

See the latest findings and research related to cannabis and our kid's health.

[www.mjfactcheck.org](http://www.mjfactcheck.org)

### **Vaping FactCheck**

Learn about the risks of vaping and the impact on teens. Keep informed about the latest research and news.

[www.vapingfactcheckvc.org](http://www.vapingfactcheckvc.org)

### **Social Determinants of Health**

The Social Determinants of Health website provides resources, news, and features community agencies or “Drivers of Change” who are working to building healthier communities through individual, organizational and community wide effort and engagement.

[www.healthequityvc.org](http://www.healthequityvc.org)

### **Ventura County Behavioral Health**

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) provides mental health and substance use treatment services. Learn about our services and how to access help.

[vcbh.org](http://vcbh.org)

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## **About Us**

### **Supporting Health – Preventing Harm**

*Substance Use Prevention Services works upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. Initiatives are aimed at limiting harms related to impaired driving; underage and binge drinking; marijuana and vaping, especially as it relates to harms to youth; prescription drug abuse; and addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations.*

*A primary goal is to delay the onset of first use of alcohol and or other drugs by youth. We collaborate with schools, parent groups, government agencies, medical partners, law enforcement, community-based organizations and more.*

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## **Contact Us**

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*Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez  
pre-COVID-19.*



STAY CONNECTED

