



FREE FAMILY RESOURCE

Understanding Mental Health

*A culturally grounded introduction to mental health for
parents, elders, and youth.*

What is mental health?

Mental health is how we think, feel, and cope with life. It shapes how we handle stress, care for others, and make choices. Just like the body, the mind can be strong one season and need care the next.

In many Haitian families, we were taught to keep problems private, to stay strong, and to trust God. Those values have carried our people through so much. At the same time, many of us have lived through hard things: leaving home, separation from loved ones, discrimination, money stress, and loss. Carrying all of that quietly can wear down even the strongest person.

"Dèyè mòn gen mòn."

Beyond the mountains, more mountains. Life brings challenges, and we do not have to climb them alone.

Mental health is a spectrum

Thriving

Feeling mostly okay, coping with everyday ups and downs, connected to others.

Struggling

Stress, sadness, or worry that keeps coming back and starts to affect daily life.

Needing care

Feelings that are hard to manage for weeks, or make it hard to work, learn, or care for family.

Anyone can move along this spectrum. With rest, support, and sometimes professional care, people heal and grow. *Gerizon pran tan.*

What we hear vs. what's true

Many ideas about mental health come from love and from trying to protect our families. Some of them can keep us from getting help when we need it.

WE SOMETIMES HEAR

Mental health problems only happen to people who are "crazy" (fou).

THE TRUTH

Mental health is part of everyone's health. Stress, sadness, and worry affect people of every age, faith, and background.

WE SOMETIMES HEAR

If I pray enough, I will not need any other help.

THE TRUTH

Faith can be a deep source of strength. Many people of faith also see a counselor or doctor. Prayer and care can go hand in hand.

WE SOMETIMES HEAR

Children don't have mental health problems. They will grow out of it.

THE TRUTH

Children and teens feel stress too, especially when adjusting to a new country, school, or language. Early support helps.

WE SOMETIMES HEAR

Talking about problems outside the family brings shame.

THE TRUTH

Getting help protects the family. Counselors keep what you share private, with only a few safety exceptions they will explain.

WE SOMETIMES HEAR

Strong people handle things on their own.

THE TRUTH

Men anpil, chay pa lou. Even the strongest among us need others to share the load.

When someone may be struggling

Struggles can look different depending on age. If you notice several of these signs lasting two weeks or longer, it's a good time to check in and consider support.

Children

- Clinginess, tantrums, or going back to younger behaviors
- Stomachaches or headaches with no clear cause
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Not wanting to go to school

Teens

- Pulling away from family and friends
- Irritability or anger that seems constant
- Big changes in grades, sleep, or appetite
- Spending most time alone or online

Adults

- Feeling tired, numb, or hopeless
- Constant worry, tension, or trouble focusing
- Drinking more or using substances to cope
- Short temper with partner or children

Elders

- Loss of interest in church, cooking, or visitors
- Talking often about being a burden
- Confusion, forgetfulness, or not eating
- Loneliness, especially after moving or a loss

Immigration and stress. Adjusting to a new country, a new language, uncertainty about status, or being far from family can bring grief, fear, and exhaustion. These are normal reactions to heavy circumstances, and support can help.

How to check in with someone you love

- **Choose a calm moment**, like a car ride, a walk, or while cooking together.
- **Listen more than you talk.** You do not need to fix it right away.
- **Believe them.** Avoid "you're being dramatic" or "just pray about it."
- **Use your family's language.** Some feelings are easier to say in Kreyòl.

FOR PARENTS TO CHILDREN

Kijan lekòl la te ye jodi a, vre?

How was school today, really?

FOR PARENTS TO TEENS

Mwen remake w gen lè fatigue. Ou vle pale?

I've noticed you seem tired. Want to talk?

FOR ADULT CHILDREN TO ELDERS

Manman, Papa, kijan kè w ye jounen jodi a?

Mom, Dad, how is your heart today?

FOR ANYONE

Ou pa poukont ou. Mwen la.

You are not alone. I'm here.

Feeling words in English and Kreyòl

Stress	Estrès	Sadness	Tristès / Lapenn
Worry	Enkyetid	Anxiety	Anksyete
Depression	Depresyon	Trauma	Twomatis / Chòk
Grief	Lapenn / Dèy	Therapist	Terapis
Feelings	Santiman	Mental health	Sante mantal
Healing	Gerizon	Support	Sipò

Where to turn for help

Your doctor

A good first step. They can check your physical health and refer you to a counselor.

A therapist or counselor

Trained to help with stress, sadness, trauma, and family struggles. Ask for someone who speaks Kreyòl or understands Caribbean culture.

Your faith community

Pastors and faith leaders can offer comfort and help connect you to other support.

Community organizations

Groups like Lakou Lokal offer free workshops, circles, and resources in English and Kreyòl.

If you or someone you love needs help right now

911

If someone is in immediate danger or has a medical emergency.

988

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text 988, any time, free and confidential. Interpreters are available by phone; ask for Haitian Creole.

211

Connects you to local help for food, housing, counseling, and more. In Palm Beach County, dial 211.

741741

Crisis Text Line. Text HOME to 741741 to reach a trained crisis counselor.

Lakou Lokal is not a crisis service. For local referrals, visit lakoulokal.org/directory or email info@lakoulokal.org.



Men anpil, chay pa lou.

Many hands make the load light.

Lakou Lokal is a virtual community center supporting Haitian and immigrant families with culturally grounded wellness, mental health, and parenting resources, in English and Haitian Creole.

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