

# CORE Solutions

Mental Illness Awareness Month



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## Conversations Around Mental Health

This October, we're given the opportunity to raise awareness and show support for mental health. With the tandem of World Mental Health Day on October 10 and Mental Illness Awareness Week rolling out the week prior, it's a great time to hold conversations around this important topic.

Given that it's just as essential as physical health, you would think we would be talking about it just as openly. However, despite the great strides that have been made to normalize such a conversation, the fact remains that there is still a significant stigma surrounding it.

The incredible thing about treating mental health like a taboo topic is that we will all likely experience some form of poor mental health at some point in our lives. After all, our mental well-being affects nearly everything we do — from how we think, feel, and act to how we handle



“Conversations Around Mental Health” continued

stress and relate to others. It affects us whether at work or home, and it doesn't discriminate. One tiny emotional push in the wrong direction can easily impact our overall well-being. Given that our days are filled to the brim with stressors that can lead to an adverse emotional reaction, the likelihood of us experiencing a bout of poor mental health is almost a foregone conclusion.

### So why aren't we talking about it?

Well, some people might be afraid of being judged, while others may feel like no one could understand what they're struggling with. These types of feelings are entirely normal. In fact, it's so normal that it's preventing a lot of us from ever talking about anything that's bothering us! And that's what we need to change.

The great thing about making this change is that every one of us can help by simply starting a conversation with someone we care about. If we keep talking about mental health and how it affects us all, we can soon make it as commonplace as discussions about physical health. Imagine a world where we discuss depression or anxiety just as casually as we talk about aches and pains; one where mental health checkups are scheduled just the same as physical wellness exams.

Opening up these lines of communication to talk about how we're feeling and what we're dealing with can be highly beneficial to our well-being. As more of us share conversations around mental health, there will eventually be a point where the stigma surrounding it is eliminated once and for all. Until we reach that point, all we need to do is keep talking. Let's keep this subject in the spotlight and make sure we don't leave anyone in the dark.

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## Strategies to Start the Mental Health Conversation with Someone You Care About

1. **The Casual Check-In.** Break the ice by saying something like, “Hey, I haven’t talked with you in a while; I just wanted to check in to find out how you’re doing — the good, the bad and the ugly.” Remember that you don’t have to unpack everything in one conversation.
2. **The Universal Touch-Base.** Break the ice by saying something like, “These last couple of years have been really tough on everybody. Can you tell me what it’s been like for you?” You can apply the idea behind this touch base to anything that feels like a shared or collective experience.
3. **The Direct Observation.** Consider saying something like, “I don’t want to be intrusive, yet I have noticed that you have not been yourself lately. If you’d like someone to listen, I can offer you a nonjudgmental ear.” The goal here is to discuss something concrete about the way the person you care about is acting.
4. **The Strategic Share.** A final conversation starter might be to share your own experience but tread lightly; remember that the conversation isn’t about you. Consider saying something like, “Last year, when I was struggling at work, I found it helpful to talk to a therapist.”

Source: [prevention.com](https://www.prevention.com)



## Monthly Moves: Forearm Stretch

Working on a computer all day can cause soreness in your forearms, wrists and hands. To prevent or reduce stiffness and pain, try simple forearm stretches and wrist stretches throughout the day.

1. Lift one of your arms and hold it comfortably in front of you, palm facing down.
2. Bend your hand downward and gently pull it toward you using your other hand. You should feel it on the outside part of your elbow and forearm.
3. Hold for 15 – 30 seconds, and then repeat the stretch with your other hand.

Bonus — repeat all steps with your palm facing up.

Source: [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)



## Recipe: Butternut Squash Soup with Bacon and Crème Fraîche

Few dishes can perfectly capture the taste of fall like butternut squash soup. The rich flavor bursting from this recipe will fill you with warm fuzzies and possibly inspire a trip to the countryside to take in the fall foliage.

For this recipe, roasting the butternut squash with honey and a touch of salt intensifies the natural sweetness of the squash and caramelizes the honey. A word to the wise: take time browning the onions; cooking them low and slow deepens the foundational flavor of this hearty soup. And lastly, don't be scared off by the crème fraîche — although it's super easy to make, you can easily substitute it with sour cream.

Source: [foodandwine.com](https://www.foodandwine.com)

### Ingredients:

- 1 large (3-pound) butternut squash, halved and seeded
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt, divided, plus more to taste
- 1/2 cup salted butter (4 ounces)
- 2 medium-size yellow onions, chopped
- 11 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage
- 8 cups lower-sodium chicken broth, or as needed, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon Hungarian sweet paprika, plus more for garnish
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
- 6 thick-cut bacon slices, cooked and cut into 1/2-inch strips
- 3 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh flat-leaf parsley

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Using a paring knife, score cut sides of squash in a crosshatch pattern. Arrange squash halves, cut sides up, on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Brush cut sides of squash with honey; sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Roast in preheated oven until tender when pierced with a paring knife, about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Let cool 20 minutes. Using a spoon, scrape squash flesh into a medium bowl. Discard peels.
2. Meanwhile, melt butter in a medium Dutch oven over medium until sizzling. Add onions and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and translucent, about 12 minutes. Reduce heat to low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until very tender and light golden brown, about 25 minutes. Add carrots and sage; cook, stirring occasionally, five minutes.
3. Stir in cooked squash and six cups broth. Bring to a boil over high. Cover, reduce heat to low and simmer until carrots are tender, about 30 minutes.
4. Ladle soup, in three batches, into a blender. Secure lid on blender; remove center piece to allow steam to escape. Place a kitchen towel over opening. Process until velvety smooth, about 30 seconds per batch. (Alternatively, puree soup in Dutch oven using an immersion blender until smooth.) Return pureed soup to Dutch oven over medium, and stir in paprika, pepper, nutmeg, and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt. Stir in remaining two cups chicken broth, 1/2 cup at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Season with salt to taste. Cook, stirring often, until heated through, about four minutes.
5. Divide soup evenly among bowls. Top each with a spoonful of crème fraîche, and sprinkle each serving with bacon, parsley and paprika.