

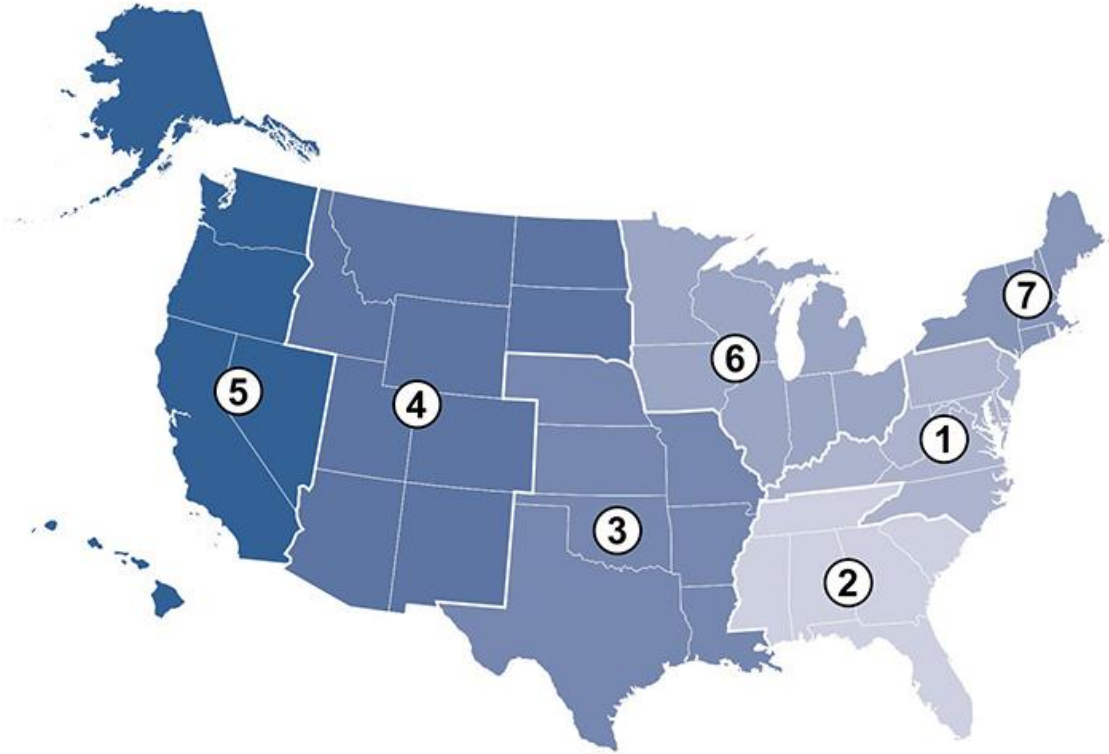


NNLM Region 7 Presents: Cultivating a Grief Sensitive Community through Library and Community-Based Partnerships

August 5, 2025



Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM)



The mission of NNLM is to advance the progress of medicine and **improve the public health** by:

- Providing all U.S. health professionals with equal access to biomedical information
- Improving the public's access to information to enable them to make informed decisions about their health

Guest Presenters

- Kimberly Mead-Walters, MD
- Kathleen Shine-O'Brien, LMHC
- Anne Romano, MLIS



Cultivating a Grief Sensitive Cape & Islands through Library and Community-Based Partnerships

Kim Mead-Walters, MD
Executive Director, Sharing
Kindness, Inc.

Kathleen Shine-O'Brien, LMHC
Dir. of Clinical & Community
Services

NNLM Presentation
August 5, 2025

Goals:

- Discuss our Grief 101 program: a service to promote grief literacy and mental health awareness.
- Encourage potential partnerships for health programming and outreach in attendees' libraries to do the same.
- Identify resources from NLM and other reputable agencies that can be used for support and implementation of similar programming in libraries.



Mission:

Sharing Kindness is building a grief-sensitive and suicide-aware Cape & Islands community.

- Founded to address gaps in service around grief support and suicide awareness
- 501(c)(3) in 2018
- Thoughtful and intentional growth since that time
- Began with a suicide awareness walk
- This led to thriving peer-to-peer, evidence-based suicide prevention for students ages 10-18 across the C&I
- Followed by grief support groups for suicide loss survivors
- Expansion to grief support groups for all ages and all types of death loss
- Addition of school-based groups to improve access for bereaved children
- All groups are clinician-led for safety



When we asked grief group participants "How else can we best support you?"

NEARLY ALL replied, "You can talk to my co-worker/neighbor/family member – they don't understand what I am going through"

- Grief literacy, cultivating a grief sensitive community
- Approached local librarians to gauge need and interest
- Obtained NNLM funding
- Many work group meetings!
- Research to expand our online grief resources
- Developed a curated Child's Grief Book pack to share at each library presentation
- Created a "Grief 101" presentation
- Developed Care Cards and bookmarks for distribution at libraries.



Each program begins by covering “the basics” of grief: what it is, how it impacts our brains and bodies, reviewing some of the grief myths and biases we all have been exposed to.

The second portion of the program teaches how we can support people in our lives who are experiencing grief.

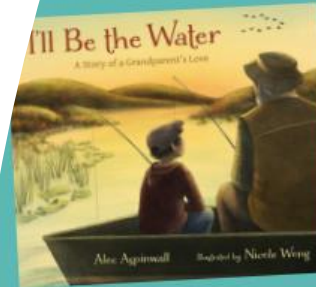
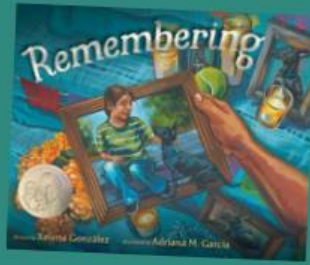


A complete list of our curated children's books on grief is available on www.sharingkindness.org under grief support resources



Remembering by Xelena González

Remember their beloved pet dog through the traditions of Día de los Muertos in this touching book, building a thoughtful offering to help lead the way home and help the little one process their grief. This story reminds us that our loved ones are never really gone, even after death, as they live on through our memories. [Learn more](#)

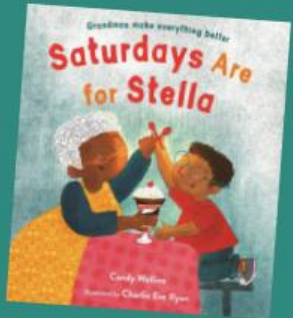


I'll Be the Water: A Story of Loss, Grief, and a Grandparent's Love by Alec Aspinwall

This story follows a boy's relationship with his grandfather and their conversations about life and death. Main character Joshua grapples with the concept of death as his grandfather's health declines—but on their final fishing trip together, Grandpa provides the assurance Joshua needs that his spirit and love will never die. [Learn more](#)

Saturdays Are for Stella by Candy Wellins

George treasures spending Saturdays with his Grandma Stella. When Stella dies, he no longer wants to partake in the activities they used to do together. But then a new addition to the family arrives, and George finds a way to celebrate the priceless memories he made with his grandma—while making new ones too. [Learn more](#)



A Garden of Creatures by Sheila Heti

With its meditative text, endearing illustrations and life-affirming message, *A Garden of Creatures* reveals how the interconnectedness of nature and the sweetness of friendship can be a warm embrace even in the darkest times. The story follows the little bunny's grief journey after the big bunny dies,



The feedback from our community members has been amazing.

And we are now being approached by healthcare and social service agencies to provide grief-sensitivity training to their staff.



"Grief 101 is needed in our community. Understanding what you are experiencing as a grieving person is helpful. Grief 101 is suicide prevention: knowing how to support someone during their darkest times can save lives. I am forever grateful for the people at Sharing Kindness for sharing this information. It needs to be taught in the schools and in the community. Information is power, and collectively we can all learn how to support someone grieving. We may even save a life with this information."

-Chrystal Kellerman, Grief 101 attendee



This school-based version of our “Grief 101” presentation improves grief literacy among teachers, staff and administration, ultimately building support for all bereaved students and supporting social change around grief and loss throughout our community.



The first school staff we presented to, Truro Central School in Truro, MA, let us know that, “Grief 101 was hands down the best professional development presentation we have had to-date, bar none.”



A few slides from our presentation:

Grief Is... A natural response to LOSS

GRIEF IS NOT.....

- **An illness or a disease**
- **The same for everyone**
- **Adhering to other people's expectations and/or on anyone else's timeline**
- **Getting back to normal (after 3-5 days of bereavement leave)**
- **Neat and tidy**

Types of Grief

Anticipatory grief

Ambiguous loss

Disenfranchised grief

Collective grief

Cumulative grief

Suffocated grief



Children and youth who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling are:

- At higher risk of early mortality, including death from suicide
- Less likely to complete high school or enter higher education
- At higher risk of substance abuse
- At a higher risk of entry into the juvenile justice system
- At higher risk of developing mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, post-traumatic stress symptoms)



Grief Is Different for Each Person Based on Their...

Personal relationship or perceived connection with the deceased

- Prior experience with loss
- Age and level of understanding about death
- Access to and understanding of coping skills
- Available support systems
- Cultural and family framework and mourning rituals

What to say...

Instead of this	Say this
"I know just what you're going through."	"Can you tell me more about what this has been like for you?"
"You must be incredibly angry."	"Most people have strong feelings when something like this happens to them. What has this been like for you?"
"This is hard. But it's important to remember the good things in life, too."	"What kinds of memories do you have about your sister?"
" At least he's no longer in pain."	"What sorts of things have you been thinking about since your father died?"



Our tagline at Sharing Kindness is "start the conversation" and we have developed "Grief 101" for public education and to encourage informed grief conversation

The ripple effect: Recently a bereaved teen in one of our groups shared that there had been an unexpected student death in their school. They didn't know the student who died but did have a shared friend group. The teen shared, "I knew just what to do to support my grieving friends because of what I learned in my group. I know I can't fix their pain, but I can be present and let them know I care about them. I can ask them to tell me about their friend."


The work of Sharing Kindness is creating sustainable change in how our community addresses grief and loss, stigma and mental health. Doing so with NNLM funding support and the collaboration of our local libraries and librarians has been an incredible experience for all of us.



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THANK YOU



Cultivating a Grief Sensitive Community through Library and Community- Based Partnerships

Anne Romano, MLIS

Silver Hill Hospital, New Canaan, CT

**Director of Library Services/CME
Coordinator (23 years)**

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention,
CT Chapter**

Board Member (4 years)

Disclosure

- I do not have any relevant financial relationships to disclose in relation to this presentation.

Silver Hill Hospital

Silver Hill's mission is to reduce suffering from mental illness and addiction.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

AFSP's mission is to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.


Grief

- Loss is a part of life and grief is the natural part of the healing process.
- We know that grief involves some type of loss.
 - That loss can be death (family, friend, co-worker, pet), job, marital status, housing, financial stability, health, and other major events.
 - Everyone experiences grief at their own pace.
 - There are physical symptoms and behavioral changes.


As a hospital librarian I receive calls from doctors, nurses, social workers and the chaplain asking me to send patients and family members information about “grief”.

The materials I distribute may be in the form of handouts, educational books, memoirs, podcasts, and support groups.

MedlinePlus.gov

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#) ▼

NIH National Library of Medicine

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25 YEARS
of health
information

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[Health Topics](#) [Drugs & Supplements](#) [Genetics](#) [Medical Tests](#) [Medical Encyclopedia](#) [Español](#)

Service Alert: Planned Maintenance beginning July 25th
Some services may be unavailable or have limited functionality for 24 hours or longer starting 9 PM EDT. [Learn more about the maintenance.](#)

Home → [Health Topics](#) → Bereavement

Bereavement
Also called: Grief

On this page

Basics

- [Summary](#)
- [Start Here](#)

Learn More

- [Related Issues](#)

See, Play and Learn

- No links available

Research


- [Clinical Trials](#)
- [Journal Articles](#)

Resources

- [Find an Expert](#)

For You

- [Children](#)
- [Teenagers](#)



National Institutes of Health



Virtual Tour | En Español

[Health Information](#) [Grants & Funding](#) [News & Events](#) [Research & Training](#) [Institutes at NIH](#) [About NIH](#)

grief



[Everything](#) [News](#) [Videos](#) [Clinical Trials](#) [Este tema en español](#)

112 results

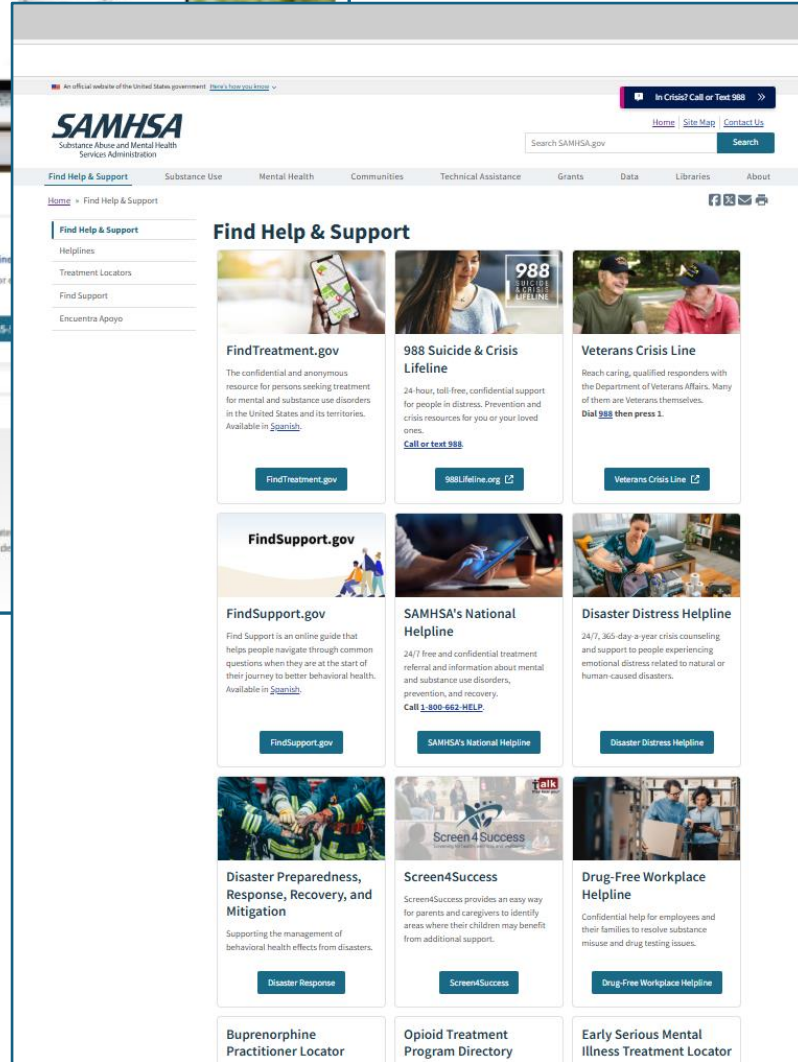
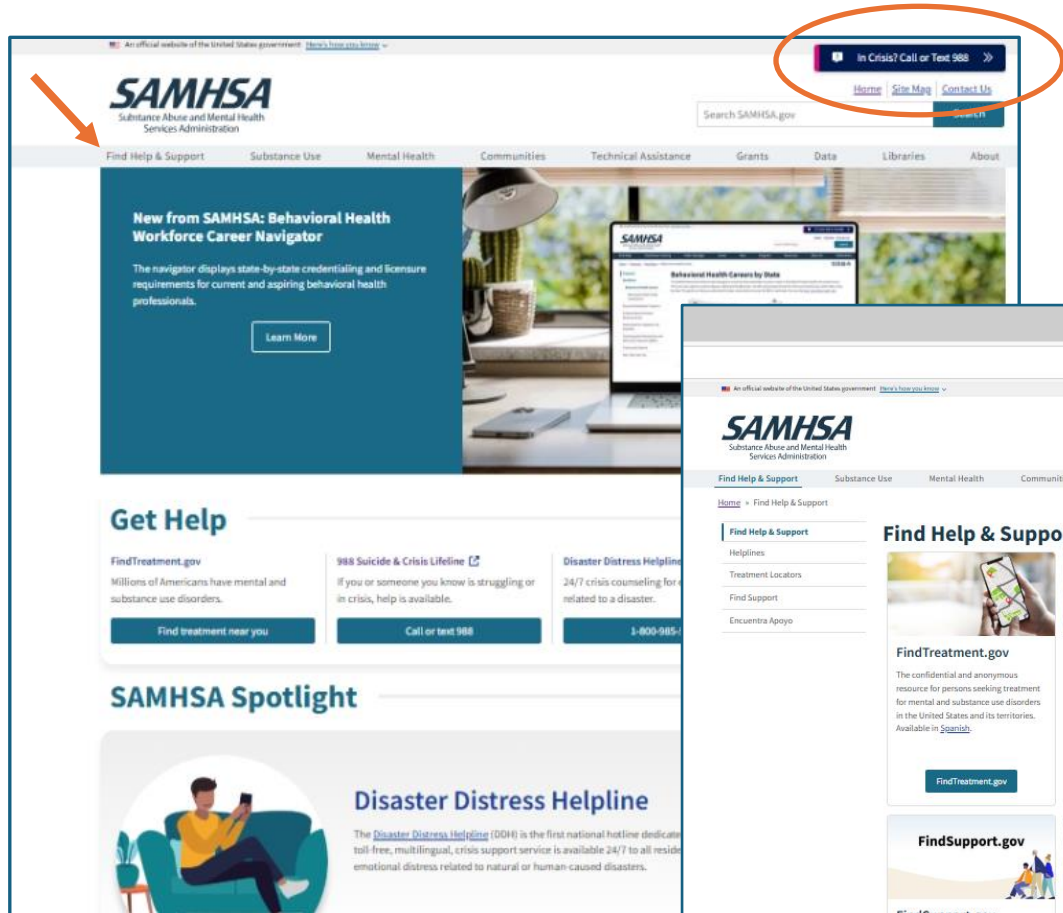
Bereavement

Bereavement is the period of grief and mourning after a death. When you grieve, it's part of the normal process of reacting to a loss.

Related topics: [End of Life Issues](#)

Open clinical studies and trials: [Bereavement](#), [Grief](#)


- Health information
- Resources to find help
- Free education and outreach materials (including social media)
- Free webinars, social media events



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Agency (samhsa.gov)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[Home](#) | [About Mental Illness](#) | [Mental Health Conditions](#)



Mental Health Conditions

About Mental Illness

Warning Signs and Symptoms

Mental Health Conditions

Anxiety Disorders

ADHD

Bipolar Disorder

Borderline Personality Disorder

Depression

Dissociative Disorders

Eating Disorders

Obsessive-compulsive Disorder

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Psychosis

Schizoaffective Disorder

Schizophrenia

Common with Mental Illness

Jump To:

Conditions

NAMI recognizes that other organizations have drawn distinctions between what diagnoses are considered “mental health conditions” as opposed to “mental illnesses.” We intentionally use the terms “mental health conditions” and “mental illness/es” interchangeably.


A mental illness is a condition that affects a person’s thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others. If you have — or think you might have — a mental illness, the first thing you must know is that **you are not alone**. Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don’t like to, or are scared to, talk about them. However:

- **1 in 5** U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- **1 in 20** U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year
- **1 in 6** U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- **50%** of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

A mental health condition isn’t the result of one event. Research suggests multiple, linking causes. Genetics, environment and lifestyle influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too.

None of this means that you’re broken or that you, or your family, did something “wrong.” Mental illness is no one’s fault. And for many people, recovery — including meaningful roles in social life, school and work — is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your own recovery process.

[Home](#) | [Support & Education](#) | [Mental Health Education](#)



Mental Health Education

Support & Education

Mental Health Education

NAMI Basics

NAMI Ending the Silence

NAMI Family-to-Family

NAMI Family & Friends

NAMI Hearts+Minds

NAMI Homefront

NAMI In Our Own Voice

NAMI Peer-to-Peer

NAMI Provider


NAMI Sharing Hope: Mental Wellness in the Black Community

Jump To:


[Education Classes](#) | [Presentations](#) | [Outreach, Advocacy & Wellness](#)

Across the country, thousands of trained NAMI volunteers bring peer-led programs to a wide variety of community settings, from churches to schools to NAMI Affiliates. With the unique understanding of people with lived experience, these programs and support groups provide outstanding free education, skills training and support.


Education Classes



NAMI Basics



NAMI Family-to-Family



NAMI Homefront

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Connecticut Chapter

Our Mission is to save lives and bring hope
to those affected by suicide

AFSP was founded in 1987, and chapters
can be found in all states

4 Core strategies:

1. **Funding scientific research**
2. **Educating the public about mental health and suicide prevention**
3. **Advocating for public policies in mental health and suicide prevention**
4. **Supporting those affected by suicide**



QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer.)

- “The QPR mission is to reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training. The signs of crisis are all around us. We believe that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know.”
- <https://qprinstitute.com/>



Mental Health First Aid

- Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based, early-intervention course that teaches participants about mental health and substance use challenges.



Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

WHY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents ages 12-18.

- 10.2%** of youth will be diagnosed with a substance use disorder in their lifetime.
Source: Youth Mental Health First Aid**
- 1 IN 5** teens and young adults lives with a mental health condition.
Source: National Alliance for Mental Illness*
- 50%** of all mental illnesses begin by age 14, and 75% by the mid-20s.
Source: Archives of General Psychiatry***

WHO SHOULD KNOW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

- Teachers.
- School Staff.
- Coaches.
- Camp Counselors.
- Youth Group Leaders.
- Parents.
- Adults who Work with Youth.



Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

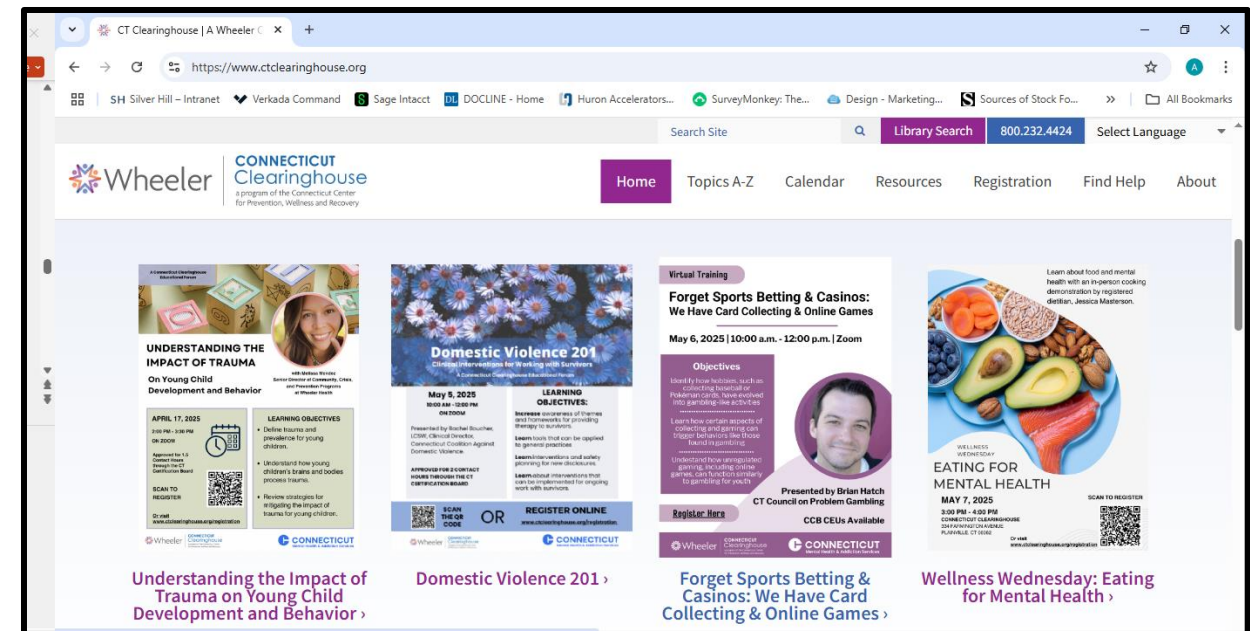
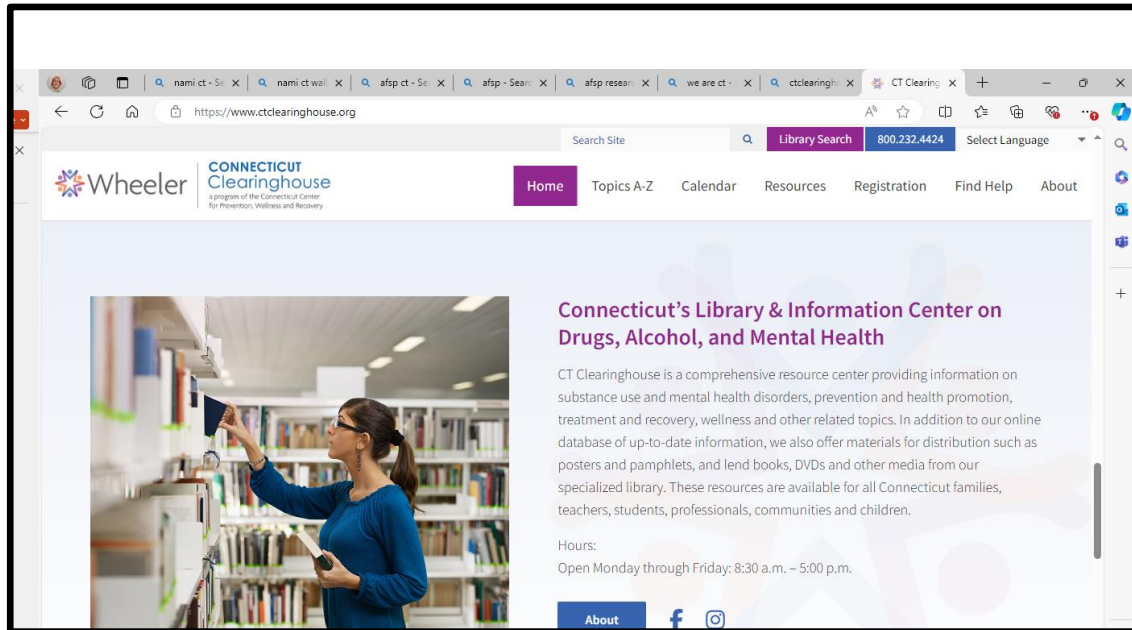
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

- On average, 130** people die by suicide every day.
Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- From 1999 to 2019, 841,000** people died from drug overdoses.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Nearly 1 IN 5** in the U.S. lives with a mental illness.
Source: National Institute of Mental Health

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- Employers.
- Police officers.
- Hospital staff.
- First responders.
- Caring individuals.

CONNECTICUT Clearinghouse



CONNECTICUT Clearinghouse

Highlights

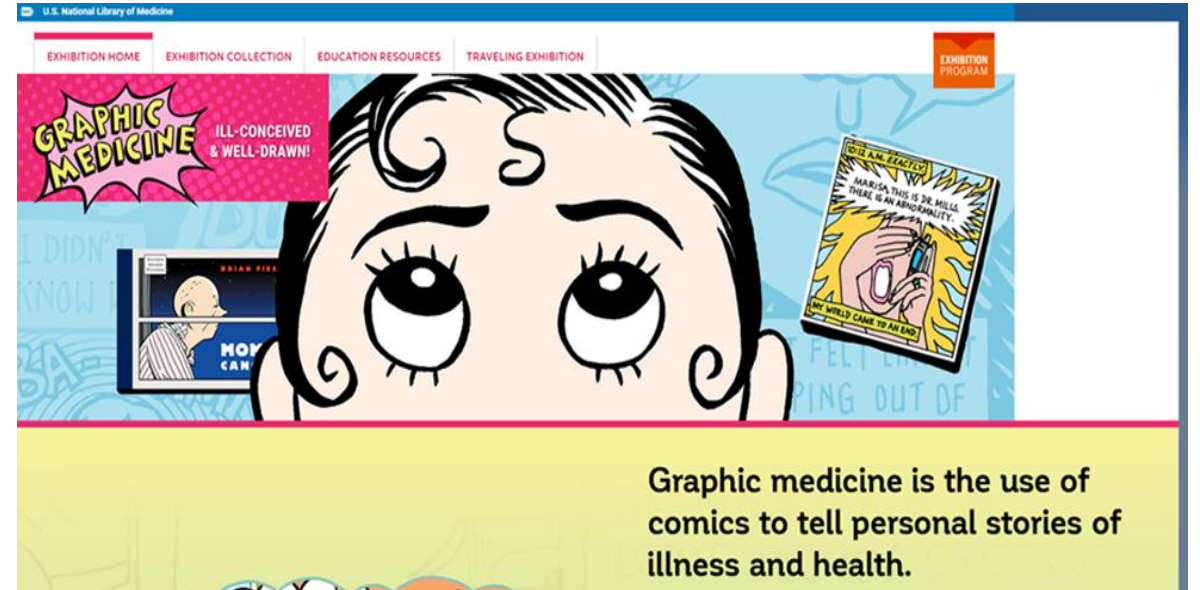
- Resources in other languages
- Change the Script Van
- Fact Sheets
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Trainings
- Pamphlets/Brochures/Posters
- Free Coloring and Activity Books
- Plus Books!



Graphic Medicine

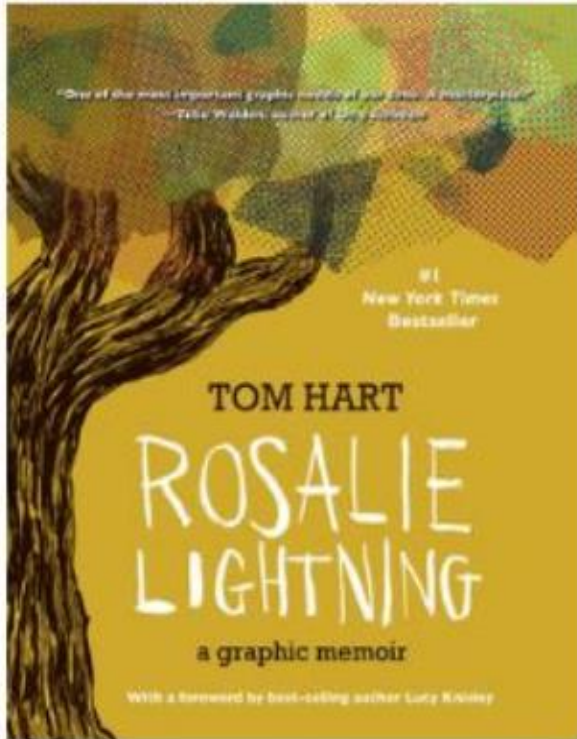


Graphic Medicine: <https://www.graphicmedicine.org/>



Graphic Medicine: Ill-Conceived & Well-Drawn

Rosalie Lightning: A Graphic Journey through Grief



 Facebook

 Twitter

 Pinterest

Author: Tom Hart

Format: Paperback

Pages: 272

Publish Date: July 15, 2025

Publisher: Stret Noise Press

Catalog ID: ISBN: 978-1951491406

Where to buy: <https://bookshop.org/lists/recently-reviewed-on-graphicmedicine-org>

Author website: <https://www.tomhart.net/>

Ideas for Library Programs

- Book Display
- Panel Discussion
- Author Talks
- Book Discussion
- Activities that may include Rock Painting, Chalk Drawing



**988 Day –
September
8**

**NO JUDGMENT.
JUST HELP.**

TEXT, CALL, CHAT

9888

More Ideas for Library Programs and Services

- Caregiver information
- Support groups
- All ages relaxation or low impact yoga
- Meditation or guided imagery
- Brochures/handouts from local or national agencies
- Host trainings such as Mental Health First Aid, Talk Saves Lives, QPR Class

- Wellness journals
- Post signs in bathrooms and around library such as 988 wallet cards
- “Did You Know...?” education or tips
- Invite experts on mental health, stress management, grief, and resilience, etc.
- Programming with pets, art, music, and dance.

Examples

- **Book Club**

- Last year I applied for a collection development grant from the NNLM and purchased books on loneliness and isolation.

- **Self Care Boxes**

- I contacted a local public library and offered to run a program on coping skills for stress. I purchased small white boxes and brought along magazines for collaging. The library supplied the scissors and glue sticks. My hospital donated silly putty, fidget spinners, flash drive of meditations, and stress balls for the boxes.

- **Mental Health To Go Kits**

- I selected 12 topics and put together boxes that are made to look like books. These were donated to 2 public libraries.



Mental Health To-Go Kit

Suicide

Contents:

1. Book: Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt
2. Book: Why Suicide? Questions and Answers about Suicide, Prevention and Coping
3. DVD: Stories of Hope and Recovery: A Video Guide for Suicide Attempt Survivors

Items for You to Keep:

1. Recommended Reading List
2. Resource Guide
3. Stress Ball
4. Flash Drive with Guided Meditations

Mental Health To-Go Kits provided by Silver Hill Hospital





Gizmo 4 Mental Health

- Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health
 - Host a Read-Along (appropriate for 5–11-year-olds)
 - Book is available in English and Spanish



Thank You!

Anne Romano

aromano@silverhillhospital.org

Closing Comments

Connect with Us!



Newsletter Sign Up

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/PL1FYmg/NNLMRegion7>

Upcoming Programs of Interest

Monday, August 11, 2025

R7 Presents: State of Data Librarianship | NNLM

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Mental Health First Aid | NNLM All day training and limited to 30 participants

Thursday, October 9, 2026

Providing Mental Health Resources at Your Library | NNLM

September – Disaster Preparedness Series