

Mental Health Among Seniors

April 18, 2024

Presented by:

- Sarah Jacob, MD, MPH, MBA
- Anamaría Valencia, MD, MPH





Presentation Objectives

After listening to this presentation, you will be able to:

1. Define mental health as it relates to older adults.
2. Identify prevalence of mental illnesses and substance abuse among the elderly.
3. Discuss risk factors and associated conditions that lead to mental health issues.
4. Identify tools and resources to prevent and/or improve mental health outcomes.

What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood, and adolescence through adulthood.



FACTS

Mental Health of Older Adults

- By **2030**, one in six people in the world will be aged 60 years or over.
- **Loneliness and social isolation** are key risk factors for mental health conditions in later life.
- Approximately **14%** of adults aged 60 and over live with a mental disorder.
- Frequent mental health problem: **anxiety - depression.**
- One in six older adults experience **abuse**, often by their own caregivers.
- Older adults do not seek help, and sometimes healthcare providers mistake depression for a natural response of aging.



Prevalence

Around **14%** of adults aged 60 and over live with a mental disorder

- Mental disorders account for **10.6%** of the total disability among older adults.
- **The most common mental health conditions for older adults are depression and anxiety.**

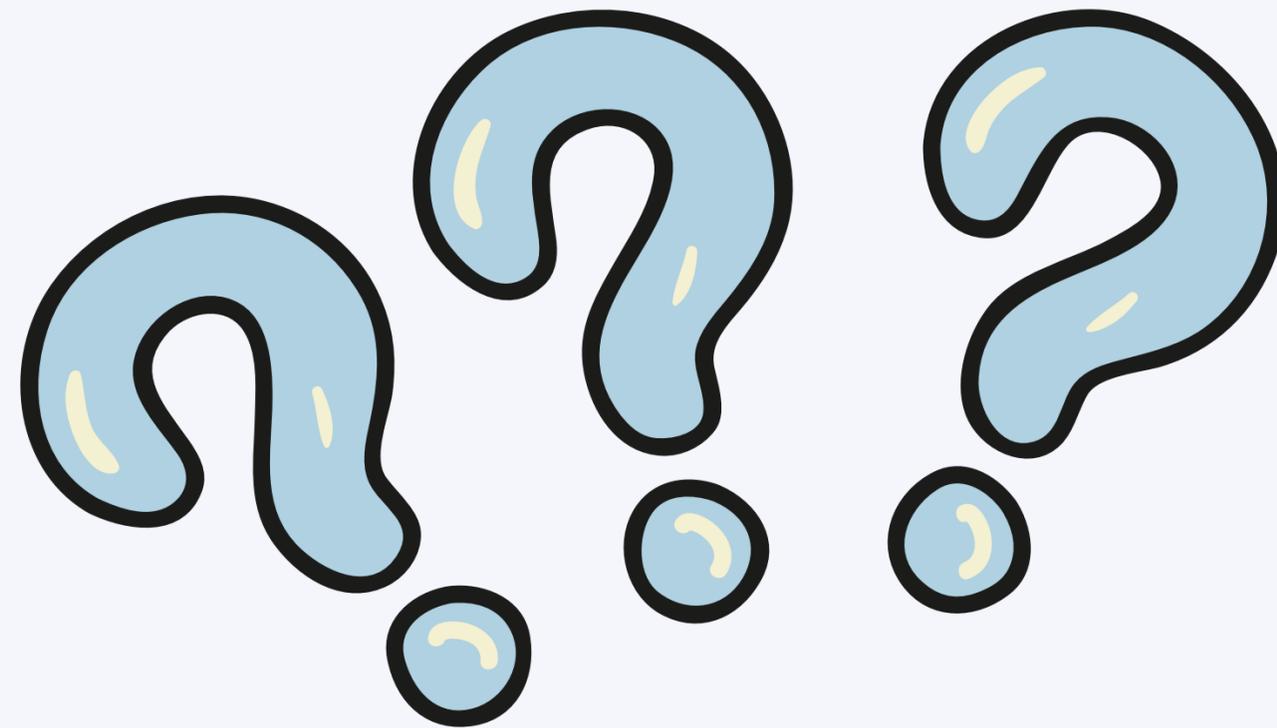


27.7% of adults in New Jersey exhibited signs of anxiety or depression in 2023 (*compared to 32.3% nationally).

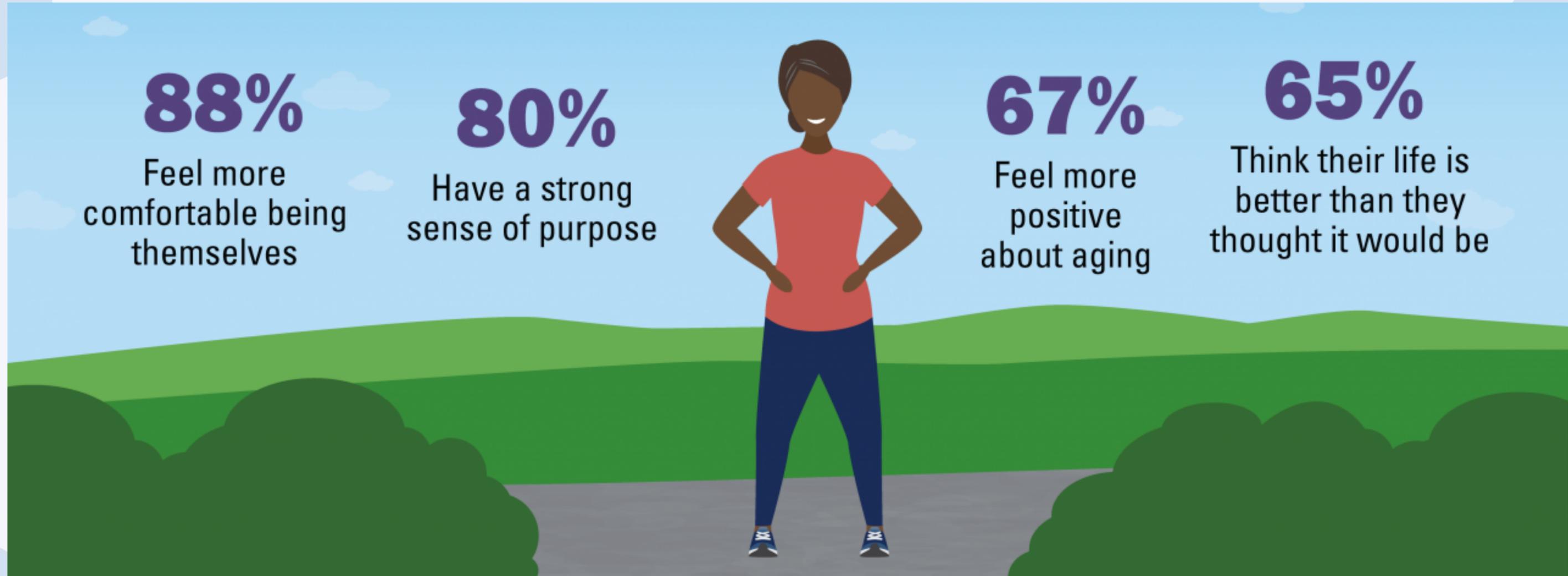
37% of New Jersey residents reported their mental health being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health conditions among older people are often underrecognized and undertreated, and the stigma surrounding these conditions can make people reluctant to seek help.

Attitudes towards the Elderly



Positive views on aging AMONG ADULTS AGE 50-80



Risk Factors



Earlier life experiences

Exposure to adversity, significant loss in intrinsic capacity and a decline in functional ability can all result in psychological distress.



Living conditions

Living with a disability.
Change of environment.
Barriers.



Ageism

Discrimination can affect people's mental health



Abuse

Any kind of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual or financial abuse, as well as neglect affect mental health



Social isolation & loneliness



Chronic conditions

Living with chronic illnesses such heart disease, neurological disease or substance use problems





Warning signs

Signs that may indicate that a person should consider reaching out for help include:

SADNESS OR HOPELESSNES

**IRRITABILITY, CONFUSION,
ANGRINESS**

CHANGES EATING/SLEEPING HABITS

WITHDRAWAL OF NICE ACTIVITIES

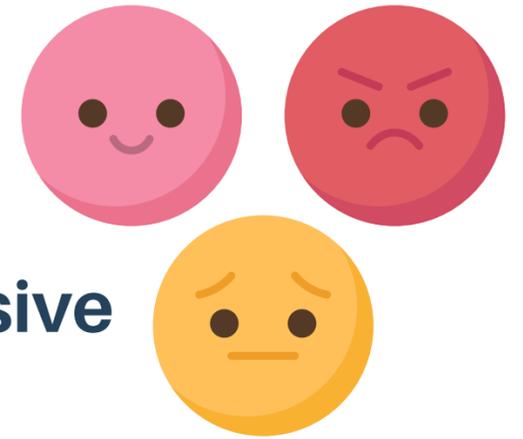
THOUGHTS OF WORRY & FEAR

**THOUGHTS OF HURTING
ONESELF/OTHERS**



Symptoms

- **Changes: mood, energy level, or appetite**
- **Difficulty: concentrating, sleeping, feeling emotions**
- **Increased worry or feeling stressed, being angry, irritable, or aggressive**
- **Ongoing headaches, digestive issues, or pain**
- **Misuse of alcohol or drugs**
- **Sadness or hopelessness**
- **Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts**
- **Thoughts or behaviors that interfere with work, family, or social life**
- **Seeing, hearing, and feeling things that other people do not see, hear, or feel**

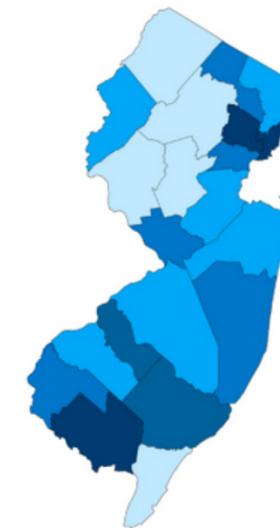


Conditions that affect/contribute to Mental Health

- There is a strong connection between healthy behaviors and good mental health
- Chronic illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes may make you more likely to have or develop a mental health condition.
- Drug overdose deaths among adults ages 65 and older significantly increased 43% between 2016-2018 and 2019-2021, and 136% since 2008-2010
- In 2023, one in three adults age 50–80 (34%) reported feeling isolated from others in the past year.



New Jersey Risk of Social Isolation by County



Index of social isolation risk factors: poverty; living alone; divorced, separated or widowed; never married; disability; and independent living difficulty among adults ages 65 and older, relative to all U.S. counties. Normalized values are 1 to 100, with a higher value indicating greater risk.

■ <= 36 ■ 37 to 42 ■ 43 to 48 ■ 49 to 56 ■ >= 57

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021

Mental Health vs Mental Illness

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of well being in which the person realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Indicators of Good Mental Health

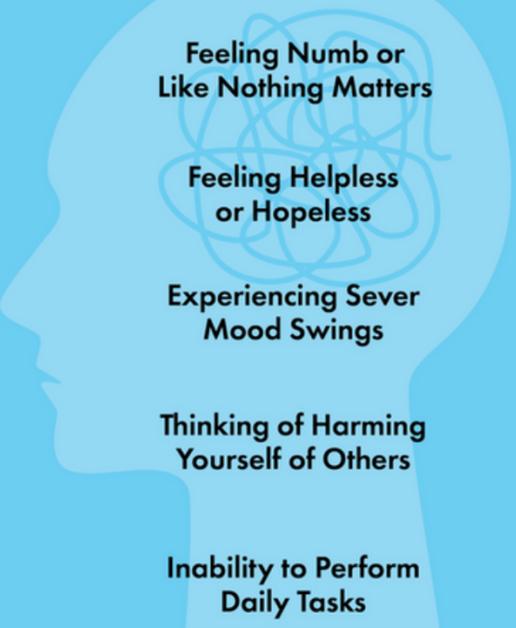


Resiliency to Stress Empathy
Flexibility Spirituality
Optimism Stable Relationships
Productive Behavior Respect for Self and Others
Self Confidence Sense of Belonging
Ability to take care of self and others Clear Thinking
Sense of Well-being and Contentment

What is Mental Illness?

Mental Illness is defined as a health condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day.

Indicators of Mental Illness?



Pulling Away from People and Usual Activities
Feeling Numb or Like Nothing Matters
Feeling Helpless or Hopeless
Experiencing Severe Mood Swings
Thinking of Harming Yourself or Others
Inability to Perform Daily Tasks



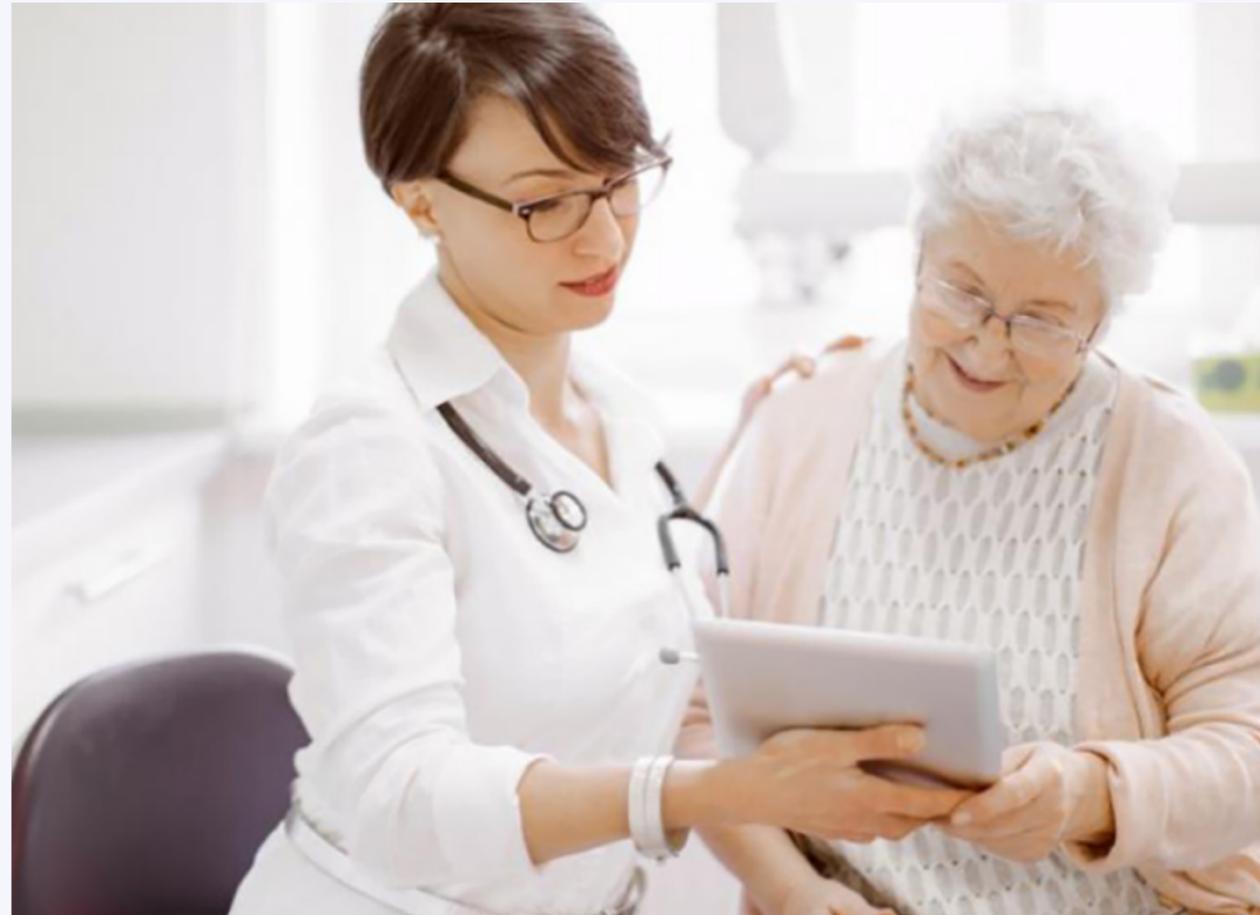
Elder Competency

Understanding

Describes current medical problems, lists treatment options offered, names major risks and benefits of each alternative, retains information disclosed during the course of conversation

Appreciation

Explains how current medical problems impact life, discusses likely outcomes of treatment options, articulates reasons provider recommends a particular option



Reasoning

Explains factors considered when making a choice, discusses goals and values influencing decision, connects choice to the likely outcome, choice aligns with previously stated goals and reasoning

Expression of Choice

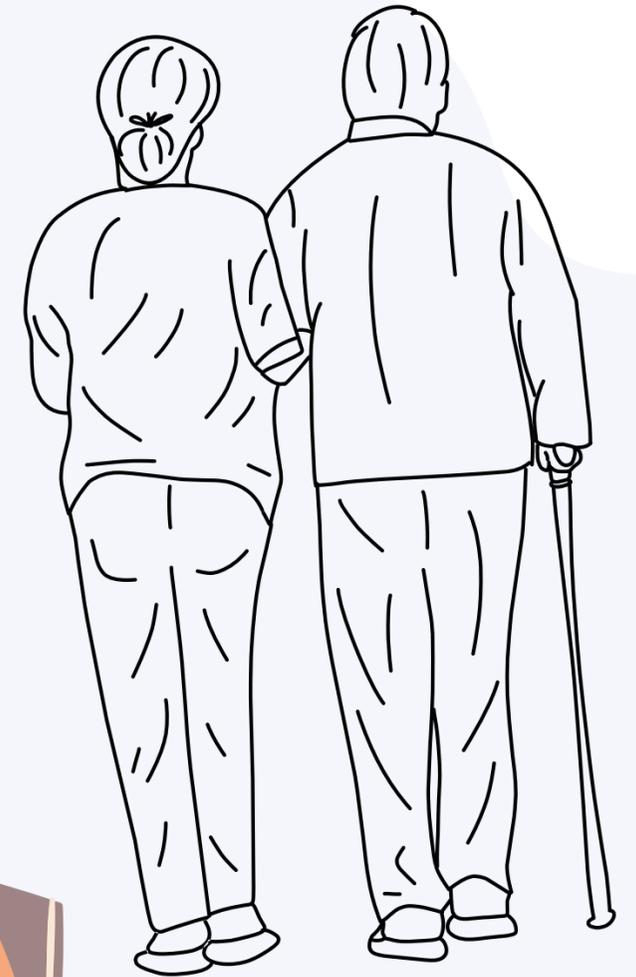
Physically able to communicate, indicates chosen alternative

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an intentional or negligent act by any person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an older adult. It is a term used to describe five subtypes:

- Physical Abuse
- Psychological Abuse
- Financial Exploitation
- Neglect and Abandonment
- Sexual Abuse

What are the warning signs/ red flags of elder abuse?



Prevention & Promotion

- **Social support groups for older adults and their caregivers.**
- Support for healthy behaviors: eat a balanced diet, be physically active, refrain from tobacco and reduce alcohol use
- **Develop health and social programmes** targeting vulnerable groups, and those living with a chronic health condition.
- **Ensure safe and accessible** housing, public buildings and transport.
- Anti-discrimination policies and laws (representatives).



MENTAL
health
MATTERS

Mental Health Goals

Mental health goals - especially for older adults - should include improvement of quality of life



Sharpen your brain: try brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand

Enhance friendships & meaningful connections: sit at a different table with people you don't know at lunch or dinner

Stay happy & content: commit to complimenting someone regularly

Maintain or improve lifelong skills: use a stress ball to strengthen your hand grip and dexterity

Move your body: set a walking steps goal or chair exercise goal and meet it daily.



Resources

- Prevention Links
- Prevention is Key
- Cranford Municipal Alliance/
Cranford Prevention &
Wellness
- Local Pharmacist
- Community Center, library



Cranford Municipal Alliance

HOTLINES

- NJ Hopeline (suicide prevention): 855-654-6735
- NJ Mental Health Cares: 866-202-HELP (4357)
- National Suicide Hotline: 988
- Union County Community Outreach: 908-994-7131
- NJVet2Vet: 866-838-7654
- Union County Adult Protective Services: 908-497-3902
- Union County Department of Human Services: 908-527-4800
- Union County Division of Aging: 908-527-4870
- In an emergency, please dial: 911





Thanks!