



GUIDE: Empower & Engage

Protecting Mental Health Through Service & Social Change

Research shows that getting involved in your community — volunteering, and engaging civically — are important protective factors that support the mental health and resilience of young people when they face challenges.



Here's why: Because volunteering and community empower growth & change!

Volunteering and helping others allows us to see that we have the power to make a change and address the inequalities and injustices that exist in our world. When we play a part in creating change, we contribute to the overall well-being and mental health of our communities. Volunteering has a positive impact.

Engaging in Change:

- **Releases** happy hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins.
- **Builds** community in school campuses, neighborhoods, clubs, teams, workplaces, and faith and cultural communities, as well as with friends and families.
- **Creates** positive feelings about our cultural identities.
- **Increases** academic success and builds motivation.
- **Helps** increase self-esteem.
- **Provides** a sense of purpose.
- **Builds** hope about our current and future world.
- **Creates** actual change in our communities.



Seven ways you and your family can engage in your community

1. **Volunteer at your child's school** or college, a local organization, club, cultural center, or faith community center.
2. **Engage in advocacy efforts** for human rights, mental health, or communities with unmet needs.
3. **Raise awareness about mental health** via social media, posters, or school or work projects.
4. **Engage in mental health awareness days, weeks, and months** led by national or local organizations.
5. **Write letters to your elected officials** about mental health issues important to you and your community.
6. **Raise money for a mental health project** or initiative hosted by your school or by a local organization.
7. **Destigmatize mental health challenges** in your culture, family, or community by inviting people to share their stories.
8. **Help connect neighbors and networks** by sharing resources and ways to access free or low-cost culturally responsive mental health care.

You can make a difference!

Each of us can contribute something to support positive change no matter where we come from or our personal abilities, financial circumstances, beliefs, or values. Here are some examples of how all of us, whatever our background, can get started.

- **Consider your talents.** If you are shy or introverted, you can think about things you are good at that do not require you to talk in front of big crowds. Thinking about your unique skills and circumstances can help you find ways to get involved. Try writing, art, poster making, posting on social media, baking or cooking, doing research, or volunteering.
- **Find places to volunteer.** If you can't think of anything on your own, look up a local community, cultural, or faith-based organization and see how you can get involved.
- **Do you speak other languages?** If you speak a language other than English, think of people in your community who might need support and could benefit from talking with someone who can speak their language.
- **Think about ability.** If you are differently abled, consider how your voice and experience can support change. How can others benefit from learning about your experience?
- **Raising funds and awareness makes a difference.** If you do not have financial resources, think about free or low-cost ways to raise money and resources, such as fundraisers, bake sales, or foundations you can contact for funding and grants. You can also focus on doing things that require little or no money, such as raising awareness about a cause through conversations as well as via social media posts and campaigns.



Learn More: [Empower & Engage Mini Workbook](#)

Support your young person to try volunteering as a way to support their well-being — and their community. This workbook is part of **Built to Thrive**, an interactive workbook created by The Steve Fund. [Explore the Built to Thrive workbook.](#)

Visit [SteveFund.org/Family-Corner](https://www.stevelfund.org/Family-Corner) for resources and events designed to support you and your family.