

# Health And Well-Being

## Tips For Improving Mental Health

(NAPS)—When it comes to mental health, many people across the U.S. have experienced their share of challenges—but help may be at hand.

### The Problem

The issue is especially concerning in rural America, where more than 60% of people report having a mental health condition—such as anxiety or depression—yet less than half of them get the help or treatment they need. Rural Americans face unique mental health stressors and barriers to accessing care, but those living in rural communities also boast unique support mechanisms that they can tap into to flip the script on mental health stigma.

### An Answer

An example of those unique support mechanisms can be found in rural Georgia, where community leader Adaris Rivera has found hope in the resilience that living in a rural community presents. “Each person’s journey with mental health is deeply personal and unique, yet there’s a universal truth that support and hope are within reach for everyone. No one should feel isolated in their struggles,” she said. This is what inspired her to share her own story as part of a national public service advertisement (PSA) campaign called “Love, Your Mind” from Huntsman Mental Health Institute and the Ad Council.

Rivera experienced hardship while growing up in Puerto Rico, moving to the Midwest and eventually laying down roots in rural Georgia. In the PSA video, she talks about her story, saying “I’ve been through a lot” including trauma, anxiety and depression. For Rivera, the goal of sharing her story is to help others who may be going through the same thing. She advocates for people to seek professional help when needed, and shares how daily practices can also be helpful—such as spending time in nature, journaling and finding time for prayer or reflection.

On her mental health journey, Rivera found solace in one unique benefit of living in a rural place: easy access to nature. “When I come home exhausted, there’s nothing more rejuvenating than stepping into my backyard. Cooking with the door open, letting the breeze in and stealing a few moments on my deck to listen to a mental health podcast.”

Another benefit of rural living that has supported her healing: having a close-knit community. When it comes to mental health, one key step is finding



**Adaris Rivera, a community leader who found hope and help with her mental health while living in a rural area.**

people with whom you can talk openly. Rivera is a strong supporter of this idea, saying “Accepting help means that we are allowing somebody to bless our lives.”

She has also found ways to share that hope with her community. She organizes group activities to create “mental health boxes” for individuals who are struggling or being seen for inpatient mental health care. The boxes contain such things as reminders of family and loved ones, items to help with daily self-care and positive messages and quotes.

### Expert Opinion

The notion of leaning into your community for support is one that’s also backed by experts. Dave Eldredge from Huntsman Mental Health Institute says, “The reality is, we all have mental health—just like we all have physical health. And when we take care of our minds, we can show up stronger in our work and for the people we care about.”

Eldredge grew up in both rural Utah and rural Idaho and knows that talking about mental health in rural communities can feel difficult at first. “A big part of the challenge can be our mindset. We pride ourselves on being self-reliant, and that can be a wonderful thing. But when we open up to others for a helping hand or just a listening ear, we can actually be stronger.”

### Online Help

To empower individuals and break down the stigma that can sometimes exist with this topic, the “Love, Your Mind” campaign launched a website with free mental health resources at [LoveYourMindToday.org](http://LoveYourMindToday.org). As Eldredge says, “We want people to know that they are not alone, and resources like [LoveYourMindToday.org](http://LoveYourMindToday.org) are a great place to take steps forward for your mental health. Together, we can change the narrative around mental health in rural communities across the country.”