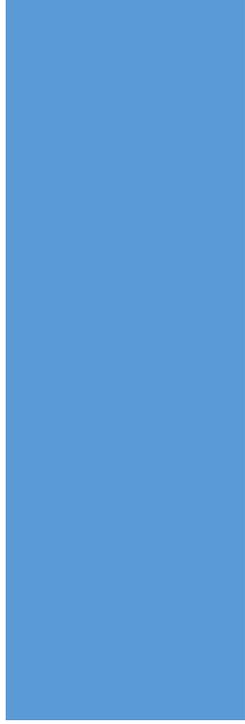
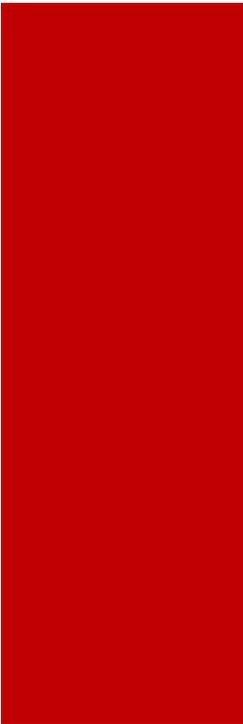
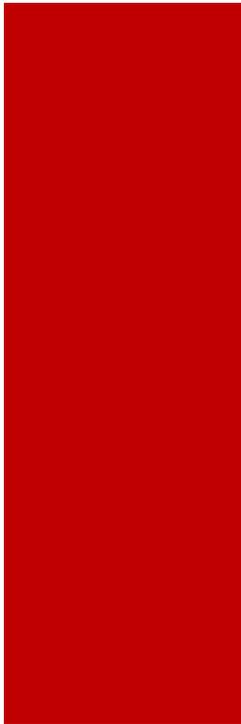
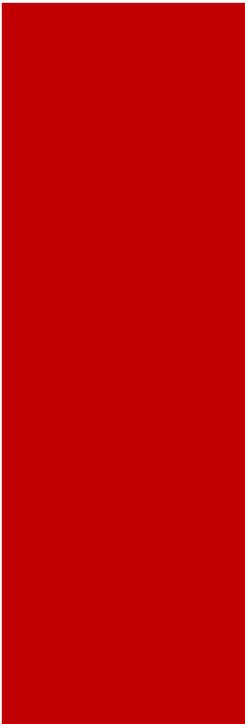
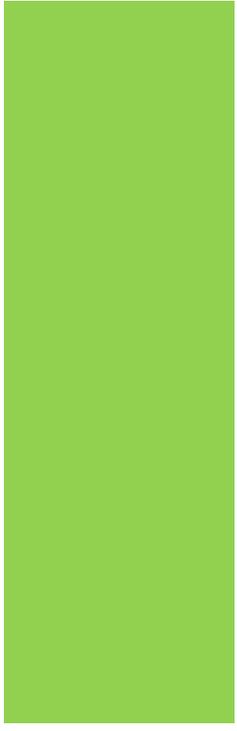
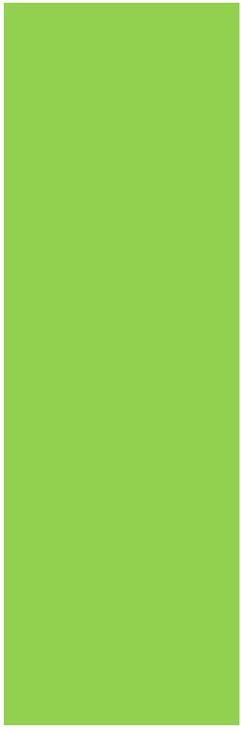
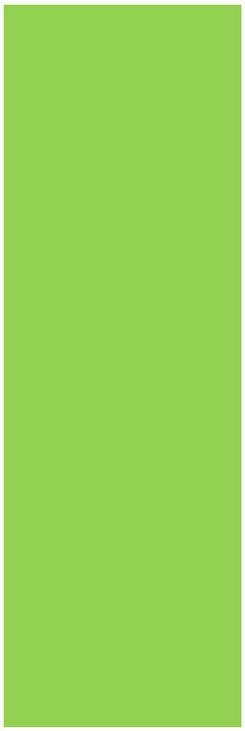




**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
CHECK-IN**





# IN THE WEEDS? Industry Help for Anxiety, Depression and Mental Health



It is actually OKAY not to be OKAY. Just help each other do the gutsy thing and get help. You are absolutely worth it.

## NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE

Call **1-800-273-TALK** (8255)  
Text **HOPE** to **916-668-4226**  
*Both lines are available 24/7*



Are you okay now? Great. Put this number in your phone so you have it to share with a friend.

## BIG TABLE REFERRAL

Big Table exists to directly support those in our industry who are struggling or in crisis. Any colleague or friend can refer someone in need. It takes three minutes through Big Table's site: [www.big-table.com](http://www.big-table.com).



## KNOW THE SIGNS THAT YOU OR YOUR FRIEND IS *IN THE WEEDS*.

### DIRECT SIGNS

Talking/writing about wanting to die or hurt or kill oneself

Talking/writing about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

Talking/writing about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain

Talking/writing about being a burden to others

Looking for ways to kill oneself, such as searching online for suicide methods or seeking access to firearms, pills or other means of suicide

### INDIRECT SIGNS

Changes in productivity  
– *deterioration in work*  
– *lethargy in a previously energetic person*  
– *new pattern of unexplained lateness/absences*  
– *new inability to concentrate or complete work*

Changes in social functioning  
– *withdrawal from colleagues, increased isolation*

Changes in personality  
– *extreme mood swings*  
– *acting anxious or agitated*  
– *showing rage or uncontrolled anger*  
– *behaving recklessly*

Increased alcohol or drug use

Changes in eating/sleeping patterns

## CHEF PATRICK'S STORY

After my friend killed himself, my wife said this needs to become part of the restaurant's conversation. She took a tea box and covered it with 4 colors of construction paper and drew faces - happy, neutral, angry and in the weeds.

2-3 times a week the box goes by the POS and as folks punch in they anonymously put a colored card in the slot indicating how they feel. At line up whoever is leading says something roughly like "Tonight's temperature, 8 happies, 3 neutral, one angry and two in the weeds. What are we going to do to have a successful night knowing that two of us are struggling? And for those who are blue, how can we help you and what will you learn from tonight that can be used to help others next time when you are not in the weeds?". That's it.

The magic happens when people are folding napkins, picking herbs, buffing glassware and real conversation begins to happen. Everyone gets involved in the conversation... including, and importantly, chefs, managers and owners who should begin to consider what the staff needs. That could be a kind word or a day off, but most of the time it is an open ear and a quiet mouth.

We found the culture of the restaurant changed. It is not perfect but better because for the first time we are turning our strength (delivering welcome and true hospitality) on ourselves and acknowledging that we need it too. I learned that showing vulnerability, especially as a leader, actually gives us strength and increases people's trust.

The conversations, in the walk-in, by the dumpster, at the front desk, are important. When folks are down we share the crisis numbers with them, actually putting them in their phones and then asking them to save them. We can't always be there, but we can let them know we care and want them to reach out.

# HOW TO CREATE A MENTAL-HEALTH CHECK-IN FOR YOUR TEAM

## THE STORY

Patrick Mulvaney, a chef in Sacramento, created a simple way to check-in on his staff after a good friend of his, another chef in Sacramento, died by suicide. He realized the kitchen culture made it hard to share when you were struggling, and he and his wife created a cardboard box with four colors and face icons on the side to represent four possible mental states:

-  I'M JUST FINE TODAY
-  I'M OKAY... OR NOT SURE
-  I'M MAD OR IRRITATED
-  I'M IN THE WEEDS... STRUGGLING, SAD, DOWN

### Questions? Ideas for Other Ways to Care?

Send us an email at [information@big-table.com](mailto:information@big-table.com).

Our mission is to care for those in crisis working in the restaurant and hospitality industry and we love collaborating with others who also have a heart to see our industry thrive.

[www.big-table.com](http://www.big-table.com)



Patrick then cut open the top of the box and made cards with each of the four colors. He told his staff when they clocked in to grab a card that represented how they were and drop it anonymously in the box. Then at the pre-shift meeting he grabbed the box and shared with the whole team the tally for the night. If any blue cards were in the box, he would remind them to connect with someone and that it was okay to be struggling and that he or others on the team would listen.

## START HERE

Create a box with the [check-in options \(page one\)](#) on the front and an open top.

Print out enough [colored cards \(page two\)](#) for the size of your staff.

Post the [resource flier \(page three\)](#) where everyone will see it. If there is a staff restroom, consider putting a second copy there.

Talk to your team about how important it is to care for each other as much as you all care for each guest and explain the simple idea of the check-in box.

Two to three times a week before shift, put the box and cards out where your staff clocks in and then go through the box at your pre-shift meeting to share the “temperature” of the team and reaffirm support for anyone struggling. This primes the pump for further conversations through the night.

## NEXT LEVEL

Get one or more peers on your team trained to listen and refer to help when needed. Once these peer counselors are trained, make sure everyone knows who those people are. Patrick and his colleagues in Sacramento identify these trained peer team members with a purple **I Got Your Back** hand lapel pin.

Learn more: <https://igotyourback.info/>