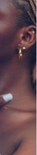
ICTMH BI-WEEKLY
www.cognitiveng.org
# NEWSLETTER
Mental & Wellness Ed. Vol. 38 | 1st - 14th August 2026

BUILDING EMOTIONAL STRENGTH

## Strong Enough to Feel

Understanding our emotions, responding in healthier ways, and learning that asking for support can also be a sign of strength.
Life will not always give us time to prepare for disappointment, pressure, loss, fear or uncertainty. Sometimes we cope well. Other times, we struggle.
But emotional strength is not measured by how well we hide difficult feelings. It is found in our ability to recognise what we feel, understand what is happening within us, respond in healthier ways and know when it is time to reach for support.

Strength and emotion can exist in the same person.



INSIDE THIS EDITION

**Recognise. Understand. Respond. Reach out.**

A deeper look at emotional awareness, resilience, vulnerability, healthy coping, self-compassion and the courage to ask for support when it is needed.

### Editorial Note

There is a version of strength many of us have learned to admire.

It is the person who keeps going. The person who does not complain. The person who holds everything together even when life becomes difficult.

But sometimes what looks like strength from the outside is actually someone trying very hard not to fall apart.

In this edition, we are looking at emotional strength differently.

Our recent WhatsApp Wellness conversation explored emotional awareness, resilience, vulnerability, healthy coping and self-compassion. At the centre of all these conversations was one important message: **being emotionally strong does not mean becoming emotionally silent.**

Volume 38 invites us to become more honest about what we feel and more intentional about how we respond.

*Warm regards,*
*Joseph Abang*



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

In recent editions, we have talked about recognising distress, understanding emotions and making care easier to reach.

Knowing that emotions matter is only the beginning. We also need to learn what to do with them.

What happens when anger comes? What do we do with disappointment? How do we respond when we feel overwhelmed? And what happens when being "the strong one" becomes exhausting?




## WhatsApp Wellness Highlights

Our WhatsApp Wellness is a standing weekly program — independently designed each week, facilitated by the ICTMH Clinical Team, and structured from Monday to Sunday with daily prompts, interactive polls, reflective exercises, and moderated peer-sharing.

### Building Emotional Strength

3rd - 9th August 2026 • Compiled by Dr. Elizabeth Idowu

Sometimes we think emotional strength means being the person who never breaks down, never complains, and always seems to have everything under control.

This week's WhatsApp Wellness conversation challenged that idea. The focus was not on becoming less emotional. It was on developing a healthier relationship with what we feel.

Across the week, the conversation moved from recognising emotions to accepting them without shame and finally to choosing healthier ways to respond when emotions become difficult.



#### First, Notice What You Feel

Emotional strength begins with awareness. Sadness, anger, fear, frustration, and disappointment are normal human experiences. The problem is not simply that we feel them. What matters is whether we understand what is happening within us and how we respond.

The week's conversation encouraged members to stop treating every difficult emotion as something that must immediately be hidden or judged.

Sometimes the first healthy step is simply being able to say: "This is what I am feeling right now."



#### Strength Can Include Vulnerability

As the week continued, the focus shifted from recognizing emotions to how we carry them.



Resilience does not mean that difficult experiences stop affecting us. It develops gradually as we learn healthier ways to cope, stay connected to supportive people, and give ourselves time to recover. The conversation also challenged another common belief:

***Vulnerability is not the opposite of strength.***

Admitting that something has been difficult, expressing an emotion, or asking for support can take courage. You do not always have to appear fine to prove that you are coping.

#### Then Ask: What Will Help Me Respond Well?

By the end of the week, the conversation became practical.

When emotions feel heavy, healthier responses may include:

- Taking a break when you need space before reacting.
- Writing things down to help organise thoughts and feelings.
- Talking to someone you trust instead of carrying everything alone.
- Using relaxation techniques to settle yourself during emotionally intense moments.
- Doing something meaningful that supports your wellbeing.
- Being kinder to yourself while you work through a difficult experience.
- Seeking professional support when emotions become difficult to manage.



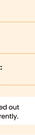
The goal is not to find one perfect coping strategy. It is to gradually build healthier ways of responding.

**Feeling is human. Responding well is a skill.**

Greater awareness helps us recognise what is happening within us, choose healthier coping strategies and reach for support before the pressure becomes overwhelming.

### Emotional Strength Check-In

*Take one minute to answer honestly.*



**When I feel overwhelmed, I usually:**

**One emotion I find difficult to express:**

**One healthy coping strategy that helps me:**

**One person I can safely speak with:**

**One thing I need to be more patient with myself about:**

You do not need to have everything figured out before you begin caring for yourself differently.

### WHAT THIS WEEK TELLS US

There is a difference between being strong and appearing strong. Appearing strong may mean hiding what hurts, pushing through everything, and telling people you are fine.



Emotional strength asks for something different. It asks us to notice. To understand. To give ourselves room to recover. To choose healthier responses. And, when necessary, to let someone help.

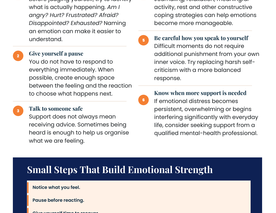
Strength is not how well you hide what you feel. Sometimes strength is knowing what you feel and what to do with it.

ICTMH STAFF VOICE



### When "I'm Fine" Becomes a Habit

by Joseph Abang



**"How are you?"**
**"I'm fine."**

For many people, the answer comes before they have even considered the question. Sometimes we genuinely are fine. But sometimes "I'm fine" simply means:

**I don't know how to explain it.**
**I don't want to worry anyone.**
**I don't think anyone will understand.**
**I need to keep going.**
**I don't want to look weak.**

There is nothing wrong with keeping some things private. We do not owe everyone access to our emotions.

But constantly hiding distress, even from people we trust, can make difficult experiences feel heavier.

A healthier alternative may begin with honesty in safe spaces. You do not need a perfect explanation.

"Today has been difficult."
"I don't really know how I feel yet."
"Can we talk?"

**You are allowed to choose carefully who you speak to.**

Emotional openness should happen where there is safety, respect and trust.

And when distress begins to affect daily life, relationships, sleep, functioning or your ability to cope, professional support may be appropriate.

**You do not have to wait until "I'm fine" becomes "I can't cope anymore."**

CARE CAN BE SIMPLE

### Healthy Ways to Respond When Emotions Feel Heavy

1. **Name the feeling**
   Before judging yourself, try to identify what is actually happening. *Am I angry? Hurt? Frustrated? Afraid? Disappointed? Exhausted?* Naming an emotion can make it easier to understand.
2. **Give yourself a pause**
   You do not have to respond to everything immediately. When possible, create enough space between the feeling and the reaction to choose what happens next.
3. **Talk to someone safe**
   Support does not always mean receiving advice. Sometimes being heard is enough to help us organise what we are feeling.
4. **Use a healthy outlet**
   Journaling, relaxation, meaningful activity, rest and other constructive coping strategies can help emotions become more manageable.
5. **Be careful how you speak to yourself**
   Difficult moments do not require additional punishment from your own inner voice. Try replacing harsh self-criticism with a more balanced response.
6. **Know when more support is needed**
   If emotional distress becomes persistent, overwhelming or begins interfering significantly with everyday life, consider seeking support from a qualified mental-health professional.

### Small Steps That Build Emotional Strength

- **Notice what you feel.**
- **Pause before reacting.**
- **Give yourself time to recover.**
- **Stay connected to supportive people.**
- **Use healthier ways to cope.**
- **Speak to yourself with compassion.**
- **Ask for help before things become unbearable.**

## Wellness Wednesdays:

# Free Health Screenings

Every Wednesday at the ICTMH Kaduna Office, **free blood pressure and blood sugar screenings** are available to all community members at no cost.



**WHEN**

Every Wednesday
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**WHERE**

ICTMH Office
No. 28 Abuja Road,
Kaduna State

**COST**

100% free
No appointment required

*Reaching out is a sign of strength.*
***Visit us this Wednesday to***
***give your body the attention it deserves.***

**JOURNAL ARTICLE CALL — STILL OPEN**

ICTMH invites submissions on mental health and cognitive behavioral therapies, with particular interest in African-contextualized approaches.

- **Submit to:** enquiry@cognitiveng.org
- **Subject:** Journal Submission

*Writing guidelines and topic suggestions available on request.*

*Learn more:* ***www.cognitiveng.org/journal/***



# Connect with care

ICTMH OFFICE ADDRESS

**No. 28 Abuja Road, Kaduna State, Nigeria**

OPERATING HOURS

9:00AM - 5:00PM

MONDAYS - FRIDAYS

NEED TO TALK?

Call the ICTMH Hotline:

**+234 912 213 0769**

**+234 706 287 4416**

OPERATING HOURS

24 Hours

MONDAYS - SUNDAYS

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Your support helps ICTMH continue community outreaches, mental health education, free screenings, and practical support for individuals and families.

For Naira donations, use:

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SCAN TO DONATE

**Every gift helps care move closer to the people who need it.**




## ICTMH's One Ask

This week, pause before saying, **"I'm fine."**

Ask yourself instead:
**"How am I really feeling, and what healthy support do I need?"**

Sometimes emotional strength begins with simply being honest with yourself.

MEDICAL DISCLAIMER
Content in this newsletter is psychoeducational in nature and is intended for general informational purposes only. It does not constitute clinical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing a mental health concern or persistent physical symptoms, please seek support from a qualified healthcare professional. In an emergency, contact your nearest hospital or emergency services.