



ICTMH BI-WEEKLY

www.cognitiveng.org

NEWSLETTER

Mental & Wellness Ed. Vol. 34

11th May – 22nd May 2026



Editorial Note

When you know what it feels like to carry something silently, you become more patient with the person in front of you who is doing the same. Self-awareness is not a private exercise. It changes the quality of every conversation you have.

Volume 34 asks, "What are you going to do with that awareness when you open your mouth?" *When we listen to our bodies, we learn how to listen to each other.*

Warm regards,
Joseph Abang.

Continuing the conversation

Think about the last time a conversation went wrong. Not a dramatic falling-out — just an ordinary exchange that left something sour in the air. Someone snapped. An assumption was made. A message was read in a tone it was never sent in. The conversation ended, but the feeling did not.

Now think about what was happening underneath it. Stress. Exhaustion. A It leaks into conversation too. It comes out as impatience, as withdrawal, or as the silence that the other person mistakes for indifference.

Volume 34 gives us the tools to speak more carefully and listen more fully. Not because we should be perfect. Because the people around us deserve our best effort, and because that effort, practiced consistently, is what makes relationships safe.



WhatsApp Wellness Highlights

Our WhatsApp Wellness is a standing weekly programme — 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.

Healthy Communication: Speaking Better, Listening Better

May 11–16, 2026 • Compiled by Dr. Elizabeth Idowu

This week's program asked a simple question: can we communicate with more care? Not perfectly, but with more intention, more patience, and more willingness to actually hear the person in front of us.

Think Before You Speak Words carry weight that we often underestimate in the moment. A single sentence spoken before thinking can damage a relationship that took years to build.
– Monday

Listening Is Love The discipline of listening to understand rather than listening to reply. Patient, attentive listening is one of the most powerful acts of care available to us.
– Tuesday

Speak with Respect It is possible to be honest without being harsh. Respectful expression means saying what is true without making the other person feel attacked or diminished. Respect should remain present even in difficult conversations—especially then.
– Wednesday

Don't Assume, Ask Assumptions are one of the most common sources of unnecessary conflict. We fill in what we do not know with what we fear, then respond to the fear rather than the fact. Asking a simple question — "what did you mean by that?" — can dissolve conflicts before they start.

– Thursday

Repair After Conflict Disagreements are not the problem. What we do afterwards is. Apologize, take responsibility, and reopen a conversation that closed badly. Repair is not weakness. It is the mark of emotional maturity.

– Friday

Weekly Reflection The week closed with one question: what communication habit do I most need to change? Name it honestly and carry one practical intention forward into the following week.

– Saturday

Communication health checklist

Tick each sign that applies to you this week.



PAUSING — Do I think before I speak?

- ☐ I listen to people, but I am often already thinking of my response before they finish.
- ☐ I struggle to give someone my full attention without checking my phone.
- ☐ I have been told, more than once, that I do not really listen.
- ☐ I find it easier to talk than to sit with what someone else is feeling.

LISTENING — Do I listen to understand?

- ☐ I listen to people, but I am often already thinking of my response before they finish.
- ☐ I struggle to give someone my full attention without checking my phone.
- ☐ I have been told, more than once, that I do not really listen.
- ☐ I find it easier to talk than to sit with what someone else is feeling.

REPAIRING — Do I make things right after conflict?

- ☐ When a conversation goes badly, I prefer to let time pass rather than address it.
- ☐ I find it hard to apologize, even when I know I was wrong.
- ☐ I leave misunderstandings unresolved and hope they resolve on their own.
- ☐ I have relationships that have been damaged by something that was never spoken about.

*If you ticked two or more in any category,
that area may be worth paying attention to this week.
Communication is a skill. Skills are practiced, not perfected.*

WHAT THIS WEEK TELLS US



This week confirmed something ICTMH has observed consistently: most people want to communicate better. They just do not always know how, and they are not always given the language or the permission to try. Many participants saw themselves in the examples — the snapping that comes from exhaustion, the silence that comes from not knowing how to start, the assumed offence that turned out to be a misread. Healthy communication is not about never getting it wrong. It is about being willing to notice when you did, and to do something about it.

Partnership in Action: ICTMH Receives \$8,500 Grant from SANP

May 5, 2026



There is a version of this story that leads with the number. We are going to lead with what the number means.

For years, ICTMH has been building a model of community mental health work that is accessible, evidence-based, and rooted in the realities of communities. It is delivered virtually and physically, through training sessions and outreaches and through a newsletter that goes out to people who might not otherwise encounter mental health education in a form they can use. The work has been sustained through determination, partnership, and the conviction that community care, done consistently, produces outcomes that matter.

In May 2026, the Southwest Association of Nigerian Physicians Inc. (SANP) — a nonprofit association of Nigerian physicians based in the Southwestern United States — looked at that model and chose to invest in it. Their grant of \$8,500 is the largest single external funding commitment ICTMH has received.

SANP was created to support professional and cultural connection among Nigerian physicians while giving back to communities through outreach, education, and charitable

support. Their membership represents Nigerian medical professionals who understand what quality healthcare in Nigerian communities requires — and who recognize in ICTMH a model worth backing.

This grant directly strengthens ICTMH's capacity to deliver programs in communities that need them, expand professional training and development, and sustain office operations. It supports the work already happening and makes more of it possible.

The SANP grant is proof that ICTMH's community model is being recognized beyond Nigeria's borders. Mental health work cannot be sustained by one organization alone. It grows through collaboration, shared vision, and the willingness of institutions to invest in care before a crisis makes it unavoidable. SANP has done exactly that. ICTMH extends sincere appreciation for that trust and will honor it through the reach and quality of the work ahead.

Charity begins at home

May 14, 2026 • Compiled by Dr. Elizabeth Idowu



The same week the SANP grant arrived, ICTMH's team was on the ground in the Kazaure area of Kaduna, sitting with women who did not have a grant to point to. About 15 women attended a community outreach session that provided mental health education, emotional wellbeing support, and practical guidance on stress, family burdens, and what it means to seek help without shame.

Free blood pressure and blood sugar screenings were provided alongside the session. That pairing is intentional. Many women in these communities will attend a health screening who would not yet describe themselves as someone who needs mental health support. The screening creates the opening. Once a woman is sitting down and being cared for, the conversation about what she is carrying emotionally becomes possible. Physical health is the door. Emotional health is what is waiting on the other side.

Our mission is simple: to break the silence, reduce stigma, and create safe spaces where women, men, children, and families can speak, heal, and receive care. This is not a one-time event. It is a movement.

The women who came that day represent a community that absorbs tremendous pressure in silence — financial strain, domestic weight, grief, exhaustion — and receives little in return. ICTMH's commitment is to keep showing up in those places. Not occasionally, and not only when it is convenient. One community at a time, one conversation at a time, until the silence starts to lift.

Stigma does not disappear through campaigns. It disappears when someone shows up, sits with you, and makes it safe to speak. Fifteen women received that this day.



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. No appointment is necessary.

- **When:** Every Wednesday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- **Where:** ICTMH Office, No 28 Abuja Road, Kaduna State
- **Cost:** 100% **FREE**

***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.*



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

You can donate to the work we do

For Naira donations, use:

ACCOUNT NUMBER

1311129028

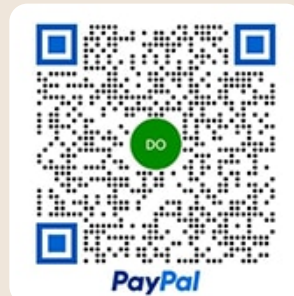
BANK

Zenith Bank

ACCOUNT NAME

Initiative for Cognitive

Therapies and Mental Health



**SCAN
TO DONATE**



ICTMH's One Ask

There is a conversation you have been avoiding.

You know which one. The apology you have been postponing. The question you have not found the right moment to ask. The misunderstanding that has been sitting between you and someone you care about, growing heavier with every week that passes.

This week, take one step toward it. Not the whole conversation — one step. A message. A phone call. Three sentences. The beginning is almost always smaller than the fear of it.

Communication is how we carry each other. This week, carry someone.

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.