

From: [Nirmala Bandra](#)
To: [Council](#); [Anthony Suber](#)
Subject: Public comment
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Hello,

Could you kindly read my public comment at the CC meeting tonight?

Public Comment to the Town of Atherton City Council

Re: Thanking City Council Proclamation supporting May as Mental Health Awareness Month

Good evening Mayor Elizabeth Lewis and town of Atherton Council members.

My name is Nirmala Bandrapalli and I am a longtime resident of San Mateo County and tonight, I offer this public comment as a Commissioner and President on the San Mateo County's Commission on the Status of Women.

On behalf of the Commission ---we want to thank the Town of Atherton for recognizing May as the mental health month. Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health. Everyone at this meeting tonight needs no reminder of the toll the pandemic has taken on the mental and emotional health of all of our residents.

As a Commissioner on the Status of Women.... I want to take this opportunity to take a moment to draw attention to the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on women...

- 60% of job losses during the pandemic were borne by women.
- Women were the majority of workers in high-risk jobs such as childcare and healthcare.
- Women bear the brunt of care responsibilities – for aging parents or sick family members, childcare when it's no longer available, and specific to the pandemic, home schooling when schools were closed and/or partially in session.
- Expectant mothers and those with young children have reported a 3-5-fold increase in anxiety and depression symptoms.
- Tragically, women have been the target of a dramatic increase in domestic violence during the pandemic.

To our women councilmembers and all the women in the audience this evening, please know:

1. During these unprecedented times come stress, sadness, and anxiety, you are not alone.
 - Sharing your emotions with supportive listeners can alleviate stress and improve your mood.

- Practicing self-compassion is a must. Too often we are kind to others and dismissive to our own distress.

2. Seek out professional help – it’s not a sign of weakness; it’s a sign of strength

I wanted to share some valuable resources you may not be aware of through the **San Mateo County’s Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS)**: smchealth.org/mental-health-month.

I encourage everyone, not just women and girls, to access this website which lists a wide range of **free** online events happening this month and they are all free. Presentations are practical, meaningful, provided in multiple languages and reflect different cultures. Topics include for example, meditation, yoga, music and art techniques, book reviews, expressive arts and youth-led discussions. In addition, mental health and substance abuse services are described as well as how to access providers.

In closing, as the Council’s Proclamation noted, if mental health is fundamental to overall health, then a focus on your *behavioral wellness* is the best prevention.

Thank you again to the Town of Atherton leadership, on behalf of the Commission on the status of Women for helping us all rise above the stigma surrounding Mental Health

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“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In the space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom”

Victor Frankl