

# changing minds



## ADULT & FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Mental Health Conversations that Matter



## ABOUT CHANGING MINDS

**MENTAL HEALTH** challenges can be difficult to navigate – and too many face these challenges alone, fearful of being misunderstood and marginalized. This can change. This should change.

That’s why we – Community Access – launched Changing Minds, a unique storytelling initiative that uses short films to spark open, honest conversations about mental health, stigma, healing, and community support. Through sharing and discussing films that portray real-life stories and experiences, Changing Minds aims to positively change how we think and talk about mental health matters.

This guide is designed to help our community reflect together in respectful and supportive spaces — to listen, connect, and remind each other that we are not alone.

## STIGMA AFFECTS ALL ASPECTS OF WELLNESS

**IT’S OFTEN TRUE** that we don’t talk about mental health enough – and that many of the conversations we do have are inhibited by mistrust, misunderstanding, and a general sense of unease. Even among close friends and family members, mental health stigma can prevent open, nonjudgmental, and empathetic dialogue.

While this state of affairs may be familiar, its far-reaching impact on our lives can be difficult to appreciate fully. Our failure to discuss mental health in constructive ways comes with many costs – and, left unaddressed, these costs only compound over time, with consequences felt at every level of our society.

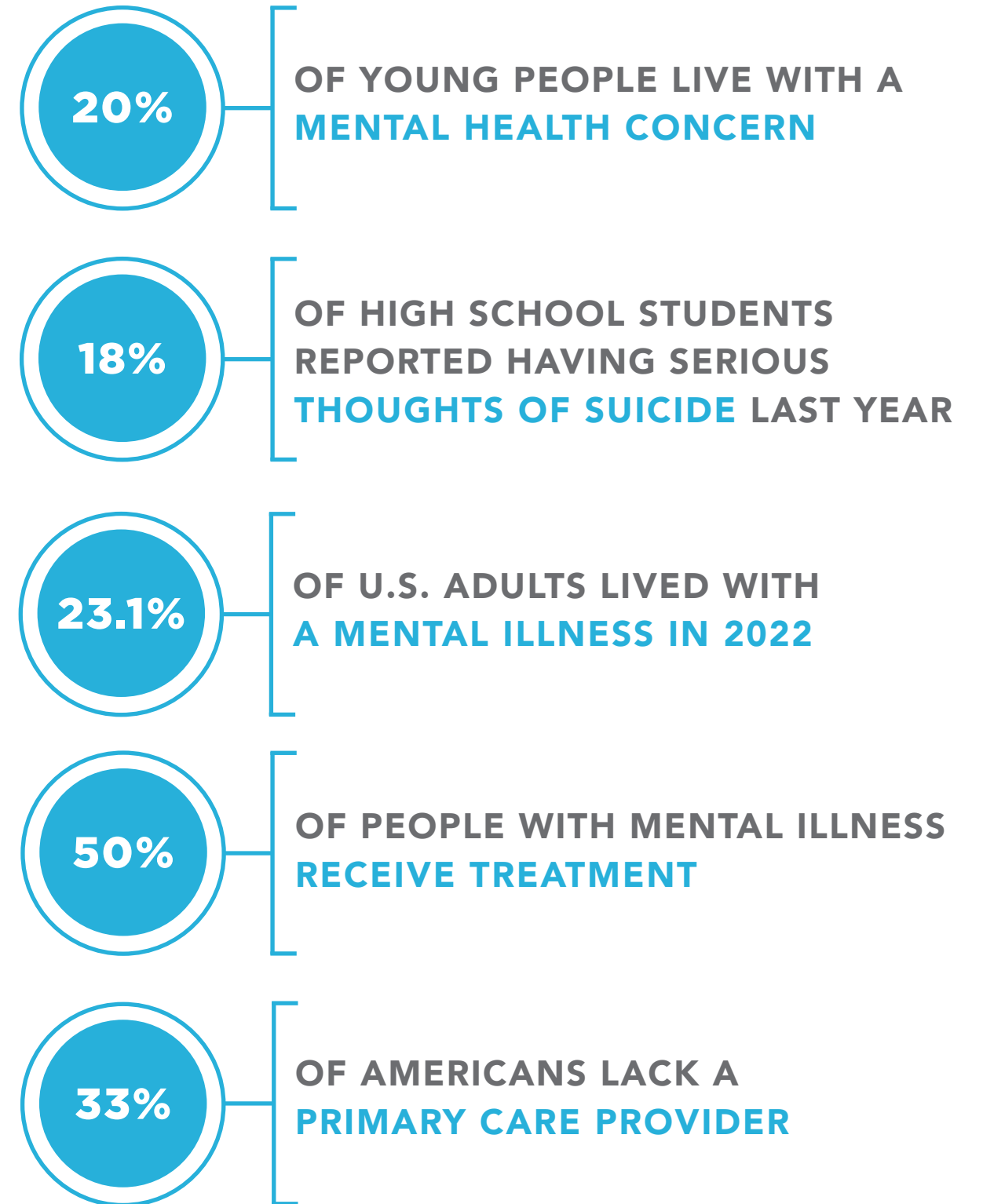


The World Health Organization has defined wellness as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” There are eight dimensions of wellness: emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual. Mental health stigma hinders our ability to pursue opportunities across each of these dimensions. For young people – who are still establishing their identities and place in the world – this unnecessary roadblock can be especially damaging.

We can’t put mental health in a box and move it aside; mental health *is* health. By helping people “change minds,” we can change lives for the better.

## MENTAL HEALTH: IN FOCUS

**MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES** can affect people at any stage of life. Stress, trauma, physical health concerns, and financial pressure can all shape how people feel and cope.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

It is our hope that viewing these films about mental health will lead to productive, honest conversations.

From our vantage point, after watching these films, we think some of the following questions may be a good place to start:

- ▶ **What are your general reactions to the films?**
- ▶ **Which film was your favorite? Why?**
- ▶ **Did any of these films surprise you? How?**
- ▶ **Did these films make you feel more or less likely to talk about mental health in your own life? How so?**
- ▶ **Was there anything these films were missing?**



*In making this film, we felt empowered to talk visually about what it looks and feels like to encounter an eating disorder, and how that impacts one's personal life. We're so excited to share it with a wider audience.*

*- Abby Thompson*

Once everyone has given their general feedback, perhaps then is the time to get into bigger themes. Some possible questions include:

- ▶ **Do you feel that there is stigma around mental health concerns? If so, why?**
- ▶ **What do you think people can do to make others feel safe to share their experiences honestly?**
- ▶ **What kind of support exists for young people with mental health concerns? What's missing?**
- ▶ **Do you feel that you have a place to turn when you are having a hard time mentally or emotionally?**

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Facilitators can come up with creative activities to discuss mental health, and we also recommend the following exercises:

### ▶ **“HAVE YOU EVER HEARD” CIRCLE**

Everyone stands or sits in a circle. The facilitator says, “Raise your hand if you’ve ever heard someone say...” Facilitator can choose statements on their own, or draw from these examples related to mental health stigma:

- Just get over it.
- You don’t seem depressed.
- You’re being dramatic.
- Everyone gets sad sometimes.
- Other people have it worse.
- Snap out of it.
- Why can’t you be normal?
- Nobody wants to hear about your problems.
- That’s not a real problem.

After each one, participants can briefly react or discuss: Why would people say this? How might it affect someone? What would be a more supportive statement?

### ▶ **ROLE REVERSAL EXERCISE**

- Pair up
- Person A shares a mild stressor (school, work, family)
- Person B listens, then repeats the story back in first person as if it’s their own
- Switch roles

### ▶ **“WHAT HELPS / WHAT HARMS” WALL**

- On sticky notes or paper:
  - Write 1 thing people say that helps mental health
  - Write 1 thing people say that could harm mental health
- Put them on two sides of a wall or board
- Review as a group and discuss patterns

### ▶ **WRITE AN ANONYMOUS NOTE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

- Prompt:
  - “Something I’ve never said out loud about mental health is...”
- Collect all responses anonymously
- Mix and redistribute randomly
- Each person reads one aloud

### ▶ **SOUNDTRACK YOUR MOOD**

Ask everyone to pick a song that represents:

- How they feel today
- Play 10–20 seconds of each
- After each clip, the person can explain (or pass)

### ▶ **BUILD A PERSONAL “EMERGENCY KIT”**

Have everyone write down:

- 2 people they can reach out to
- 2 things that calm them down
- 1 place they feel safe
- 1 thing they can do in 10 minutes to reset

### ▶ **ONE SMALL ACTION COMMITMENT**

- Each person completes this sentence:
  - “This week, I will \_\_\_\_\_ to take care of my mental health.”



## ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS

**FOUNDED IN 1974**, Community Access is a pioneer of supportive housing and social services in NYC. A big part of our work involves advocacy – breaking down barriers and rallying our community to promote housing, human rights, and human rights.

Our mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.



*I wanted to give a voice to teens trying to figure out their own identities in a world that wants to box them in and label them.*

*- Daphne Parkhill*



## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

### NYC SUPPORT

#### NYC 988

Free, confidential mental health and substance use support for anyone in NYC, available 24/7 by call, text, or chat. NYC 988 can also connect people to local crisis services.

#### Mobile Crisis Teams

Provide in-person crisis intervention, assessment, de-escalation, and connection to services through NYC 988.

### NATIONAL CRISIS HOTLINES

#### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

24/7 emotional support via call, text, or chat for mental health crises and substance use concerns.

#### Crisis Text Line

Text **HOME** to **741741** for free, confidential 24/7 support. Spanish support available..

#### SAMHSA National Helpline

Call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for treatment referrals and information. TTY: 1-800-487-4889.

### WARM LINES & PEER SUPPORT

#### NAMI Warmline Directory

Find peer-run support lines for non-crisis emotional support. <https://helplinefaqs.nami.org/article/577-nami-national-warmline-directory>

### RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

#### Call BlackLine

Peer support and crisis line prioritizing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Call or text **1-800-604-5841** <https://www.callblackline.com/>

### RESOURCES FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

#### 988 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Access support via call, text, chat, or ASL videophone. Use relay service or dial 711 then 988. <https://deaflead.org/>

### RESOURCES FOR BLIND, LOW VISION & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

#### Lighthouse Guild

Vision care, rehabilitation, and behavioral health support. <https://lighthouseguild.org/healthcare-services/behavioral-health-services/>

### LGBTQ+ AND IDENTITY-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

#### The Trevor Project

24/7 crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth via phone, text, and chat.

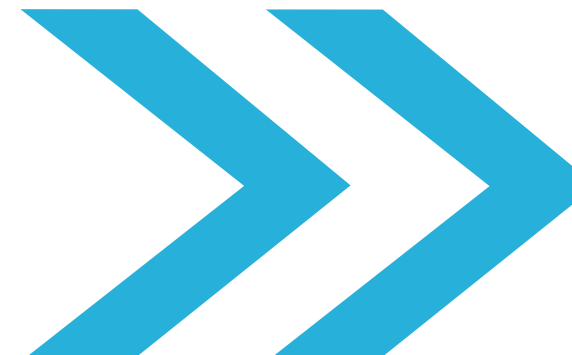
#### Trans Lifeline

Peer support hotline run by and for trans people. Call or text (877) 565-8860

### FINDING ONGOING CARE

#### FindTreatment.gov

Confidential, anonymous locator for mental health and substance use services. <https://findtreatment.gov>



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## ABOUT CHANGING MINDS

Established in 2015 by Community Access, Changing Minds is a festival and stigma-challenging community education program in NYC that sparks real-life conversations about mental health matters.

Join us as we shine a spotlight on youth mental health and celebrate this year's dynamic group of young filmmakers, their stories, and experiences.



Laurie M Tisch  
ILLUMINATION FUND

The Pixley Hill Foundation

