Teacher Resource Guide

Thank you for inviting NAMI’s Ending the Silence (ETS) into your classroom. We hope that this will be an eye-opening experience for you and your students. Helping middle and high schoolers understand mental health conditions makes them more likely to recognize warning signs in themselves, or others, and ask for the help that they, or a friend, need.

This guide will help you continue the conversation of mental health conditions long after the Ending the Silence presenters have left your classroom. Please look through this guide and familiarize yourself with the many resources that are available to you, your school and your community.

Your local NAMI affiliate will also be happy to help connect you with further resources and lend support when needed.

NAMI Santa Cruz County
namiscc.org
(831) 824-0406

This guide includes:

1. Becoming a Friend - to print when leaders feel a student might not be able to access the online version through the ETS resource card QR code.

2. Parent Information Form – to email to all parents after you’ve had a presentation. Feel free to use signed and returned forms as extra credit.

3. Your Language Matters – a handout to give you examples of terms you should use that diminish stereotypes and promote understanding.

4. Say It Out Loud, Breaking the Silence and In Our Own Voice – other programs that help educate teens about mental health conditions

5. Awareness Events – a list of days/weeks/months that can be recognized and can help you continue the mental health conversation.

6. Resources – helpful resources to share with teens who need support.

Adapted from www.suicideispreventable.org
How to Help a Friend

1. Know the warning signs
You know more about what’s going on in your friends’ lives than anyone else. This puts you in the best position to know if one of your friends needs help. Below is a list of warning signs to look out for:

- Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks
- Trying to harm or end one’s life or making plans to do so
- Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behavior that causes harm to self or others
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing
- Throwing up, using laxatives or not eating to lose weight; significant weight loss
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still leading to physical danger or failing at school
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

For more information about the symptoms of mental health conditions, check out the following websites: www.nami.org and www.teenshealth.org.

2. Share your concerns
If you notice any of the above warning signs or if you’re concerned one of your friends is thinking about suicide, don’t be afraid to talk to them about it.

Start the Conversation
- Before you start the conversation, have a list of resources, like the ones on your Ending the Silence resource card, that your friend can use to get help.
- Open the conversation by sharing specific signs you’ve observed.
  - “I’ve noticed lately that you [haven’t been sleeping, aren’t interested in soccer anymore, which you used to love, are posting a lot of sad song lyrics online, etc.]…”

If you think your friend may be thinking about suicide, ask the direct question, saying something like:
- “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- “Do you have a plan? Do you know how you would do it?”
- “When was the last time you thought about suicide?”

If your friend answers “Yes” to these questions or if you think they might be at risk of suicide, you NEED to talk to an adult you trust IMMEDIATELY, or call the National Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or 911.

Listen, express concern, reassure
Focus on being understanding, caring and nonjudgmental, saying something like:
- “You are not alone. I’m here for you”
- “I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help”
- “I’m concerned about you and I want you to know there is help available to get you through this”
- “You are important to me; we will get through this together”

What not to do
- Don’t promise secrecy. Say instead: “I care about you too much to keep this kind of secret. You need help and I’m here to help you get it”
- Don’t ask in a way that indicates you want “No” for an answer.
  - “You’re not thinking about suicide, are you?”
  - “You haven’t been throwing up to lose weight, have you?”

Adapted from www.suicideispreventable.org
What not to say

- We all go through tough times like these. You’ll be fine
- “It’s all in your head. Just snap out of it”

3. Get help

If your friend is experiencing warning signs of a mental health condition, encourage him or her to **TALK TO A TRUSTED ADULT.** In addition, let your friend know about resources they can turn to for anonymous support and information.

**Online Resources**
- [www.OK2TALK.org](http://www.OK2TALK.org) – An online forum for teens and young adults to talk about what they’re experiencing by sharing their personal stories and motivational quotes and images
- [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org) – For more information on how to talk to a friend about suicide
- Resources listed under Know the Warning Signs for additional information and support

**Talk to Someone**
- Crisis Text Line: Text “NAMI” to 741741
- Teen Line: open 9 p.m. – 1 a.m. ET 310-855-4673 or text “TEEN” to 839863 (8:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. ET)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

**Apps**
- Mindshift – helps teens and young adults cope with anxiety
- My3 – helps youth stay connected with their support network if having thoughts of suicide
- MoodKit – helps improve your mood by developing self-awareness and healthy attitudes
- Take a Break! Guided Meditations for Stress Relief – helps you cope with stress

4. Be a good friend

One of the most important factors in recovery is the understanding and acceptance of friends. Below is a list of ways you can help a friend who is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition:

- Include your friend in your plans – continue inviting him or her, even if they turn down your invitation
- Help your friend stay positive
- Don’t treat him or her differently
- Stand up for your friend
- Check-in regularly, listen and offer support
- Learn more about mental health (see websites listed throughout this document)

5. Reduce stigma

Stigma is the biggest reason people don’t try to get help. By taking steps to reduce mental health stigma in your school and community, you can help your friend feel more comfortable speaking up when they need support. The sooner your friend gets help, the greater their chances of getting better will be. Below is a list of things you can do to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and end the silence:

- Talk about mental health with friends & family
- Share links to resources on social media
- Don’t bully, stereotype or label others
- Call people out if they use stigmatizing language
- Use people first language
  - If you speak to or about a person with a mental health condition, speak to the person first, and then the mental health condition. Ex: Instead of “a bipolar person,” say “a person with bipolar disorder”
- Wear a lime green ribbon to raise mental health awareness and let people with a mental health condition know they’re not alone
We visited your student’s class today—ask them what they learned!

- One in five teens live with a mental health condition
- Mental health conditions are not anyone’s fault or something to be ashamed of
- 50% of mental health conditions emerge by age 14 and 75% by age 24
- Warning signs typically begin about two to four years before a mental health condition becomes serious
- Many young people who receive treatment and support early can achieve recovery and live healthy, full and productive lives

Know the Warning Signs

You know more about your son/daughter’s typical behavior than anyone else. This puts you in the best position to notice changes and know when it’s time to get professional help. Below is a list of warning signs to watch for:

- Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks
- Trying to harm or end one’s live or making plans to do so
- Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that causes harm to self or others
- Sudden, overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing
- Throwing up, using laxatives or not eating to lose weight; significant weight loss
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still leading to physical danger or failing at school
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

- www.nami.org
- www.teenshealth.org
- www.thebalancedmind.org
- www.p2pusa.org
- www.kidsinthehouse.com
- www.teenmentalhealth.org
- www.parentcenterhub.org
- www.mentalhealthchannel.tv

If you or a family member is showing signs of a mental health condition, trust your instincts and get help!

You are not alone…Recovery is possible…Early intervention is key!

Please tear along the dotted line and return the below completed form.

Student name: ____________________________

I, (name of parent/guardian) ____________________________ have read the above information and asked my son/daughter about what they learned from NAMI Ending the Silence.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature Date
Your Language Matters

The words you use matter. You can better reach youth, break down negative stereotypes and give teens hope by choosing words that are more relatable and promote understanding.

This simple but caring approach may help youth feel more comfortable and willing to talk openly about mental health and to reach out for support early.

Your presentation will resonate more effectively and honestly by choosing the best words for your audience. Included here are suggested words and phrases to help teens be more open and receptive to your message.

It only takes one person to make a difference. Lead by example. Be that person.

Tips for Talking to Youth

Consider saying
- Mental health condition
- Mental health
- My daughter has bipolar disorder
- Person with a mental health condition
- Lives with, has or experiences

Instead of
- Brain disorder or brain disease
- Mental illness
- My daughter is bipolar
- Consumer, client or patient
- Suffers from, afflicted with or mentally ill

A person is not their mental health condition. You wouldn’t say someone “is cancer,” so we wouldn’t say someone “is bipolar.” Use words like “has,” “lives with” or “experiences” instead. Talk about mental health in a way that encourages hope and empowers youth. Words like “brain disorder/disease,” “mentally ill” and “suffers from” can be intimidating to teens and give the illness the power.

Tips for Talking About Suicide

Consider saying
- Suicide attempt/attempted suicide
- Died by suicide/suicide death
- Took their own life
- Died as the result of self-inflicted injury
- Disclosed

Instead of
- Failed suicide or unsuccessful attempt
- Successful or completed suicide
- Committed suicide
- Chose to kill him/herself
- Threatened

When talking about suicide, consider other meanings your words may have. For example, “committed suicide” implies that suicide is a crime. You can help eliminate the misunderstanding and stigma that prevent people from speaking up and getting support by choosing words that are more clear and neutral.

Created October 2015
We’ve made it easy to start conversations with teens about mental health!

Why is this important?

- 1 in 5 teens lives with a mental health condition
- less than ½ of teens with mental health conditions get help
- more than 4,000 teens are lost to suicide every year
- mental health remains a topic that few talk about

We can change that reality by ending the silence and engaging teens in community conversations.

Our Say It Out Loud toolkit has everything you need to start the conversation!

- An Informational Presentation for teen group facilitators to get comfortable talking about mental health
- A Facilitation Guide with step-by-step instructions on running a successful teen group discussion

- A 5-minute film that features:
  - The 10 Common Warning Signs of Mental Health Conditions
  - 3 youth sharing their personal journey
- A series of fact sheets for those interested in learning more

The Say It Out Loud toolkit is available for download at www.nami.org/sayitoutloud.
INNOVATIVE LESSONS

- Put a human face on mental illness and confront the myths that reinforce the silence
- It is biology, not a character flaw that causes mental illness
- Mental illness has never been more treatable
- The warning signs of mental illness
- How to fight the stigma that surrounds mental illness

EASY TO USE

- Fully scripted lessons and suggested activities for upper elementary, middle school, high school
- Eye catching posters and board game
- Plans can be used for one day or extended to several days
- No prior knowledge of the subject required

Meets National Health Education Standards AND Character Education and Violence Prevention Goals

“When I teach BTS, students are always surprised to find that, with treatment, many diagnosed with mental illness can lead successful, productive lives.”

Marilyn Calore, Guidance Counselor
Hilton Head Preparatory School
Hilton Head, South Carolina

“When Breaking the Silence” is our primary tool to increase knowledge and reduce stigma. These lessons should be used in every Tennessee school.”

Roger Stewart, Director of Education, NAMI Tennessee

For more information: www.btslessonplans.org

Mental illness has never been more treatable, but there’s a deafening silence about it in our classrooms. Break the silence through education.
NAMI In Our Own Voice presentations change attitudes, assumptions and stereotypes by describing the reality of living with a mental health condition. People with mental health conditions share their powerful, personal stories in this free, 60-minute presentation that’s accompanied by a video with additional experiences.

What You'll Gain
NAMI In Our Own Voice adds a critical perspective to the popular understanding of what people with mental health conditions are like. Having this presentation will give your audience:

- A first-hand account of what it's like to live with a mental health condition. Presenters humanize this misunderstood topic by demonstrating that it's possible—and common—to achieve your goals and dreams, and find recovery.
- A chance to ask the presenters questions, which allows for a deeper understanding of mental health conditions and dispel stereotypes and misconceptions.
- The understanding that every person with a mental health condition can hope for a bright future.

Schedule an IOOV Presentation

If you would like to host a NAMI In Our Own Voice presentation, [contact your local NAMI](https://www.nami.org/). If the presentation isn't already available, ask to bring it to your community.

A Spanish-language version of NAMI IOOV, En Nuestra Propia Voz de NAMI, is available in a limited number of states.

To find out more about In Our Own Voice, visit [www.nami.org/ioov](https://www.nami.org/ioov) for a sample video.
Awareness Events

Please see below a list of mental health awareness events that can be used to help emphasize the importance of fighting stigma and mental health education in your classroom. Links are provided where you can find templates, resources and toolkits to use in your curriculum.

**NAMI’s Mental Illness Awareness Week**
During #MIAW, join NAMI in shining a light on mental illness and replacing stigma with hope.
When: First full week in October running Sunday to Saturday

**NAMI’s Suicide Prevention Month**
Helps promote resources and awareness around the issues of suicide prevention, how you can help others and how to talk about suicide without increasing the risk of harm.
When: September

**National Suicide Prevention Week**
Led by the American Association of Suicidology
When: The Monday to Sunday surrounding World Suicide Prevention Day, September 10th

**Minority Mental Health Month**
Taking on the challenges of mental health conditions, health coverage and the stigma of mental illness requires all of us. In many communities, these problems are increased by less access to care, cultural stigma and lower quality care.
When: July

**Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day**
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) week that seeks to raise awareness about the importance of children’s mental health and to show that positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development from birth.
When: First Thursday in May during Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week

**Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week**
The National Federation of Families’ yearly event, geared toward raising awareness to the issues and causes integral to the children’s mental health field in each of the communities across the country.
When: First full week in May running Sunday to Saturday

**National Bullying Prevention Month**
Led by PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, it unites communities around the world to educate and raise awareness of bullying prevention. There is an increased risk for mental health and behavior problems for those who are victims of bullying (*Centers for Disease Control, 2015*).
When: October

**National Eating Disorders Awareness Week**
Puts the spotlight on the seriousness of eating disorders and to improve public understanding of their causes, triggers and treatments.
Additional Resources

These resources are found on the Ending the Silence resource card that each teen will receive as part of the ETS presentation.

Websites:

- www.nami.org
- www.eachmindmatters.org
- www.thetrevorproject.org
- www.ok2talk.org
- www.halfofus.com
- www.mentalhealthchannel.tv
- www.teenshealth.org
- www.reachout.com
- www.suicideispreventable.org

24/7 Crisis Text Line
Text “NAMI” to 741-741

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

NAMI Helpline
1-800-950-6264