

## Mental Health Short Video Activity

### Grades 4-8

This activity is designed to increase students' mental health awareness and empower them to seek help if needed. The following films are short, 60-second public service announcements created by youth through Directing Change, a program that supports statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness and to promote the mental health and wellness of students.

Before you begin, ***let students know that this lesson is about mental health challenges (and suicide) and that this topic may be triggering for some. Encourage reaching out for support, if needed, and clarify where students can go and who they can talk to if feelings arise.*** Review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected, safe, and heard. Sharing is encouraged but not required, and whatever is shared will remain confidential. Invite students to briefly share their thoughts on what constitutes mental health, what kinds of mental health challenges young people may face, and what stigma means. Ask in what ways mental health, specifically, is stigmatized.

During this activity, ***pause whenever needed to address behaviors that could create an unsafe environment. Laughing and negative comments about the characters or stories being shown during the films send a message to students in the room who identify with those characters and stories that they would be mocked, as well, if the other kids knew what was also true for them. Discreetly check in with any students who exhibit noticeable changes in their mood, body language, or demeanor. They may be becoming triggered and require support.***

To get started, choose **one** short film from the list below. Watch the film together and then have a dialogue about what they saw, learned and felt when watching the film about mental health. Discussion questions to facilitate dialogue have been provided below. If time permits, consider having students do a brief pair-share on each question before inviting discussion in small groups or as a whole class. This will draw out more voices and help students increase their comfort level talking about such sensitive and personal topics. Choose **a different short film** and repeat. **Compare the two films** and have a dialogue to determine if this has helped them better understand mental health.

- Bag of Sadness*** – A young person shares her experience with depression and how a friend showed her support and understanding, helping her to unburden herself from her “bag of sadness.” Language: Mandarin with English captions.

[https://youtu.be/FI\\_lpgU4N1s](https://youtu.be/FI_lpgU4N1s)

- ❑ ***Caged Bird*** – An animated film about how becoming more educated about mental health can allow us to help and care for those living with mental health challenges. Language: Mandarin with English captions. <https://youtu.be/4HBqGO2XGFw>
- ❑ ***Depression Has No Culture*** – People from a variety of cultures discuss the importance of coming together to support one another because depression has no culture. Language: English and various languages with English captions. <https://youtu.be/I0ueH92AV0w>
- ❑ ***Depression is Serious*** – A young person diagnosed with depression describes her experience from a Hispanic cultural perspective. Language: English with English captions. <https://youtu.be/dsCnyv8ekMg>
- ❑ ***Emily's Monster*** – This film tells the story of a student diagnosed with Schizophrenia as she expresses her feelings through drawings of monsters in her art class. Her teacher disapproves of her artwork, but fellow classmates show her support and reassurance, highlighting the importance of standing up for those living with mental health challenges. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/GwUhoVYOFXU>
- ❑ ***If We All Speak Loud Enough*** – This creative film highlights how speaking up helps to end the silence on mental illness and reduce stigma. Language: English with English captions. <https://youtu.be/8TirhNtBuvg>
- ❑ ***Lub Neej Muaj Nqe (Worthy Life)*** – A student shares the difficulty of being Hmong and integrating his cultural beliefs into American society, depression, and how his brother supports him. Language: Hmong Daw with English captions. <https://youtu.be/M4E9ZhFX90w>
- ❑ 隠された思い (***My Hidden Feelings***) – A film that tells the story of a girl who experiences anxiety and hopelessness and finds support from a friend who reaches out to her. Language: Japanese with English captions. <https://youtu.be/aTRqBfKvH1g>
- ❑ ***Not Alone*** – A film about gender identity/orientation and a young person experiencing depression who finds help after speaking with a friend. Language: English with English captions. <https://youtu.be/NPccvhaDXE0>

- ❑ **Not Alone** – With the help of his basketball team, an African American youth is reminded of his own strength, that he is not alone, and that there is help. Language: English. [https://youtu.be/R8G\\_FxZOWLM](https://youtu.be/R8G_FxZOWLM)
- ❑ **Off the Script** – A metaphorical film that reminds youth to not hide how they are feeling, to steer away from their same old script, and to instead talk openly and honestly about their mental health. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/idaoW2cNjfA>
- ❑ **Real Life Super Hero** – This inspiring film teaches youth that anyone can be a superhero by supporting a friend experiencing a mental health challenge. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/kMbFbq4yXHE>
- ❑ **Rising Up** – An animated film with a hopeful message about facing the challenges of mental illness with the help of friendship. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/NUI9HYW24yw>
- ❑ **Talking Taboo** – An exchange student from Ecuador discusses her experience joining the Each Mind Matters mental health movement and her passion for sharing the movement with others. Language: English with English captions. <https://youtu.be/rZbGYDGy1Ng>
- ❑ **The Full Story** – A story of a young adult with diagnosed depression that highlights the important message that a mental illness is just something you are dealing with and that it does not define your character. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/NQDoCzw1Ark>
- ❑ **The Journey** – A film that takes viewers on a road trip, showing the metaphorical journey of one youth's experience in which he opens up to friends about his mental illness and receives support. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/mYaKnDVv1mw>
- ❑ **The Language of Healing** – First generation college students express some of the barriers they faced when accessing mental health services and encourage young people to seek support through the healing power of community. Language: English and various languages with English captions. <https://youtu.be/ULuMmtXdOVU>
- ❑ **This Is Me** – A student's story about how life isn't always what it looks like on social media and how opening up to friends about mental health challenges can be uplifting. Language: English. <https://youtu.be/MJqYhNVi034>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What positive messages are the filmmakers wanting to share about living with mental health challenges? How do youth living with mental health challenges want to be understood by other people?
2. What negative messages about living with mental health challenges are the filmmakers trying to directly confront and change? What are some examples of stigma that youth with mental health challenges experience and worry about having to face?
3. What examples did the young people living with mental health issues give of finding help and hope? What did you learn about the impact on them when they started sharing what it's like to live with mental illness and were met with acceptance and support by the people in their lives?
4. In what ways can families support one another through mental health struggles? How can a person's family and cultural background affect their feelings and beliefs about mental health and whether or not to seek help? Where can a young person turn if their family doesn't offer them the support they need?
5. Why do you think there is so much silence and stigma around mental health? What can each of us do to break the silence and end mental health stigma?
6. What are some warning signs that someone might be thinking about suicide? What can we do to help if we are worried about a friend or family member? What are some ways you can get help if you are the one who is struggling with feelings of hopelessness?