HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT
Youth Mental Illness

HOW CAN WE TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

Reframe Your Questions: If *How are you feeling?* or *What’s going on in your mind?* aren't getting a response, try asking how their body is feeling. Rephrasing questions differently -- like asking about body and mind -- can sometimes help young people to better verbalize and share their feelings.

Create a Routine: Being open about feelings and making space for regular check-ins helps them become part of your routine. Maybe you start or end each school day with a quick conversation about how you're feeling.

Be Creative: In trying to spark conversation with young people about how they’re feeling, sometimes you need to think outside the box. For example, try asking what emoji or ice cream flavor they are feeling like today. If someone says "rocky road," it might be a good idea to follow up with a deeper conversation.

Be Patient: It is sometimes hard for people who have anxiety and depression (whether they’ve been diagnosed or not) to put how they are feeling into words. Maybe they can't express their feelings because they don't have the words to convey how they're feeling. Remember that putting feelings into words is harder for people with mental health struggles. Your patience and encouragement will go a long way in helping them feel supported.

WHAT CAN WE ADVOCATE FOR?

Youth Voice: Create space for young people to share their needs/feelings and BELIEVE what they tell you. Validate their feelings. Don’t disregard them, listen to them, trust them and believe them.

BIPOC Support: Advocate for mental health professionals that look like BIPOC youth, live in the same community and are familiar with the struggles they are facing.

Community Training: Advocate for mental health training for police officers, teachers, guidance counselors, public servants and others so they know how to respond to mental health crises.

Normalize Mental Health Breaks: Champion the idea of mental health rest days, both in schools and in the workplace. Stop glamorizing the grind -- rest is important!

RESPONSE TO HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

"It's nice to not feel alone and know that there are supporters around me -- hiding in plain sight."

"This made me sad for my friends and family who have struggled through mental health issues. After this, I'm going to call them and tell them I love and care about them."

"Definitely revived my passion to help other parents."