


Community Building—Outreach



Not One More: A Mission to Eliminate Youth Suicide

Overview

Helping others is an important component of improving mental health. Research has shown that actions of service not only benefit recipients but better the well-being of those partaking in the actions. Through giving, we receive overwhelming joy to see the impact we have on others, and the good that spreads throughout our community. However, willingness to seek out opportunities to volunteer and serve is a skill that is unique to each person and must be developed.

In *Community Building – Outreach*, activities guide students towards discovering their preferred method of volunteering while teaching them to be upstanding, compassionate members of society. Finally, this pamphlet explores ways to spread mental health education beyond the confines of your school.

Objectives

- Feelings of community increase as student awareness of one another heightens
- Helping others becomes a habit
- Mental health education and suicide awareness spreads beyond the confines of the school
- Students find purpose in volunteering

Venue:

- Classroom Activities
- Around the School
- In the Community

Estimated Cost:

- Art Supplies
- Fabric

Activities:

- Making Comfort Items for Others
- Murals
- Daily Kindness Initiatives
- Posters

“We are not put on this earth for ourselves, but are placed here for each other. If you are there always for others, then in time of need, someone will be there for you.”

-Jeff Warner



Making Comfort Items for Others

Calling all Home Ec Teachers!! Teach your students to sew through “Making Comfort Items for Others”!

What Is It?

In “Making Comfort Items for Others”, students make pillows, blankets, and other calming objects that help soothe during mentally distressing times. In order to do this, they receive cloth, stuffing, scissors, and a guide (guides are found in the Resources section of this pamphlet). After the comfort items are made, they are passed out to members of the community. Feel free to give the articles to anyone, the main idea of this activity is to strengthen bonds with one’s neighbors.

Why It Is Effective!

Comfort items are invaluable assets to one’s Crisis Response Plan. They provide a sense of safety and have a soothing, familiar component that give stability during periods of anguish. Comfort Items also act as a medium to direct negative emotions such as anger and sadness upon.

Reaching out to give the objects to members of the community is wonderful for cultivating relationships. According to South University, the process of choosing, making, and giving a gift is beneficial to one’s emotional well-being. Gifts help us connect with our neighbors and strengthen our relationships by sending a clear sign that says “I care for you.” Since the Comfort Items are handmade, the sentiment behind this message is strengthened. The time and dedication students put into the Comfort Items demonstrate to the recipient that they are cared for and appreciated.

Everyone has their favored method of volunteering, and it often varies from person to person. Despite this variation, volunteering in which the participant enjoys the work provides a sense of belonging. Enjoyable service also supplies a sense of purpose. When preventing suicidal ideation, it is imperative to have a drive and dedication that acts as a source of inspiration and results in positive self identity.



Take Action

Before doing the activity, the leader should decide the specific items that will be created. They then should acquire scissors, fabric, and whatever other materials they may need. During the allotted time, guide the group through making the objects, explain their importance, and ensure safety. Finally, decide who will receive the comfort items!

Alternative Activities

Change the Comfort Items to be more budget-friendly. If fabric and stuffing are out of the price range, make cards or Happiness Jars!

Want a challenge? Try making squishies, stuffed animals, or stress toys as comfort items! The possibilities expand far beyond the scope of just pillows and blankets.

Take a field trip! To get a more personal experience when gifting the Comfort Items, take those that made the items to the place they will be gifted.



Murals

What Is It?

The finished product of the activity “Murals” is just that: a mural! As this is a mental health improvement-based program, murals are ideally based around a related topic. Painted on walls, doors, or wherever else murals are found, this art serves as a constant reminder of the importance of mental health. Keep in mind, this is a large undertaking and will require many different skill sets from many different people.

Take Action

Leaders are in charge of the following:

- Finding people to develop the idea for the mural
- Finding people to sketch the idea for the mural
- Getting a location for the mural, the mural sketch, and the day of making the mural approved by administration and properly coordinated
- Enlisting the help of those that will make the mural
- Instructing others during the process of making the mural, and offering help when needed

Location, Location, Location...

Murals don't have to be made within the school. Go out and make a mural in your community! (Make sure to get permission from land owners, city council, and anyone else before painting, though)

Why It Is Effective!

The prominence and permanence of a mural exists as a lasting reminder of efforts made towards bettering mental health.

Although the mural serves a purpose long after it is created, the process of making the art is also included in efforts to better mental health. The work that must be done to create a mural requires many different people.

Working together provides an opportunity for people to become familiar and form relationships with one another. This then grows individual support systems and a feeling of community.

Finally, artistic expression is one of the most effective ways to convey feelings and alleviate stress.





Posters

What Is It?

Similar to “Murals” the end goal of “Posters” is pretty self-explanatory: make a poster! What do you want people to know about mental health education? Tell your school through a poster!

This is the participants’ time to further their

education of mental health and teen suicide. If approved by teachers and administration, posters could be hung around the school!

Why It Is Effective!

Posters are a classic form of communication around schools. With only a quick glance at one, a clear message is communicated. This can provide help or hope to someone that may only see it in passing. Furthermore, people of any and all skillsets are capable of making posters, all they need is an idea. Finally, artistic expression is one of the best ways to alleviate stress and communicate difficult messages, such as those involved with teen suicide prevention.

Take Action

In order to do “Posters”, one must:

- Determine how many posters will be made
- Determine who will make the posters
- Acquire materials (posterboard, markers, pencils, etc.) to make posters
- Determine the day during which posters will be made
- Explain the activity, carry out the activity, and ensure safety during the activity

REMEMBER: Have administration approve of the content on each poster and approve that the posters may be hung on the walls

Be a Part of the Community!

Don’t be afraid to take these posters beyond your school walls. Remember that the entire community can benefit from mental health improvement/suicide prevention reminders! It is encouraged that extra posters be made and put up around the community.



Daily Kindness Initiatives

What Is It?

Daily Kindness Initiatives are challenges proposed by either faculty or teachers to their students. For whatever duration of time the administrator wants to do this activity, students are tasked with completing kindness-related task. It is up to the administrator to decide whether students come up with their own initiatives or are given them. The goal of Daily Kindness Initiatives is to excite students about being thoughtful, compassionate members of society.

Why It Is Effective!

Daily Kindness Initiatives are an exercise in noticing and caring for others. When someone sees that their words and actions have positive effects on others, they are likely to continue acting in that manner.

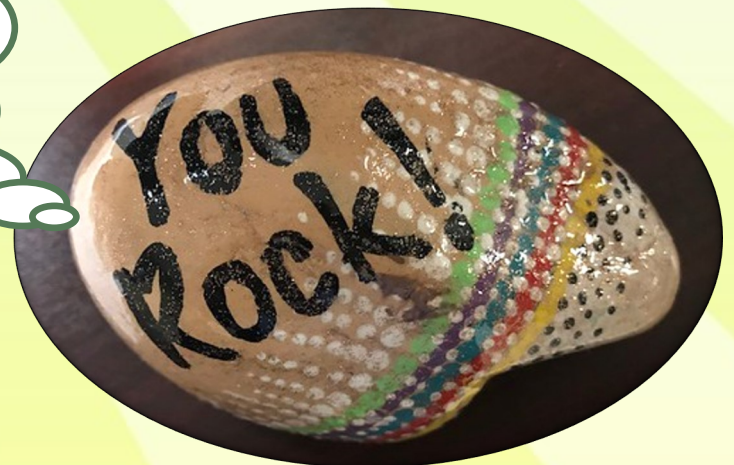
The wonderful thing about Daily Kindness Initiatives are that they're contagious. Think about someone holding the door for you. That makes you feel good and appreciated, so now you want to do something nice for someone else. It's very likely that they now want to be kind to another person. This results in another action, and another, and soon the butterfly effect has taken place. Overall,

Take Action

Decide whether the students will pick their own initiatives or if they will be given initiatives. Explain the activity, and communicate the initiative.

Optional: During any discussion time, ask students to explain some details of the completion of their initiative (who they did it to, what they did, where it happened).

If rocks could talk I'd say, "Try Daily Kindness Initiatives over Announcements!"



Get Involved!

Incentivize students! If you find difficulty in getting students to complete Daily Kindness Initiatives, hold a drawing or award prizes to those that complete an initiative.

Make it a competition! Daily Kindness Initiatives could also be made into a competition between teachers and students. Whichever group has completed the most initiatives by the end of the designated time period receives a prize. (ex: Pizza Party!)



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- Bennett C.

IMPORTANT

- THIS IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR THERAPY OR PROFESSIONAL HELP. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE LISTED TO PROVIDE EASY-TO-ACCESS RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED TO LESSON FEELINGS OF ANXIETY. TRAUMA SHOULD NOT BE PROCESSED IN A CLASSROOM SETTING. PLEASE SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU ARE SUSPECTED OF HAVING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, PTSD, OR OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES.
- To get a list of overall guidelines to follow when doing the activities in the pamphlets please reference the “Safety” page in the Implementation Packet.





Resources

How to make Comfort Items:

<https://www.instructables.com/DIY-No-Sew-Pillow/>

<https://www.instructables.com/No-Sew-Fleece-Blanket-1/>

Ideas for Daily Kindness Initiatives:

<https://www.virtuesforlife.com/100-ways-to-be-kinder/>

Reasons to Help Others:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/teen-angst/201701/achieving-happiness-helping-others>

Read more about the importance of comfort items and other peoples' experience with mental health and comfort items:

<https://themighty.com/2018/06/helpful-items-comforting-having-suicidal-thoughts/>

What murals do for the community:

<https://www.productcare.org/about/blog/importance-of-community-murals/>

Art's impact on stress and mental health:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/how-arts-can-help-improve-your-mental-health>

"The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers."

-Juliette Gordon Low