

Say It Out Loud

Discussion Group Facilitation Guide



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#sayitoutloud

 **nami**
National Alliance on Mental Illness



Say it Out Loud—Discussion Group Guide

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NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope for all of those in need.

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Overview

Thank you for taking the first step in raising mental health awareness with the youth that you work with. Your commitment to starting a dialogue about mental health makes a difference as we raise awareness and make it okay to talk about. This guide will provide you with everything you need to lead a successful group discussion with the youth group!

Who are We?

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope for everyone. To learn more about NAMI, visit www.nami.org.

Background Information

Mental health issues are common among youth. 50 percent of lifetime cases of mental health conditions begin by age 14, with 75 percent emerging by age 24. 1 in 5 teens will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives. Yet, more than half of youth experiencing a mental health condition are not getting services or supports. Concern about negative perceptions and fear are major factors in youth not seeking help.

Raising awareness by sharing information and starting conversations about mental health are key in reducing these perceptions and increasing the likelihood that teens will seek mental health services and supports when they need them. This guide and the facilitated presentation with it include everything you need to fully prepare for leading a discussion with teens about mental health.

For this project, targeted for 14-18 year olds, we worked with a film maker in developing a short film, which runs about 5 minutes, that features the 10 common warning signs of mental health conditions and three youth talking about living with a mental health condition and why it is important to talk about it. The film is a terrific way to jump start a conversation with teens and, if they are experiencing a mental health condition or see the signs in a friend, to encourage them to not be afraid to talk about it and to **Say it Out Loud**.

The warning signs in the film were developed by Peter Jensen, M.D. and published in *The Journal of Pediatrics*. (Jensen, Peter, et. al. (October 24, 2011). *Overlooked and Underserved: 'Action Signs' for Identifying Children with Unmet Mental Health Needs*. Pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/21/peds.2009-0367. Accessed August 14, 2014.)

Getting Started

Where Should I Start?

This guide walks you through the steps for leading a successful discussion with youth about mental health. The USB drive that you received contains everything you need for a successful discussion, including the following:

- An informational presentation designed for the facilitator to gain important information about mental health conditions before beginning a discussion with youth.
- This guide that provides recommendations on leading the group discussion and questions to help break the ice in talking with youth.
- A short film to share with youth to get a conversation started about mental health.
- Fact sheets to share with youth and others who may be interested.

Let's get started! Begin by watching the educational presentation titled *Presentation for Facilitators* to get prepared for your discussion group and then come back to this guide for the next steps.

Preparing for Discussion

Before leading the *Say it Out Loud* youth discussion group, here are things you can do to prepare and to help ensure that it is a success:

- Read this guide in its entirety. It gives you everything you need to know to be prepared.
- Have a conversation with your organization about the discussion you will be having with youth. Determine next steps if youth seek help or support.
- Review the resource sheet attached to this guide. The resources listed provide valuable information for youth and their families about services and supports available in the community.
- Set the discussion agenda. Your youth group discussion should be no more than an hour and an agenda helps you to stay on time and topic. A sample agenda is included at the end of this guide.
- Print the sheet of famous people living with mental health conditions found at the end of the guide. This will be helpful for your group discussion.
- View the short film designed to get the conversation started with teens. Have the film loaded onto a computer or TV that you will be using for the group discussion. The film can be found on the USB drive. Test your connection and equipment before you hold the group discussion to be sure that everything goes smoothly on the day of your discussion.

Facilitating Discussion Groups

Now that you've watched the presentation and the film and have everything ready, it's time to lead the youth in a facilitated discussion. Although we went through some of these tips in the presentation, it helps to have the tips in front of you during the discussion.

Remember to always treat the youth in the discussion with respect. Listen to what they have to say. For some, this may be the first time they have talked about mental health and it may be a bit awkward for them. That's okay. They are likely stepping out of their comfort zones, which is not always easy.

Discussion ground rules. Before showing the short film, lay some ground rules. We suggest the following:

- Everyone gets a chance to talk.
- Do not talk over each other—only one person should talk at a time.
- Personal attacks, making fun of comments shared by others or negative comments are not allowed.
- This is a safe place to share information, but there are certain things that should not and will not be kept secret including information about serious self-harm. If this comes up, we will have a private conversation and it will require me to involve another safe adult to protect you.

Say it Out Loud Short Film

After covering the discussion ground rules, you should show the *Say it Out Loud* film. The film covers the ten common warning signs of mental health conditions and why speaking up is important. You can access the film on the USB drive. You should have this already loaded on the computer that you will be using during the discussion so that you can play the film after your short introduction and sharing of the ground rules.

The film consists of two parts:

- First is a short visual depiction of the ten common warning signs of a mental health condition. This part of the film shows youth what the warning signs might actually look like in someone experiencing them.
- The second part features three youth talking about their personal experiences living with mental health conditions—what it felt like, how they got help and why it's important to speak up about them.

Introduce the film by telling the youth what they are going to see and reminding them that there will be a discussion afterwards. Here is what you might say:

Thanks for being here today. I'm looking forward to talking with you about mental health and why it's important. Before we start our conversation, I'm going to show you this short film showing the ten common warning signs of a mental health condition and why speaking up about experiencing these signs is important. The warning signs show visually the reality of what many youth with mental health conditions experience. You will then see three youth who have experienced these signs and now lead happy and full lives. They are great examples of how recognizing the warning signs and getting help can positively impact your life.

Discussion Questions

After you have shown the film, you should start a discussion with the group. Below is a list of discussion questions that will help get the conversation going. Feel free to use all or some of these or to come up with your own questions.

1. What are your general reactions to what you just saw?
2. What did you think about the warning signs? Were there any that surprised you?
3. What would be your response to seeing these signs in a friend or family member?
4. Do you think that helping someone experiencing these signs can help both of you? If so, how?
5. How can we make it easier to talk about mental health?
6. What information do you think is important for adults to know about youth who may be experiencing a mental health condition?
7. How can we get more youth involved in talking about mental health?
8. Can you name anyone famous—like celebrities, athletes, historical figures—who live with mental health conditions?
 - a. After they answer, hold up attached picture of celebrities to show them that the number is higher than they might think.

Thank the youth for participating in this discussion and ask if there are any final thoughts. Pass out the fact sheets included on the USB drive. Assure them that you and other trusted adults in your organization are there if they need to talk and that help is available if they or someone they know is experiencing the signs of a mental health condition.

Tip: It may take a while for the youth to warm up to the idea of talking about mental health. Do not be discouraged if you do not have full participation during your discussion. The youth are listening and are gaining valuable knowledge whether they participate or not.

After the Discussion

Congratulations!

You have just done your part to raise awareness about mental health conditions and inform youth about the options available to them should they need it. You have made a difference in the lives of the youth affiliated with your organization and should feel good about your contribution. Congratulations on a job well done!

One-on-One Conversations about Mental Health Conditions, Drug and Alcohol Use or Suicide

You may find that after the facilitated discussion, one or more of the youth want to talk to you. Whether they approached you individually or you noticed a teen in the discussion that seemed exceptionally uncomfortable or you just got a feeling about, consider engaging that youth in a private conversation.

Remember, if a youth is coming to you, it means that they trust you and may need your help. Be sure to listen to what the youth has to say and reaffirm his or her feelings. Let them know that you are there to help and to connect them with services and supports in their community.

Use one of the following plans to determine the proper steps to take to manage the situation:

If you've talked to the teen and he or she is experiencing signs of a mental health condition:

1. Remind the youth that you are there for them and are happy to help.
2. Inform the youth that there is help available—therapists, psychiatrists and pediatricians are all there to help them feel better.
3. Have the child identify one safe adult that you can reach out to. If they are hesitant, say “I know you’re unsure, but trust me. It’s the right thing to do at this time. It can really help.” It is important to get another adult involved as early on in the process as possible and there are professionals out there that understand what you are going through and how best to help. Ask the teen if you can share the information with their parent or caregiver. If they say no, then ask for another trusted adult who can help, perhaps another adult family member, a teacher, a pastor, a coach or someone else. Let them know it is important to seek help because without help the condition can get worse.

4. Reach out to the safe adult identified by the teen and share what you've heard and offer suggestions on where to turn—a therapist in the community, pediatrician, school counselor, etc.

5. Offer the teen support. Remind them that they are not alone and that help is available.

If a teen shares that he or she is experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors:

1. **Take any talk of suicide seriously.** If a teen approaches you and shares suicidal thoughts, let the teen know that you are glad they have shared this information and reassure him or her that you can help and he or she is not alone.
2. **Provide reassurance.** Let the teen know that there is help available and that you and others care and want to help.
3. **Use your judgment.** If the teen has suicidal thoughts, a specific suicide plan and seems intent on ending his or her life, get help immediately by calling 911 or the National Suicide Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK (8255).
4. **Contact a parent or other trusted adult.** If a teen shares suicidal thoughts with you, let him or her know that you cannot keep that a secret and that you need to contact a parent or trusted adult and ask who you should reach out to. Wait with the teen until the trusted adult arrives. Do not leave a teen who may be suicidal alone.
5. **Share the resource sheet.** When the trusted adult arrives, share the resource list and recommend that they immediately seek mental health care for the teen.
6. **Share information about the encounter with others and document it.** Let others within your organization know that you had that conversation with a member of the youth group and document how you handled it.

You may also want to work with your organization to determine protocol in these types of situations before you begin your discussion. It is possible that a system is already in place to address these issues.

Remember, if anyone is in imminent danger of harm, call 911.

For a teen perspective on suicide and how to talk to a teen who may be suicidal, watch this excellent three minute clip from the Mayo Clinic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BByqa7bhto>.

Tip: Always trust your gut. If you have a strong feeling telling you to respond in a certain way to the situation, do it. You have the knowledge and awareness to make the right decision. Trust yourself.

More Information

NAMI is an important resource for your organization. NAMI has online resources and information so please visit our [website](#) to learn about how you can get involved with NAMI in your community or to find out more about mental health conditions and supporting youth. You can connect with NAMI in your community by visiting www.nami.org/local.

NAMI has many programs to educate and support school personnel, families and youth. For more information about NAMI's education programs please visit our [Education, Training and Peer Support Center](#).

Here is a listing of some of the NAMI programs delivered by NAMI members and leaders that may be in your community:

NAMI Ending the Silence is an educational presentation for high school students designed to teach them about the signs of a mental health condition, how to help a friend and more.

NAMI Parents and Teachers as Allies helps school professionals identify the warning signs of a mental health condition and provides tips for connecting students to supports in the community.

NAMI Basics is designed for parents and caregivers of children and teen with a mental health condition and helps to identify strategies for caring for a loved one.

NAMI Family-to-Family provides mental health education and strategies for caregivers and families with loved ones living with a mental health condition. The focus of this program is primarily adults.

NAMI Homefront helps families of service members understand their loved one's mental health condition and adjust to the differences at home.

There are many other advantages to connecting to NAMI in your community, including the following:

- Many NAMI organizations operate information and referral lines;
- Many NAMI organizations hold an annual NAMI Walk in the community;
- NAMI organizations provide support groups for families and many also hold groups for youth;
- Many NAMI organizations have other programs targeting teens, siblings and families of children and youth living with a mental health condition; and
- NAMI organizations are resourceful and may be able to help guide you or families that you work with to the mental health services and supports needed.

Resource List

Connect with NAMI in Your Community

NAMI is made up of youth and adults living with mental health conditions and their families. Your local NAMI can be a source of information, programs and support designed for youth and their families. You can find your local NAMI at www.nami.org/local.

Find Resources and a Mental Health Professional in Your Community

The following sources can help you find mental health professionals in your community:

- **NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates** – Speaking with NAMI can be an important way to exchange information about mental health professionals in your local community.
- **The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** – SAMHSA has an online database of mental health professionals. Visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov. SAMHSA also has many resources for youth and families at www.samhsa.gov/children.
- **Ask your doctor's office or health clinic** – A primary care physician, pediatrician or professional in a health clinic in your community can be a referral resource for a mental health specialist or therapist in your area.
- **Health Insurance Provider** – If you have health insurance coverage, contact your insurance company for a list of mental health care providers included in your insurance plan.
- **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)** – The AACAP website includes the *Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist Finder* so that you can search for a child and adolescent psychiatrist in your city and state. Visit www.aacap.org.
- **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** – NASW has an online directory of clinical social workers. Visit www.socialworkers.org and click on Resources.
- **American Psychological Association (APA)** – The APA can refer you to local psychologists. On the APA website, visit the psychology health center and on the left side of the webpage, click on *Find a Psychologist*. Visit www.apa.org.
- **High School Counselors** – The high school counselors may also be able to refer you to a mental health professional in your community.

Remember that you are not alone. Mental health conditions impact millions of Americans and help is available in your community. Youth can help to keep their lives on track by connecting with services and supports in your community.

Sample Agenda

Purpose of Discussion and Ground Rules—5 minutes

Thanks for being here today. I'm looking forward to talking with you about mental health and why it's important. Before we start our conversation, I'm going to show you this short film showing the ten common warning signs of a mental health condition and why speaking up about experiencing these signs is important. The warning signs show visually the reality of what many youth with mental health conditions experience. You will then see three youth who have experienced these signs and now lead happy and full lives. They are great examples of how recognizing the warning signs and getting help can positively impact your life. Here are some ground rules:

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Short Film—5 minutes

Discussion—45 minutes

1. What are your general reactions to what you just saw?
2. What did you think about the warning signs? Were there any that surprised you?
3. What would be your response to seeing these signs in a friend or family member?
4. Do you think that helping someone experiencing these signs can help both of you? How?
5. How can we make it easier to talk about mental health?
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7. How can we get more youth involved in talking about mental health?
8. Can you name anyone famous—like celebrities, athletes, historical figures—who live with mental health conditions?
 - a. After they answer, hold up attached picture of celebrities to show them that the number is higher than they might think.

Wrap Up—5 minutes

Thank you so much for participating today. Please do not hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions. Remember that you are not alone and help is available if you only Say it Out Loud.



Say it Out Loud.