

# Digital Stories for Change: Level III

## Project Summary Pages

### **The Purpose of This Project:**

The purpose of this project is to help teenagers and even adults realize that there is no need to have shame, close yourself off, or even suffer in silence because of your mental health. This project is to help people realize that they are not alone. There are at least one hundred other people feeling the exact same thing that you are and that it's ok to talk about your feelings. I want to help people identify their emotions and to help guide them to a better place. There should be no shame in talking about your feelings and that opening up doesn't make you weak. I also want people to realize that they may think that their problems or past trauma may not be a big issue or may not seem "as important" as what other people are going through, but if it is important to you then it is important to other people as well. People will take time to listen to you. Your feelings are valid and you are important. You may feel like you are all alone and that you are beyond help, but trust me there are so many people ready to listen and take care of you. I want people to realize that they are valid and they are important. Everyone should start making their mental health and wellbeing a priority, instead of suffering in silence and pretending that everything is ok.

I want to show people the consequences of suffering from a mental illness and how it can alter your life in unimaginable ways. If you broke your leg or came down with pneumonia, you wouldn't let it go untreated however teenagers these days ignore mental health problems thinking they will just "snap out of it," or that it is something to be ashamed of. That kind of thinking prevents people from getting the help they need and can be the beginning of falling down a very dark deep and dark hole (stated the American Psychological Association). It is vital that America is made aware of the effects of mental illness and how it can so quickly consume your entire life. With this knowledge not only will the student body be better off but the community and families will be too.

### **The Relationship to Family and Consumer Sciences and Related Careers:**

Understanding and working through your mental health can be related to FCS in so many different ways. Mental health is connected to every aspect of our lives. In today's day in age, however, it is most commonly identified and associated with teenagers middle schoolers, and high schoolers. Therefore my project relates best to the student body and

managing anxiety and stress levels while balancing a social life and whatever else is going on in people's lives. In FCS classes we learn about health and wellness and mental health is a big part of that. Learning to take time to care for yourself is important but it's even more important to learn how to be in tune with your body and what when you need to take a step back and what you need to do in order to be in a better mindset. Also, there are many different careers that you can go into that are related to mental health and cognitive improvement.

When students enroll in courses that model the importance of mental health and wellness they are truly learning how to take care of and nurture their minds and health. They learn about the many aspects of taking care of yourself and knowing what you need to be ok. You learn about how to be sensitive about other people's mental health and how to adapt and help people get better instead of tearing people down. You also learn different techniques on how to take care of yourself and the best ways to do that. Teachers make a point to make sure we know how to identify when we need to take care of ourselves and also how to be sensitive and caring towards others so that they can start to do better too.

### **Relevant Research**

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America otherwise known as the ADAA is an organization in which they strive to find ways to help find cures for depression and anxiety. Anxiety and depression are common mental health issues in the United States. The World Health Organization estimates that depression and anxiety cost the global economy \$1 trillion per year in lost revenue and resources. They also strive to find cures to related conditions through education, practice, and research. The organization has a community of over 1,500 mental health professionals, many of whom contribute actively to research, education, and training.

There are five very important but simple steps that you can take to achieve good mental health. The first step is to build a sense of belonging and self-worth. You can achieve this by keeping a journal and reflecting on all of your achievements of the day. Also remembering to celebrate the little successes and victories is really important. The second step is to connect with other people. Achieving this is really easy and it can take a lot to achieve especially when you are in the depth of a depressive episode, but once you do reconnect with people you will feel such a sense of belonging that any overthinking that you would have done and any scenarios that you would have made up in your mind will be washed away and you will feel so amazing and rejuvenated afterward. Spending lots of time with family or people who make you feel good is a great way to

achieve this too. The third step is to get outside and get exercise with fresh air. Getting outside and getting your blood pumping is a great way to get endorphins so spread throughout your brain making you feel really great. Also, exercise can help you to feel productive and also accomplished. The fourth step is to give to others. Now it's important to not mistake this for feeling like you need to prove your friendship to others by buying them gifts. This just simply means that if you notice one of your friends is having a particularly hard time getting them a little something can help them to feel better in the moment and it may also help you to feel better too. Bringing joy to others is a huge premise to bringing joy to yourself. The final step is to practice mindfulness and be present in the moment. Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body, and the world around you.

### **Background Information**

I chose this approach for my project for many reasons. The first one is that the steps provided above are achievable and also realistic to complete. I plan to use teenage and adult actors to represent how the effects of poor mental health can affect you throughout the rest of your life and then compare how talking and working through your mental health and trauma can help to benefit your life and help you to succeed. There are too many instances where people are told to put aside their feelings, or that their mental health doesn't matter.

### **Awareness Goal**

I want to bring awareness and influence as many minds as possible into acknowledging that mental health is just as important as physical health. I plan to use the example that if you had a broken leg you would ideally rest and let it heal. Therefore if your mental health is in a bad place and you can acknowledge that you are not ok then you should put aside the time to re-set and get better instead of pushing through and making your injury worse. I believe that students and adults should be aware of the negative side effects of not dealing with your mental health compared to the beneficial facts of how healing and having good mental health is a part of setting yourself up for success.