

**TOGETHER WE CAN**  
Heal. Help. Hope.

# MENTAL HEALTH AMBASSADORS

Peer Storytelling as a Suicide Prevention Intervention




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## COLLEGE MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health Factors Experienced (past 12 months)

felt overwhelmed	87.0%
felt exhausted (not from PA)	84.3%
felt very sad	67.5%
felt overwhelming anxiety	62.5%
felt very lonely	62.3%
felt things were hopeless	49.3%
felt overwhelming anger	40.6%
felt so depressed it was difficult to function	40.8%

American College Health Association, 2019




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## TOGETHER WE CAN

- SAMHSA Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant
- Impact mental health culture
  - Decrease barriers to care, including negative beliefs about mental health disorders
  - Enhance access to mental health and substance use services
- Increase knowledge
  - Suicide risk
  - Campus resources
  - Referral skills





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## WHY STORYTELLING?

- Student testimonials
  - Effective method of suicide prevention
  - Normalizes help-seeking
- Psychoeducation
  - Effective intervention in decreasing stigma
  - Increases knowledge related to mental health



February 12th  
4 PM  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM  
What's your story?

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Giroux & Greiss, 2019

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## RECRUITMENT

- Marketing
  - Mental Health Council
  - Leadership and Service Center
- Two rounds in fall 2019
- An "ideal" Ambassador:
  - Lived experience
  - Public speaking
  - Passionate about advocacy



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## TRAINING

Content	Storytelling	Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicide Prevention</li> <li>• Campus Connect</li> <li>• Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper</li> <li>• Kognito virtual bystander</li> <li>• intervention roleplay</li> <li>• Mental Health First Aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public speaking</li> <li>• Personal narrative</li> <li>• Appropriate disclosure</li> <li>• Safe messaging</li> <li>• Focus on hope</li> <li>• Self-compassion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus Resources</li> <li>• Peer feedback</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> <li>• Clarity of purpose</li> </ul>

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### IMPLEMENTATION & OBSTACLES

- Presentations by invitation
  - Student groups
  - Faculty/staff groups
  - Academic courses
- Campus closes March 2020
  - No in-person events
  - No student organizations
  - Multiple time zones
  - Uncertainty of summer/fall
  - Departmental COVID response
- Pivot to social media
  - Introductions
  - Resources
  - Coping skills
  - Mental Health Mondays
  - Mini-storytelling Mondays
  - Takeover Tuesdays



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### RETURN TO CAMPUS

- Uncertainty
  - Loss of tradition and routine
- Mitigation strategies
- Communication
  - Zoom fatigue
  - Trust
  - Vulnerability
- Role of the MH Ambassador

**Campus Safety Status**

**Alert Level: New Normal**

The university is currently fully open under 'new normal' conditions with primary risk mitigation measures in effect.



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### HOW DID IT GO YESTERDAY?

Really well!

It was awesome to test out the new version of my story.

I had [a student leader] email me after that he was so moved, he made a triage appointment for himself!

Thanks for checking in ❤️



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### WHY MHA?

"I want to be one of those guys that's like, 'Oh, he knows a lot about mental health. If you have any questions, go to him or if you want someone just to talk to, he's a great guy to talk to.'"



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### NOW WHAT?

- Presentation requests
- Increasing autonomy
  - Outreach Chair
  - Social Media Team
- Expansion of visibility
  - TikTok
  - Fall 2021 recruitment



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**THANKS!**

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