



TEENS ARE ALRIGHT

Teens Talk to Teens

About Mental Health

Here's what we want you to know,
what has helped us, and what
we need adults to understand...



we are all
in this
TOGETHER

FLX TEENS ARE ALRIGHT

The FLX Teens Are Alright Project brought together a team of 15 teenagers who led the creation and development of these materials. Youth of different races, ethnicities and gender orientations made up the team, and were from the counties of Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne and Wyoming. The FLX Teens Are Alright initiative aims to improve mental health literacy for middle- and high-school aged youth in the Finger Lakes (FLX) Region of New York.

The initiative was a partnership between Common Ground Health, Monroe County Library System, Pioneer Library System and the Rochester Regional Library Council. Together, youth worked with a team of graphic design professors and students from the Rochester Institute of Technology to design the resources. A Young Adult Librarian from Monroe County also provided support for the written content of the materials. Funding for this initiative was provided by the Network of the National Library of Medicine.

To learn more, visit healthikids.org/flxteensarealright

What is Mental Health Literacy?

Understanding how to nurture and maintain good mental health.
Understanding mental disorders, their symptoms, and their treatments.
Decreasing Stigma. Understanding how to find and get help effectively.

Mental health literacy is important! Whether you struggle with mental health challenges or not, it's important to know how you can take care of yourself and support your peers. Read on to learn more from your peers about mental health, and talk to your librarian about where and how to find more information.



It's a
real thing.



**MENTAL ILLNESS
IS ALL IN YOUR HEAD.**

Like, yeah...
that's the whole point

You're struggling with anxiety and depression, and people around you act like you can just think your way out of it or ignore it. But that's not true. It's a real thing **that needs to be treated** – and it's OK to feel crappy about it.

TAKE THE GENDER OUT OF EMOTION

Anxiety and depression are not a guy thing or a girl thing, a trans thing or a cis thing, a gay thing or a straight thing. All of us are people, and all of us have emotions, both good and bad. **Own your emotions.**



Know that showing your emotions isn't a weakness, and suppressing them does not make you "strong."

You are strong for being your own real you and surviving on this planet.

Life is not always cupcakes and rainbows, so don't feel like you need to wear a smile every day. **Some days suck**, and anyone who tells you otherwise is not living in the real world. If you believe your feelings are wrong, you'll get more stressed.

TOXIC
POSITIVITY IS
INVALIDATING

Don't let someone else's story about their mental state diminish your own. **It's okay to not be okay** in whatever form that takes – and then get help from there. **You are doing your best day to day.**

You get good grades at school, have friends, play a sport or instrument, and seem to be on top of everything. **At least, that's what others see.** But in the privacy of your home you can become a whole different person. Know this about yourself and others, and check in with peers to see how we are really doing. Check in with yourself, too.

You might 
NOT understand
 what's going on at home

If your home life does not feel like a safe space, **check in with a trusted adult** outside of your home. A trusted adult can be a library employee, school counselor, teacher, a pastor, a friend, relative, coach, or any other adult you trust to have your best interest at heart. Not sure where to start?

Ask a peer or a friend to recommend someone.

The happy and the sad, the calm and the anxious, the content and the depressed. These are some emotional pieces that can make up a person -- even in the same hour. Get to know the whole person, and let others know the whole you. **Tell people how you feel and what you need.** Find a teen who you can share feelings with, and vice versa.

**THESE ARE
THE PIECES
OF ME**  

Social anxiety doesn't mean

I

If someone is struggling mentally, don't call them out on it, blow them off, or make jokes about mental health (not funny). Ask what's going on or how you can help. And if you're the one feeling attacked or invisible, confide in a friend or someone who will listen. People

don't

often act out of fear or a lack of understanding, but that doesn't make their actions OK. Visit <https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/> to learn more about the basics of teen mental health, and

want

to be

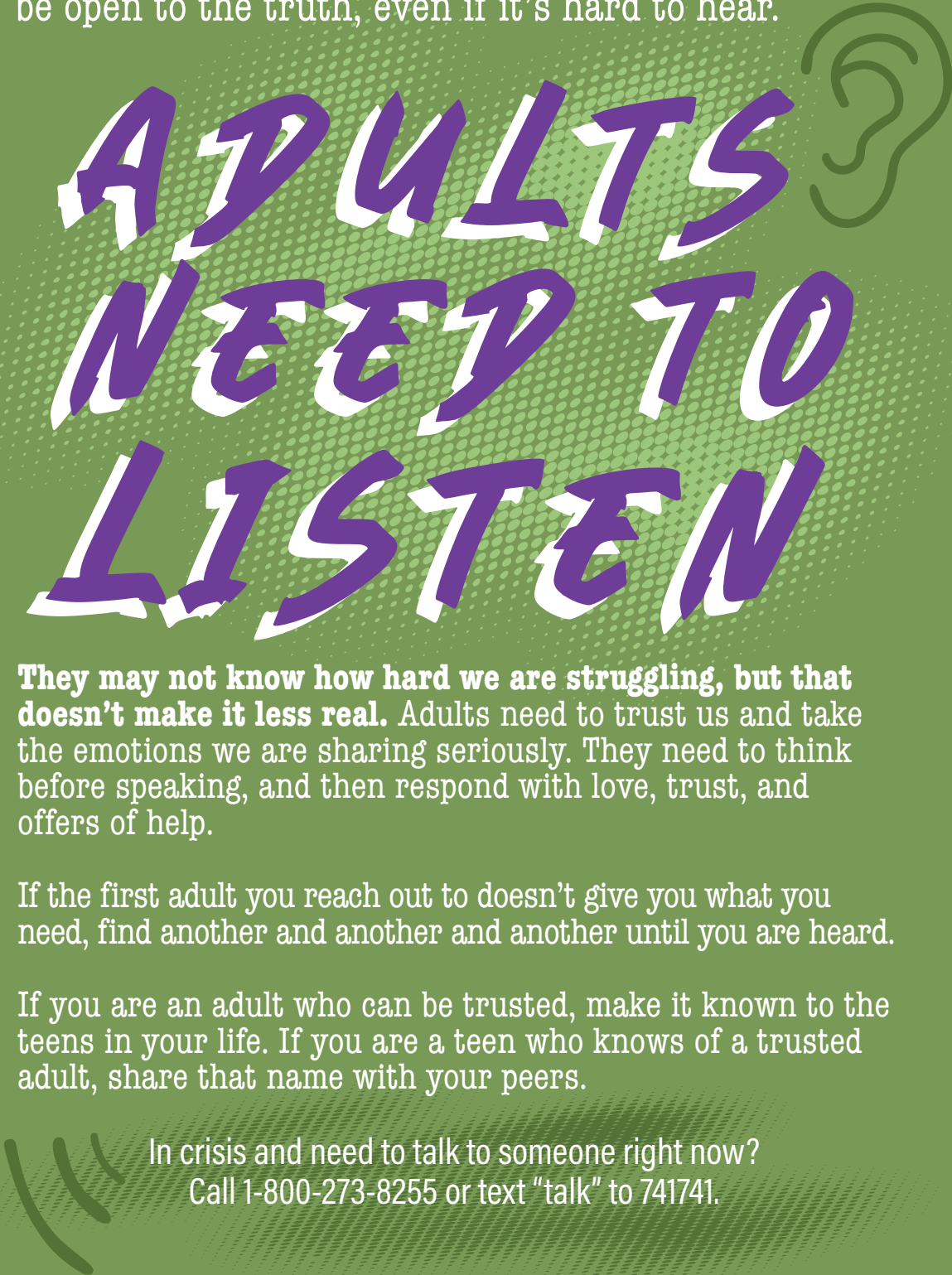
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TALK
TO A
TRUSTED
ADULT

If you're being bullied, go to <https://empoweroc.org/bullying/> for help

We go to adults for help, so they need to listen and be open to the truth, even if it's hard to hear.

ADULTS NEED TO LISTEN



They may not know how hard we are struggling, but that doesn't make it less real. Adults need to trust us and take the emotions we are sharing seriously. They need to think before speaking, and then respond with love, trust, and offers of help.

If the first adult you reach out to doesn't give you what you need, find another and another and another until you are heard.

If you are an adult who can be trusted, make it known to the teens in your life. If you are a teen who knows of a trusted adult, share that name with your peers.

In crisis and need to talk to someone right now?
Call 1-800-273-8255 or text "talk" to 741741.



i see you

**We often hide our feelings
because we are afraid of
being judged.**

Yet if we all shared, we would see that we are not alone. **Everyone has their own struggles with family, friends, mental and/or physical health, school, and more.** Each of our experiences, feelings, and opinions are valid. There is always more to a person than what they decide to show to the world. Try to reach that person – and be that person.

**No one is more or less
important than anyone else.**

EVERY 1 MATTERS

We might be from different schools, cities, counties, states, but we are all still teens and can empathize with one another. Find someone to support you and care for you.

**You don't have to be alone.
We can help each other.**

Go to <https://teencentral.com/> for peer support



Tell people what you need to feel better, then try a small thing or two. Every step counts, no matter how small, like opening the curtains in the morning – especially on the days you can barely function. You are brave to get up and try. Even the little things are progressive.

You don't have to figure everything out right now

Share stories with others about your efforts, what worked and what didn't, and what you'll try next time.

Go to <https://teencentral.com/tools/> for some small ideas you can try to help with your mental health.

IT TAKES GUTS TO SEEK HELP

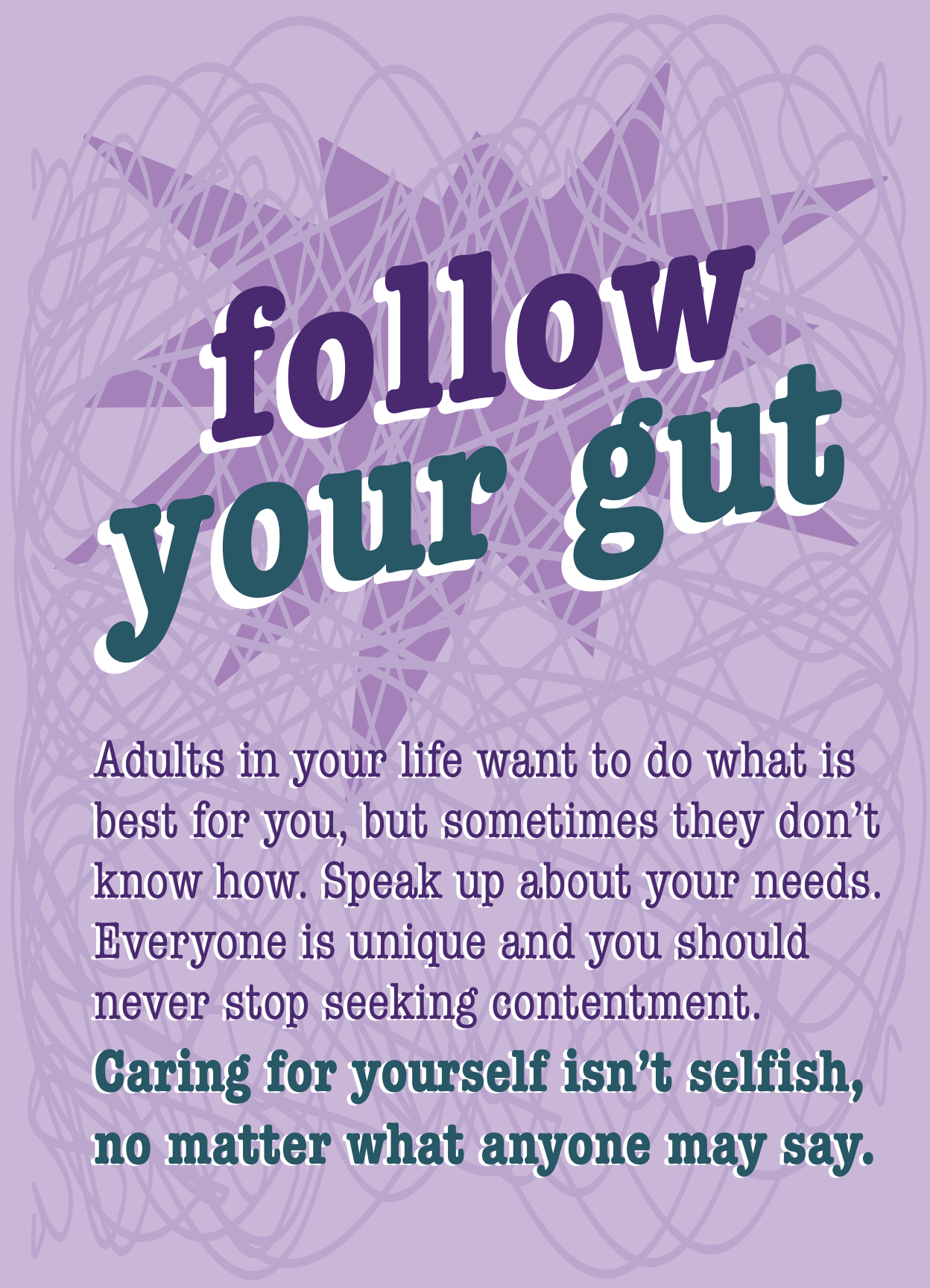


Tell an adult you need a medical professional to get better. Know that you might have a dud therapist or doctor before you land on the right one. Even your parents might not be the right adults to talk to about your anxiety and depression. It's OK to be selfish for your mental health and find the person who will help you most.

It can take years for some of us to speak up and ask for help.

But it's never too late.

Start with a peer, and with their support, go to a trusted adult and begin your path to feeling better. If you are ignored or someone walks away, try again with the next person. You are worth the effort!



follow your gut

Adults in your life want to do what is best for you, but sometimes they don't know how. Speak up about your needs. Everyone is unique and you should never stop seeking contentment.

**Caring for yourself isn't selfish,
no matter what anyone may say.**

Don't let an adult tell you that LGBTQIA+ people did not exist "when they were your age." They are wrong. People of all genders and orientations have always existed. We can just learn about the continuum faster now because of the internet. But just because we have the information, it doesn't mean we have all the answers. The Trevor Project has trained counselors for young LGBTQIA+ people who are in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk, chat or text.

**WHEN I WAS
YOUR AGE,
WE DIDN'T
HAVE ALL OF
THESE THINGS**

ADULTS
SAY

Visit the [trevorproject.org](https://www.trevorproject.org) to learn more

Teens to adults...

We are *NOT* your generation

Parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and other adults will tell us that “back in their day” they did XYZ. But that’s irrelevant today because of the internet, social media, smart phones, and other technology.

And it’s hard to explain it to those who didn’t grow up with it.

Things are changing so fast we can barely keep up, let alone our parents.

Go to <https://engage.youth.gov/resources/tip-sheet-social-media-use-and-mental-health> to learn more about healthy social media use.

Parents, teachers, and adults in general will tell us we are lazy, whiny, emotional teens instead of trying to get to the root of our emotions. A fight is sometimes easier than facing the truth about our mental health.

To help understand us, classes for teachers and parents should be offered on the topic of Teen Mental Health.

PEOPLE ACT OUT OF FEAR

Go to: <https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/product/teening-your-parent/>
to learn more about how adults can support teens and their mental health

WONDERING WHAT TO DO NEXT? LOOKING FOR MORE INFO?

CHECK OUT THE RESOURCES BELOW. They are there for YOU!

SHARE THE RESOURCES for adults listed below with the adults in your life.

HIT UP YOUR PUBLIC OR SCHOOL LIBRARIAN for books or other info on any topic you need.

MAKE CONNECTIONS—connectivity with peers, friends and adults is like a life jacket, it keeps you afloat. Ask your local librarian about support groups, clubs or organizations in the community you might be able to get involved in.

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Empower OC –an online platform with health related topics for youth from the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Ontario County:

<https://empoweroc.org/>

Mental health literacy 101 information for youth & adults:

<https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/>

Teen Central –mental health information, tips and tools for youth & peer support: <https://teencentral.com/>

The Trevor Project –crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQIA+ youth:

<https://thetrevorproject.org>

Youth Engaged 4 Change –empowering you to improve your life and the world around you:

<https://engage.youth.gov/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness –How to help a friend:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Teens-Young-Adults>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention –Western NY Chapter:

<https://afsp.org/chapter/western-new-york>

RESOURCES FOR ADULTS, PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Local youth mental health services: <https://kidsthive585.org/teens/mental-behavioral-health/>

Mental Health Association of Rochester:

<https://www.mharochester.org/>

Mental health literacy 101 for educators, parents & caregivers: <https://mentalhealthliteracy.org>

Mental Health America:

<https://www.mhanational.org/>

National Institute of Mental Health:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

CDC –Connectivity & Youth Mental Health: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm>

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