



# **ZERO REASONS WHY**

## **STORYTELLING GUIDE**

# Story Days

Story Days play an important role in the **#ZeroReasonsWhy** campaign as they further the efforts of the three strategic pillars. They generate open conversations in a public setting to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, increase community support with the involvement of local businesses and provide educational resources thanks to the help of the Community Mental Health Center.

## What is a Story Day?

A Story Day is an opportunity to gather unique content for the story campaign while increasing community support, visibility and awareness. Personal stories are gathered in either a photojournalism format, pairing interview text with a photograph, or as video content with a filming crew. Story Days give a chance for individuals to share their story, bring broader visibility to the topic, foster community support and engage a broader audience of people who wish to participate in the campaign.

## Steps for a Successful Story Day

1. Typically, a campaign field journalist, a campaign member and a mental health professional attend each Story Day. This is a great opportunity to wrap in your school newspaper.
2. Recruit a well-known, easily accessible business to host the event. Give local business owners something tangible they can do to help. They want to be a part of the movement, and it promotes their business.
3. It is crucial that the event is promoted well in advance on social media by members of the campaign, organizations and local business to spread event and campaign awareness.
4. At the event, use the time to gather ideas from anyone who wants to share their story and educate participants about the campaign pillars and upcoming activities.
5. Pass out free campaign materials like wristbands and stickers to thank people for attending, but also to increase the visibility of **#ZeroReasonsWhy**.
6. Have a mental health professional available with resources and for further conversation with attendees.
7. Require all participants in storytelling efforts to sign a release form. If they are a minor, their parent must consent to their participation.

## Start the Conversation

Storytelling efforts do not have to be complicated. Begin with a few questions to spark conversations and ask follow-up questions to gain deeper insight and perspective. Every person sharing their story draws on their own life experiences to inform how they think, feel or assess an issue. Broad questions allow for individuals to tailor their responses to their own perspective and passion for the topic.

Check out the Storytelling Worksheet for sample questions and to step through how you would tell your own story.

# Storytelling Tips

As a member of the campaign, you will be asked to share your story on the campaign's social channels and may even be interviewed by a media outlet. This may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Draw on other resources like the Campaign Talking Points and Public Speaking Tips documents. However, as an advocate for mental health, we recommend that you consider how you would answer these questions from your unique perspective. Draw on your own life experiences to inform your answers:

- Why are you passionate about mental health and suicide prevention?
- How can we work together to reduce the stigma around mental health?
- How does education play a role in mental health?
- What encouragement do you have for teens who are struggling?
- What do you hope for the future of our community as it relates to mental health?
- What do you want adults to know about mental health struggles for you and your peers?
- What can we (our community) do to better support the needs of teens?
- What is a misconception you hear often related to mental health, and how would you address it?
- What do you wish everyone knew about mental health?
- If you've struggled with mental wellness yourself, what positive coping strategies have you used? Have they changed over time?
- How can we create a more welcoming community that prioritizes mental wellness?

Please work individually and enter your answers in the third column. Then take a picture of this page so you don't risk misplacing your work. Note – The questions in the second column are simply to help with context. You do not need to provide an answer to each.

**Why are you passionate about the topic?**

Why do you care about mental health and suicide prevention? Have you or a friend struggled? How has that impacted you?

**Why is it important to remove the stigma?**

Removing the stigma is the primary pillar of the campaign. What might it look like if the stigma was reduced or removed? How can we work together to reduce stigma around mental health?

**How does education play a role?**

Committing to Education is another pillar of the campaign. The teens who developed the initial strategy felt it critical to provide more education and to start it earlier in life. How does it help?

**What can the community do to better support teens' needs?**

The final pillar is Build Community Support. Why is this important? How does knowing that you are seen, heard and supported by the community help? Why is it important that the whole community works together?

**What encouragement do you have for struggling teens?**

If you have struggled with mental wellness yourself, what positive coping strategies have you used? Who in your life provided the support you needed? What did they say or do to help?

**What do you want adults to know about mental health struggles?**

Those who have not experienced struggles themselves, may not know how to approach the topic, recognize signs or know how to relate. What advice do you have? What is a common misconception they might have and how would you address it?

**What hope do you have for the future of the community?**

How can we create a more welcoming community that prioritizes mental wellness? What would that look like?