



A Message from EISD and Student Support Services and SEL

On January 22nd, the second annual city-wide “Hi, How Are You?” Day will take place. The mission of this day is to raise awareness around the importance of mental health and to help start conversations with each other. HHAY Project founders Tom Gimbel and Courtney Blanton were inspired by Austin musician and artist Daniel Johnston’s mural on Guadalupe that features a frog asking “Hi, how are you?” “Clearly, mental health is in the press more than ever, but so much more remains to be done,” said Blanton. “Statistics show us that depression, anxiety, and suicide are on the rise. Removing the stigma is the first step towards a productive public dialog about mental health.” (<https://www.hihowareyou.org/press/>)

This is a great opportunity for families and students to take a minute to check-in and to listen attentively to each other. Start the conversation!



Start the Conversation

Four little words can make a BIG difference.

A simple question like "Hi, how are you?" can start a meaningful conversation with a friend or family member. Encouraging others to open up about mental health is a powerful gesture that can change lives.

Follow these steps to continue the conversation:

1. Remember these mental health facts

- 1 in 5 Americans experience a mental illness, so it's common.
- Mental health conditions are brain-based disorders, not personality failings.
- In 90% of suicides, there's an underlying untreated mental illness at play. The earlier people receive treatment, the less likely they are to face crisis.
- Success rates for mental illness are similar to other health issues. The good news is people can achieve health and wellness!

2. Know the common warning signs

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling very sad for more than two weeks
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating or learning
- Extreme mood changes
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Isolation: avoiding friends and social activities
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits or sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality: hearing, seeing or believing things that are not real
- Repeated abuse of alcohol or drugs
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance
- Thoughts or acts of self-harm including plans to kill oneself
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems with stress

3. Find a comfortable space to address your concerns

- Ask questions in a time and place where the person feels comfortable. This should be a neutral location, away from other family, friends or co-workers.
- You are there as a friend, not a mental health expert. It's ok to not know what to say or do next.
- By asking someone if they are ok, you are not making their well being your sole responsibility. But you may be able to help them get the help they need.

4. Ask questions and actively listen

Often people experiencing the onset of a mental health issue feel completely alone. Actively listen and look for opportunities to share the mental health facts you've learned. Never underestimate the power of simply being there. Here's some questions you can try:

- I've noticed that you're [sleeping more, eating less, etc.] Is everything ok?
- It seems like you're going through a difficult time. How can I help you?
- I am concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself?
- Who or what has helped you in the past?
- I care about you and want to listen. What do you want to share about your feelings?
- Can I help connect you to a counselor or community resource that can help you?

5. Follow up and get mental health help

- You are not alone. If someone shares they need help, there are numerous community resources available:
 - Integral Care Crisis Hotline: 512-472-HELP (4357)
 - Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
 - Crisis Text Line: Text NAMI to 741741
 - namiaustin.org/resources or namiaustin.org/crisis
- Call 911 if you think they're in danger of harming themselves or others.

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