Change Direction

Student Toolkit:

How to Spread Mental Health Awareness In Your School

Powered by:

Let's Talk, Lancaster

Change Direction Campaign: http://www.changedirection.org/

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Let's Talk. Lancaster
changing the conversation about mental health

the campaign to changedirection®

Building a Campaign Plan to Change Direction

This toolkit is designed for school clubs implementing the Change Direction Campaign. The resources included provide a framework for organizing awareness of the five signs of emotional suffering in an effort to advance mental well-being in Lancaster County. The tactics provided emerged from the national campaign initiative led by Give an Hour, a network of mental health care providers who give an hour of their time each week to help members of the military and their families cope with the "unseen wounds" associated with military service. Over the past two years, these tools have been tested and refined and will allow you to empower fellow students through awareness. The Creating a Plan section helps student leaders plant a solid footing for their initiative. With this toolkit you will be able to implement the Change Direction awareness campaign, and change the culture of mental health in your school.

Why Change Direction?

While we spend so much time, money, and effort doing all we can to care for our physical health, most of us spend little time or effort towards caring for our mental well-being. And while we are sympathetic and provide support and care for those who are physically sick or hurt, we often mistreat or misunderstand those suffering from a mental illness or recovering from psychological trauma. Those who are experiencing emotional pain feel embarrassed or ashamed and often do not seek the help they need and deserve to heal and recover.

1 in 5 American adults have a mental health disorder, but almost none of the 43.8 million people affected will talk about their illness with friends or family. The stigma that binds to mental illnesses is preventing individuals to not only from seeking treatment, but from recognizing the symptoms in themselves or others. This problem is concentrated in schools, as 80% of youth with mental illness will not receive any services. Being able to spot early indicators of mental health problems can allow young adults to get the right services when it is most critical to get them (Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Surgeon General Report 2017). Join the conversation to help change your school's attitudes towards emotional health, so that we can make it safer and more comfortable to seek help for family members, friends, neighbors, and ourselves.

What is the Change Direction Campaign?

The Change Direction Campaign is an **awareness** campaign working to change the culture around mental health so all of those in need of care receive the support they deserve. As a regional partner of the Change Direction Campaign, the Let's talk, Lancaster Coalition is reaching out to community organization, workplaces, and schools in Lancaster County as leaders and partners in helping us maximize our outreach. Central to the campaign is taking the **pledge to recognize the five signs** of emotional suffering: personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care, and hopelessness. By knowing the five signs, those who take the pledge are better equipped to help themselves and others who may be struggling with mental illness. Changing the conversation around mental health is key to decreasing the stigma and misunderstanding around mental health and increasing awareness to ensure that all those in need receive the care and support they deserve.

"Another Pledge?"

Although it may seem insufficient to simply spread the word about mental illness, awareness is the first force of change. Through awareness we can encourage personal compassion and reduce hidden suffering. The pledge is a promise to help get more people to a place of understanding.

More Americans are expected to die this year by suicide than in car accidents. While many of us are comfortable acknowledging publicly our physical suffering, for which we almost always seek help, many more of us privately experience mental suffering, for which we almost never reach out.

Here are the five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and needs help.

The next page provides resources for those who need help. You can use it as a poster later.

Need Help?

Visit your Guidance Counselor

Your school's guidance counselor can help you by listening and giving advice, and will be able to get you to the right resources if you need any extra help. Guidance counselors will also keep your information confidential. Visit the counseling office or ask your teacher to help schedule an appointment, and find a counselor you feel comfortable talking with.

Call 2-1-1

2-1-1 is like a 911 for locating nearby help resources. Ask for mental health help, and the call team will tell you what nearby mental health resources you can use. If you feel uncomfortable calling, you can ask your parents or a close friend to help.

Confide in a Friend

Talking to a friend can help reveal a new perspective into your situation, and has been proven to help people feel more in control of their problems. A friend can understand what you are going through and provide you insights or advice. It is ok to reach out for help.

Chat with a Professional Now

Crisis Text Line: Text SIGNS to 741741 for anonymous, free crisis counseling

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

In an Emergency Call 9-1-1

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Creating an Implementation Plan

We highly encourage you to consider personalizing an implementation plan **to fit the needs and expectations of your members**. We have provided a list of suggested detailed steps and resources for your use and distribution. Because this is an awareness campaign, you can re-order, skip, or combines steps to your liking and still be committed to our efforts to get the word out!

Let's Talk, Lancaster is a resource that is available to you at *any point* during your planning or implementation. Please reach out with any comments, concerns or questions.

Let's Talk Lancaster

Coordinator: Mary LeVasseur melevass@lghealth.org

(717) 544-3820

Step 0: Start a Club

This step is for students who care about issues surrounding mental wellness, but do not have a student organization with which they can approach mental health topics.

Start by gathering five to ten people interested in mental health. Select a chair of the group, who will be club president until you decide upon leadership position procedures. Now, select a time for your club to meet at least every other week, either before or after school. You may have to meet outside the school's premises until you become an official club. Put up posters on open bulletins that tell people to contact the leader, who should compile a list of possible members with contact information. Talk to your teachers about the idea, and if a teacher seems interested, ask them to be your club's supervisor. Then, contact the school administration and apply to be a new club. From there, make sure that you continue to meet regularly and promote membership to the student body.

Step 1: Host a Change Direction Presentation

Let's Talk Lancaster has committed to provide 30-minute Change Direction presentations free of charge to anyone that is interested in either joining our campaign or simply want to learn more. These presentations offer an introduction to both the material and the campaign, and allow all attendees to take the pledge to know the five signs of emotional suffering. Host one after school or during free periods. Start by approaching your club supervisor and school administration with the intent of holding the event, and have members volunteer to organize it. Please reach out to the Let's Talk, Lancaster Coordinator, Mary LeVasseur, if you are interested in hosting a presentation or have any further questions

Mary LeVasseur

melevass@lghealth.org

(717) 544-3820

Step 2: Distribute Campaign Materials

Hang Change Direction **posters** common areas such as:

- Hallways, lobbies/main entrances, windows, bulletins, health classrooms

Distribute Change Direction **wallet cards** by keeping them around:

- Front desks, office areas, information tables, counseling offices

Both materials can be found in **Appendix A**. Feel free to print posters directly from the link provided. **Contact Mary LeVasseur** if you would like to receive wallet cards for distribution.

Step 3: Get Students to Take the Five Signs Pledge

Change Direction pledges can be made individually and collectively. Here's how:

a) Share the Change Direction pledge site (included below)
   a. **Online** pledge as a school
      http://www.changedirection.org/make-a-pledge/partner-pledge/
   b. **Online** pledge as an individual
      http://www.changedirection.org/make-a-pledge/personal-pledge/

b) Distribute paper pledge forms found in **Appendix D**
   (collect upon completion and return to Nicole Hagen for submission)

Step 4: Set a Pledge Goal

Hold a club meeting where you set an ambitious but realistic goal for number of students who will take the pledge to learn the five signs of emotional suffering. Will it be 20% of the student body? 30%? 50%? Create a method to track pledges. One way would be to use the hand cutouts in Appendix C to make a pledge wall, which could be displayed in a lobby or hallway. If you do not have the space, you could simply make a goal counting 'thermometer' poster that fills up as you approach your pledge goal.

A way to implement counting pledges that could be fun for students would be to create a competition between homerooms or classes. Whichever homeroom or teacher has the most pledges filled out for them in a given amount of time would receive a prize. Prizes for winning could include a homeroom food party or having a teacher who had the most pledges in their honor do something silly (dye their hair, pie in face, etc. as long as they agree to participate).

Pledge forms for competitions can be found in Appendix E and F

Step 5: Share the Five Signs

Learn the definitions and share the five signs of emotional stress with this downloadable 2-pager during meetings, events, or in organization E-newsletters. This information sheet is also found in **Appendix B**. If you share the Fives Signs, follow up with a call to action to take the pledge.

Step 6: Host an Event, Table, or Visit Classrooms

Events are a great way to get the word out about the Campaign to Change Direction. At your next club meeting, brainstorm what extracurricular events would be feasible for your club to host. If the club cannot handle hosting an event, think about how you could collaborate with another organization who is holding one of their own (i.e. a hockey game where they let you give a small speech or a karaoke night themed toward mental wellness).

Tabling, sitting behind a table with information and free giveaways, is a dependable method of spreading information about the campaign and your organization. Try tabling at events, in hallways, and at ball games. Always ask the hosts if it is ok to table at their event.

Another tactic to spread the word is to visit homerooms and ask the teacher if you can give a small speech. Quickly outline your club's mission and vision, the campaign, the five signs, and encourage students to take the pledge.

Step 7: Encourage Club Members to Get Certified

Mental Health First Aid is a certification course that teaches you how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Get yourself and others certified, or host a training at your school.

Find a course near you by clicking on this link.

Step 8: Hold Mental Health Discussions

During regular club meetings, at an event, or at a special meeting, host discussions centered on mental health. Encourage students to share their mental health story, discuss how mental illness has affected them, and share why awareness is so important.

Sample Discussion about Suicide: Guide for Chris Stapleton's *Fire Away*

Grammy Award winner Chris Stapleton used his impressive talent and powerful music to create a video about the painful topic of suicide. *Fire Away* has the potential to engage students in a conversation that is greatly needed. This guide is intended to help you in your efforts to facilitate this conversation.

8a) Play this music video to prompt discussion.

8b) Distribute handouts to supplement discussion available for print here or in **Appendix D**.

8c) Ask your homeroom teacher if you could present this video in homeroom, and have a discussion there

Special Topic: Social Media Culture and Mental Illness

Social Media can be a chaotic form of communication. Content and format changes quickly with trends, contains intentionally misleading or provocative messages, and has an endless amount of information. Social media can easily instigate unknown suffering in people who are prone to mental suffering. Here are a few types of 'red flag' posts that aggravate or misunderstand mental illness:

1. Posts that attack a group of people or single out certain behaviors
   Example: Making fun of shy people.
   Who Gets Hurt: People suffering from social withdrawal as a side effect of mental illness will see this as an attack.

2. Trivializing Mental Illness
   Example: "I'm so OCD!" or "We're so crazy."
   Who Gets Hurt: Real mental illness may be taken less seriously if people use them to describe harmless personality quirks.

3. Glorifying Mental Illness (and Substance Abuse)
   Example: People without mental illnesses making sadness and depression look cool.
   Who Gets Hurt: Someone with depression who is calling for help online may be ignored.

Think of other ways people can unknowingly cause mental suffering online. Discuss where you may see messages like this online, or where these topics pop up in daily life.

Step 9: Continue to Spread the Message Online

Use social media, or online sources as a platform to spread the message. Platforms such as your club's **Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or school site** are most recommended. This is a very effective way to broadly reach followers.

6a) Content Suggestions:

- In **Appendix F** you will find a variety of different post examples which include graphics, videos and short captions. Feel free to use this exact content, or come up with variations of your own to make it personal to your community!
- You can also find more recent content to create posts on the http://www.changedirection.org/ site under the [Read the news] and [Download tools] sections.
- Make sure you use this hashtag in every post: **#changementalhealthlancaster**

6b) Posting Timeline Suggestions:

- **Post once a week.** This prevents burdening your audience and assures that you spread out the content.
- **Alternate content**. Do not consecutively upload two posts of the same kind. Switch your content from video, to graphic, to quote with each post.
- Follow the best times to post online:

Facebook	Fridays, 1pm - 3pm
Instagram	Mondays, 8am - 9am
Twitter	Wednesdays, 12pm -3pm

- Follow Let's Talk, Lancaster on Social Media:

Website

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Appendix A

[Poster A](#)

[Poster B](#)

[Poster C](#)

Wallet Cards

(front)

(back)

Appendix B

the campaign to changedirection®

Often our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help.

Here are five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help:

Personality changes.
You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.

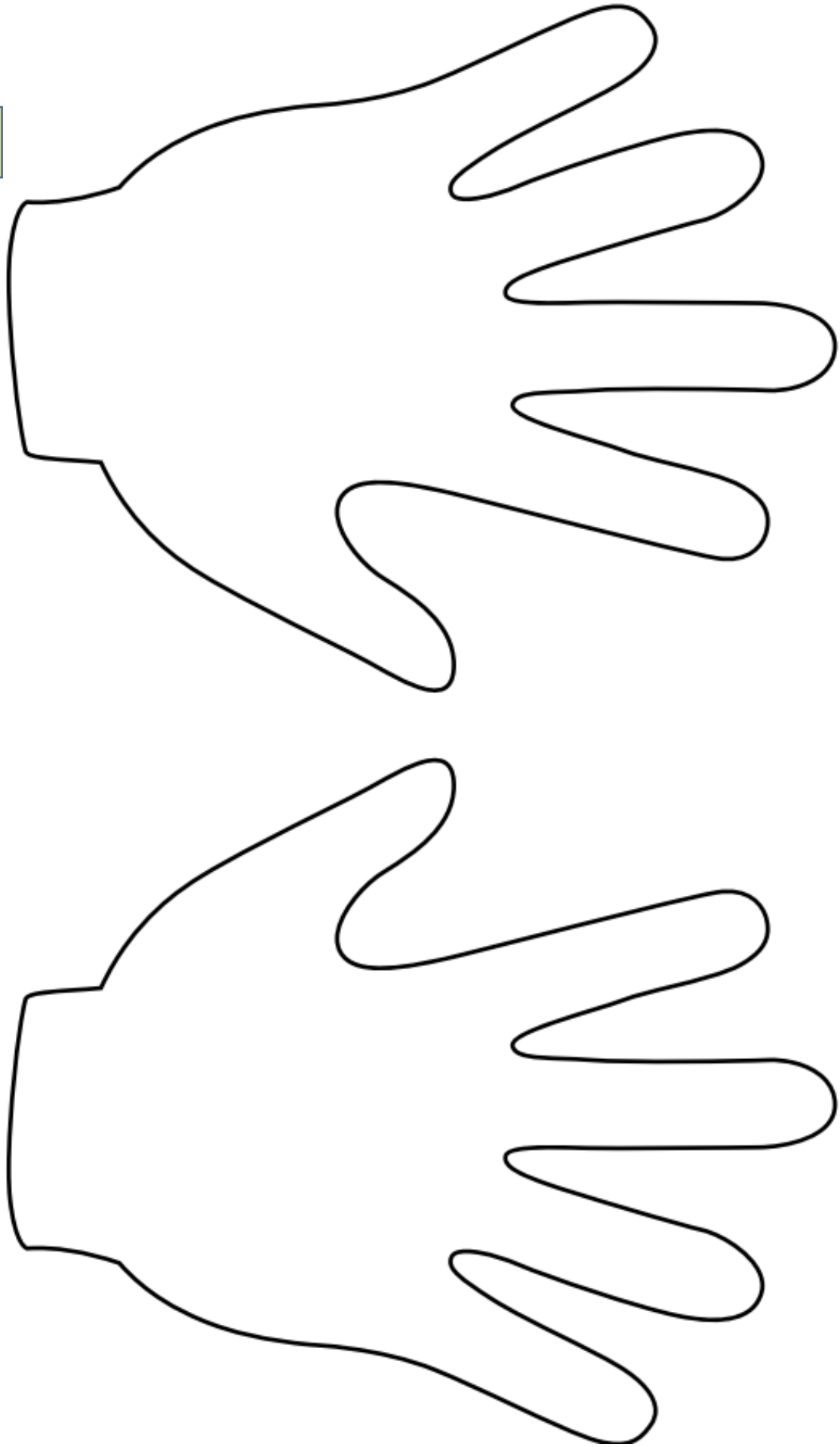
Uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.
You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.

Withdrawal or isolation from other people.
Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.

May neglect self-care and engage in risky behavior.
You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.

Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by circumstances.
Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

Appendix C



Appendix D

I Pledge

- To know the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering
- To do my part to change how my family, friends, neighbors, and I think and act about mental health, mental illness, and wellness
- To: (Check all boxes that you will do)

  ☐ Share info from the **changedirection.org** site to someone in need.

  ☐ Look out for friends and loved ones and support them when needed.

  ☐ Share my mental health story to help others learn about mental health.

  ☐ Call out mental health discrimination when I hear it or see it.

  ☐ Volunteer at a local event to raise awareness of mental health.

  ☐ I would like to add my own pledge (write below)

Spread the word! How many people will you share this pledge with? ☐

A little about you

Name _____ Age _____

Email _____

City and State Where you Live_____ Zip Code _____

Are you a college student?

Yes ____ No ____

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Appendix E

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  ☐ Call out mental health discrimination when I hear it or see it.

  ☐ Volunteer at a local event to raise awareness of mental health.

  ☐ I would like to add my own pledge (write below)

Spread the word! How many people will you share this pledge with? ☐

A little about you

Name _____ Age _____

Email _____

City and State Where you Live_____ Zip Code _____

What is your homeroom?

_____

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Appendix F

I Pledge

- To know the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering
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☐ Volunteer at a local event to raise awareness of mental health.

☐ I would like to add my own pledge (write below)

Spread the word! How many people will you share this pledge with? ☐

A little about you

Name _____ Age _____

Email _____

City and State Where you Live_____ Zip Code _____

Which teacher is this pledge for?

_____

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Five Discussion Topics

1. How are the Five Signs portrayed in the music video?
2. Have you or someone you care about struggled emotionally? Have you ever lost someone you know to suicide – have you ever contemplated harming yourself?
3. Why do you think it is difficult for people to acknowledge emotional pain? Why is it difficult for us to

Appendix G

Appendix H

Type of Posts:

1) 5 Signs of Emotional Suffering
2) Mental health statistics
3) Quotes
4) Personal Stories
5) What can you do?
6) Campaign pledges
7) Videos for different target groups
8) Share posts from:
   Let's Talk, Lancaster Instagram
   Let's Talk Twitter
   Let's Talk Facebook
   Change Direction Twitter

Examples:

1

Personality Change. First sign of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Learn all five at changedirection.org. #changementalhealth.

Hopelessness. Fifth sign of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Learn all five at changedirection.org. #changementalhealth.

Know the Five Signs of emotional suffering at www.changedirection.org/lancaster-county.

#changementalhealthlancaster

2

Did you know 1/5 of our community could be dealing with a mental health condition at this moment? Learn more at letstalklancaster.org.

#changementalhealthlancaster

It doesn't have to be this way. Learn more at letstalklancaster.org.

#changementalhealthlancaster

3

How will you become a better person this year? #changementalhealthlancaster

We have faith that we can #changementalhealthlancaster

4

Personality Change. First sign of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Learn all five at www.changedirection.org/lancaster-county.

#changementalhealthlancaster

Hopelessness. Fifth sign of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Learn all five at www.changedirection.org/lancaster-county.

#changementalhealthlancaster

5

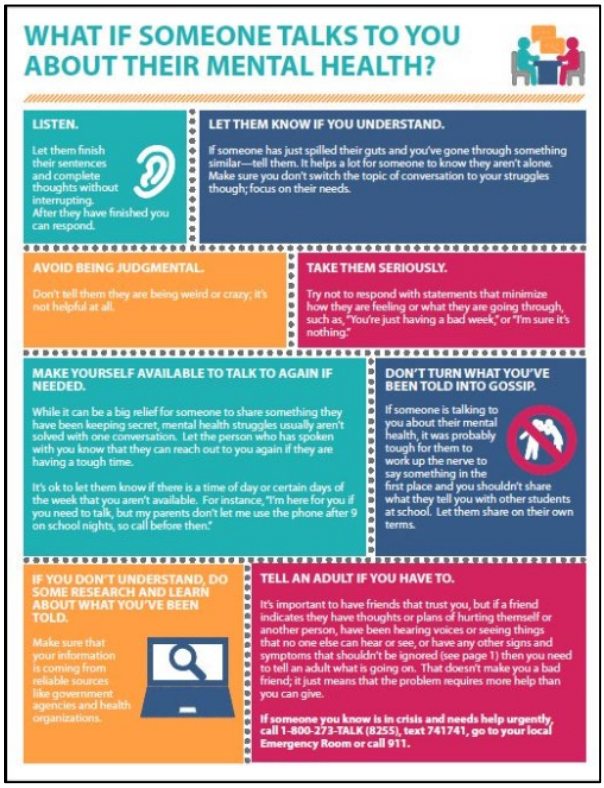
@CrisisLine is available 24/7, it is free and anonymous. Text SIGNS at 741-741

#changementalhealthlancaster

What should your kids do when they know someone is experiencing mental suffering or a mental health disorder at school?

Visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/back-school to find more resources for children and young adults.

#changementalhealthlancaster



Change Direction Campaign: http://www.changedirection.org/

6

Thanks to everyone who came out today and pledged to know the Five Signs of emotional suffering!
If you'd like to take a pledge go to www.changedirection.org/lancaster-county.

#changementalhealthlancaster

***Use your own images for this post**

7

Did you know ½ of all lifetime cases of mental disorders begin by age 14? Watch this video and learn more!

changedirection.org/teenpsa/

#changementalhealthlancaster

Support our veterans who may be experiencing mental suffering and share this video!

changedirection.org/veteranpsa/

#changementalhealthlancaster