Reducing Stigma for the Next Generation: California’s “Walk In Our Shoes” Social Marketing Campaign

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What is Walk In Our Shoes?

- Statewide education campaign focused on mental health and the elimination of stigma.
- Seeks to eliminate bias and prejudice by de-bunking myths and educating 9-13 year olds about mental health and wellness.
- Promotes help-seeking by encouraging kids to talk about mental health and confide in a trusted adult.
- Utilizes positive, authentic and age-appropriate stories.
Why target this age group?

- Stigma is developed during the “tween” years of development (9-13 years old).
- Teachers and parents are the secondary audiences of this campaign as they are influential role models for this age group.
A baseline survey was conducted of California’s middle school youth (11- to 13-year olds).

RSE produced targeted education points:

1. Mental health challenges are common
2. There are different kinds of mental health challenges
3. People with mental health challenges can manage/recover to live normal and healthy lives
4. The vast majority of people with mental health challenges are as predictable and non-violent as anyone else
5. Young people are encouraged to speak up and ask questions about mental health
Strategy

Background

- Tweens generally look for information from entertainment media and older teenage counterparts.
- These sources often typecast behaviors and appearances into outcast groups described with derogatory terms such as “emo,” “cutter,” etc.
Strategy

Creative Strategy
- Use the voice of the older teenage group to share personal stories about mental health challenges.
- Protect against stigma through education.

Media Strategy
- Combine new and traditional tactics to help inform youth and illuminate the new norms.
- Online advertising
- Radio advertising
Interactive Elements

Performance
Statewide school-based performance tour

Website
Educational, interactive website (English and Spanish)

Media
Targeted mass media (radio, digital and cable TV)

Comprehensive campaign targeting 9-13 year olds
Ponte En Mis Zapatos

- Spanish-language campaign to ensure cultural competency.
- Cultural experts provided assistance in content and resources.
- Spanish resources include:
  - Spanish-language website (www.PonteEnMisZapatos.com)
  - Three in-language narratives for Spanish-speakers.
  - In-language myth and fact sheets
Collaboration

**Strategic Council**

- Child development experts to ensure that all materials are age-appropriate. Experts from a variety of institutions:
  - California Department of Education
  - Sacramento County Office of Education
  - Chico Unified School District
  - Sacramento City Unified School District
- Mental health experts to make sure that materials are non-triggering.
- Cultural experts to check that all materials are culturally competent.
Collaboration

Stakeholder Involvement

- Walk In Our Shoes showcases authentic stories from influential transitional-age youth.
- Create your own unique shoe and support others with the “Like” function.
- Interactive campaign stresses the importance of the consumer-driven movement.
School Performance Tour

Script Development

- Collaborated with strategic council and local children’s theater, B Street Theatre.
- Developed a 35-minute play with a 15-minute talk back section immediately following the performance.

Scheduling

- Collaborative effort, utilizing statewide partners to penetrate a variety of regional infrastructures.
- California Department of Education and the Regional K-12 Student Mental Health Initiative Regional Leads communicated with education partners including county offices of education and school districts across the state.
School Performance Tour

Talk Back

- Includes a school counselor, school psychologist or other trusted mental health professional whom students will recognize when seeking help.
- Allows the actors to interact with students and solidify teachings from the play.
- Proved to be a critical part of the performance where students were seen connecting to the subject matter and applying lessons to their own lives.
2013

- Nine Week Statewide Tour (August 2013 – October 2013)
- 60 Elementary and Middle Schools
- 95 Performances
- 32 Counties
- 18,800 Students

2014

- Nine Week Statewide Tour (August 2014 – October 2014)
- 76 Elementary and Middle Schools
- 100 Performances
- 22 Counties
- 26,200 Students
Feedback from School Tour

“I thought the performance was great and could tell the kids in the audience were engaged. The story covered so many areas relevant to what youth deal with today!”  
− County Liaison

“If I had to rank this play on a scale from 1-10, it would be a 10+. And trust me, I’m very critical since I’ve been a principal for 10 years.”  
− Principal

“As an administrator, it definitely enhanced the conversation about mental health among staff. It also reinforced the need for additional support staff for students and families.”  
− School Administrator

“Today was AWESOME. The kids loved it.”  
− School Counselor

“This play fits right into our bullying prevention curriculum.”  
− School Psychologist

“Thank you. You taught us how to be nice to each other.”  
− Student
Evaluation

Components
- Surveys of website users and non-users
- RAND survey at school performances
- Small survey of teachers and administrators
Evaluation

NORC Website Evaluation 2014

• Process
  – Walk In Our Shoes website users (aged 9-13), convenience sample of non-users (11-13 years old)
  – Used California opt-in panel with parents and middle school youth
  – Did not assess users who came from media and school performances

• Results
  – Youth exposed to the website were significantly more knowledgeable in 23 of the 28 knowledge measures
  – Large majorities found the website easy to use, understand and learn from
Evaluation

**RAND School Performance Survey**
- Significant change in all 5 knowledge measures

**Teacher and Administrator Survey**
- Over 90% rated performance as successful in educating students
- 63% reported that performance started a discussion in the classroom
Resources and Sustainable Features

- For Teachers
  - Facilitation Guide: Introducing Mental Health to Students
  - Classroom Activities: Dice of Wellness & Compliment Catcher
  - Lesson Plans
  - Letter to Parents (English and Spanish)
  - Webinar #1: Introduction to the Walk In Our Shoes School Performance
  - Webinar #2: How to Integrate Walk In Our Shoes in the Classroom
  - Video Performance
Resources and Sustainable Features

- For Youth
  - Animated youth narrative stories
  - Myth vs. fact sheets
  - Mental health challenges defined
  - Create your own shoe
Questions & Answers

For more information, visit www.WalkInOurShoes.org or www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org, or contact us at:

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