

Taking Action & Planning Activities

WELCOME! This document is adapted from Jack.org's many resources to train and equip young leaders to take action for mental health across Canada. We're thrilled to be sharing our learnings externally with this resource.

Objectives:

- To understand **why** teams host activities in the communities
- To recognize the types of activities teams can plan to meet their goals
- To create a plan that maps your team's actions for the year
- To develop an understanding of how to measure and maximize the impact of your team's actions
- To feel comfortable talking about mental health and your priorities surrounding mental health in your community

Why Would You Plan Activities?

It is through hosting community activities that your team will bring people together to address the barriers surrounding mental health in your community. Through bringing as many people as possible together at your activities, and exposing them to positive messaging around mental health, your team will slowly begin to see a change in your community's culture; the more activities you have as a team throughout the year, the more talking about mental health becomes normalized. This will then result in an increase in knowledge and greater help-seeking behaviour in your community.

How Could You Plan Activities?

Having activities that exclusively revolve around mental health, such as a 'Mental Health 101' workshop, may seem very appealing and obvious as an activity for your team. These sorts of activities only reach those who are already interested and talking about mental health, and often fail to reach a wide range of people in your community. It is for this reason that you should try to take a more creative approach in order to get everyone talking; you need to bring everyone into the conversation if you hope to change the culture around mental health in your community.

Keep it Simple!

One important thing to consider when planning your actions is scale. It's easy to dream big and want to plan several large-scale actions throughout the year, but keep in mind the realistic amount of time your team will have to plan such activities. Often times, teams that do several small-scale actions throughout the year as opposed to 1-2 large actions tend to reach more people and have a larger impact. An example of a large-scale initiative would include anything that requires a significant amount of resources and time to pull off, like a week-long carnival. A small-scale initiative would include anything that doesn't require too much time and/or resources. For example, handing out candy to students during exam week with the message self care is important.

Measuring & Maximizing Impact

Now that you've drafted some goals that will define your actions as a team, it's important to consider how you will measure and amplify your impact before planning specific activities / events. In this resource, we've outlined three main questions to guide your actions to reach their maximum impact potential:

1. Who is attending?

Being mindful of who is attending your group's events is important. Reaching a wide range of people in your community will not be achieved if your team plans the same type of event over and over – you'll likely draw

out the same crowd each time. Planning a variety of activities that appeal to different groups in your community is therefore one way to reach a broad spectrum of people and amplify your success.

2. What are people taking away?

Having a clear idea of what messages you want members of the community to take away from your team's actions will help you reach the goals of that specific initiative and amplify your impact.

3. How many people were there?

The number of people that attend your activity is one of the easiest ways to measure impact. Remember, the goal of your team is to reach the largest number of people possible. When planning your team's activities, it's important to be mindful of how many people that action will likely reach, and if that number justifies the time and/or resources spent.

Types of activities

There are many types of activities you can organize in the community. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

Visual/ poster campaigns

These are most successful when visuals are placed in high traffic areas that many people have to walk past and therefore will see your message.

Social media campaigns

Allows people to rapidly share their message through popular social media platforms.

Events/ activities

Anything that brings people together to participate in an engaging activity.

Fundraisers

People often rally around fundraisers to support a cause and become a part of a movement. You've probably heard of the Terry Fox Run or the 30 Hour Famine and know how much attention these get. Fundraisers, while intended to raise money, should still include positive messaging around mental health to address your community's priorities.

ACTIVITY: Final Pitch! (15 mins)

As a team, it's important to practice giving a pitch to discuss the key messaging surrounding mental health you want to convey. Given that your initiatives are only as effective as your ability to craft and deliver your team's message, this activity will help you construct a pitch around your mental health advocacy goals and practice in a safe and supportive environment.

Steps:

In pairs, take turns talking to each other about the following:

- Positioning mental health as equal to physical health
- Explaining mental health as existing on a spectrum
- Explaining mental illnesses and how they do not equate to living in crisis
- Defining your key priorities surrounding mental health in your community
- What is your team all about?

Bringing it all Together

With this information, your team should now be ready to map out activities for the upcoming year and draft a

full action plan. By practicing what you've learned, reflecting on your community's needs, and tailoring your approach to meet your fellow students where they're at, you can work to end the silence on mental health in your community. Please consult the goals that you've set and the reflections you've made regularly throughout the year and be sure to keep your objectives in mind in everything you do. And most importantly, congratulations! Your commitment, dedication, and passion to creating safer, more supportive communities is the first step to making real change. Now take it and let's get to work!