



TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom

A Guide for Educators

TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom: A Guide for Educators
Version 1.0 (July 2011)

This guide was created in partnership by the **Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health** and **TakingITGlobal**.



The Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health aims to improve the mental health of youth through the effective translation and transfer of scientific knowledge. It creates, develops, and delivers research and education for youth, about youth, and with youth to improve the effect of disabilities caused by mental disorders in young people, as well as to increase understanding and combat stigma and discrimination. It offers training, programs, publications, tools and resources that can be used by young people, their families and professionals to enhance understanding of adolescent mental health issues. Learn more at <http://www.teenmentalhealth.org>



TakingITGlobal's mission is to empower youth to understand and act on the world's greatest challenges. It uses the power of online community to facilitate global education, social entrepreneurship, and civic engagement for millions of youth worldwide. The award-winning www.tigweb.org is the world's leading social network for global citizenship, available in thirteen languages and offering a diverse set of educational resources and action tools intended to *inspire*, *inform* and *involve*. Since launching in 2000, 20 million people have accessed the website to learn, grow and realize their potential.



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Introduction

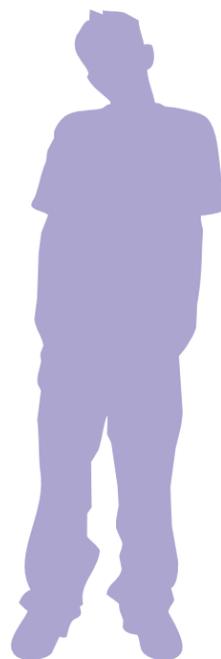
Welcome to the educator guide to the TIGed thematic classroom on mental health! This brief guide was developed to accompany the TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom – a free online classroom pre-loaded with activities and resources designed to help you and your students explore mental health and related issues. This guide provides an introduction to mental health and why it matters, an overview of the learning activities housed within the thematic classroom, step-by-step instructions on how to get started, and information on how to access support.

1. Mental Health and Why It Matters

You may be surprised to hear that 1 in 5 young people live with a mental illness, and that many mental illnesses develop during adolescence. As a teacher, this may translate to up to 6 students suffering from a mental illness in a class of 30 students. Mental disorders can contribute to school drop-out, learning and behavioural challenges, difficulties in performance, social difficulties, self-harm, and poor academic performance. Youth spend more time in school than they do anywhere else, with the exception of their own home. Therefore, the classroom is one of the best places for both educators and students to become more aware of mental health issues (Teen Mental Health, 2010).

The combination of mental health education and technology in the classroom places teachers on the cutting edge by engaging students in a vital topic to help maintain their health through a medium that will engage their interest. This in turn helps students challenge assumptions around mental health and mental illness, combat stigma, manage stress, and be aware of warning signs that may indicate a mental health problem for themselves or their peers. It will also help students in their development of 21st century skills like communication and computer literacy.

The age range of 12 – 26 years represents the peak period for onset of mental disorders. Scientific evidence shows that early detection and treatment of mental illness improves outcomes of treatment (WHO, 2004). As such, the Mental Health Thematic Classroom acts as an important resource for both learners and educators. It acts as a guide to address preconceptions about mental illness, a resource for current scientific knowledge on mental illness, a primer to combat stigma, and finally, a manual to encourage a holistic and positive understanding of mental health.



1. Mental Health and Why It Matters (cont.)

This guide was designed to provide educators with information to guide classes in completing the activities included in the Mental Health Thematic Classroom. As an educator, you are encouraged to take the self assessment for teachers in order to measure your own understanding of mental health.¹ After you've taken the self-assessment, look through the rest of the guide to learn more about getting started with your classroom. The clear, step-by-step instructions will make it easy for you, regardless of your experience with technology, to set up your own Mental Health Thematic Classroom to utilize with your students.



¹ To do this, please visit <http://teenmentalhealth.org/index.php/curriculum/curriculum/317/proceed>.

2. The TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom

TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international charitable organization that harnesses technology to empower youth to understand and act on the world’s greatest challenges. TIG serves youth worldwide through a multilingual online learning community and TIGed (TakingITGlobal for Educators), an award-winning platform that supports teachers in utilizing technology to build transformative global learning experiences. TIGed offers a growing network of teachers in over 100 countries, accredited professional development opportunities, a safe and customizable virtual classroom platform, and an extensive database of global education resources which includes a number of “thematic classrooms”, including the Mental Health Thematic Classroom.

A thematic classroom is an online classroom that is pre-populated with content and designed to support teaching and learning about a particular theme or issue. The TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom is loaded with activities and resources related to mental health. It features innovative online educational tools and resources designed to inform and engage youth about mental health issues such as specific mental illnesses, brain functions, and stigma.

2.1 Core Subjects and Skills

The thematic classroom is an interdisciplinary secondary school educational resource designed to support curriculum objectives across a wide range of subject areas and 21st century skills.¹ Teachers of various subject areas can use the classroom to incorporate mental health issues into their teaching, either independently or in collaboration with colleagues.

Core Subjects	21st Century Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Civics • Communications • Environmental Studies • Geography • Global Issues • History • Language Arts • Life Skills • Math • Media Studies • Science • Social Studies • Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • ICT Literacy • Flexibility and Adaptability • Initiative and Self-Direction • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Productivity and Accountability • Leadership and Responsibility

¹ For information on 21st century skills, visit www.p21.org.

2.2 Module Overview

The classroom contains a set of four modules with a total of nineteen comprehensive activities that can be tailored to suit the particular needs of your classroom, and is connected to two fun and educational online games. You will also find additional resources in the files section of the classroom that you and your students can explore to extend learning even further.

1) Get Informed!

This module gives learners a brief introduction to mental illness. It focuses on what mental illness has meant across time and different cultures. This module also provides a brief overview of the organ associated with mental illness: the brain.. This module gives learners a chance to understand what their perceptions of mental illness are and challenges them to understand where they might have come from through addressing the concept of stigma.

- Pre-Class Activity: uses experiential learning to help students explore the concept of stigma before they explore definitions of it in the context of mental health.
- Get Informed! 1 - Introduction to Mental Health and Mental Illness: asks learners to evaluate their current knowledge about mental illness, which can serve as a baseline indicator that is useful for both teachers and students; examines and corrects popular preconceptions and stereotypes about mental illness.
- Get Informed! 2 - Stigma: introduces learners to the meaning of stigma, and encourages them to consider both how it may feel to be stigmatized, as well as how we stigmatize others; asks learners to read a poem about stigma and contribute their thoughts on the content and message.
- Get Informed! 3 - Experience with Mental Illness: asks learners to research a current celebrity or historical figure affected by mental illness, in order to help learners understand the challenges faced by people living with mental illness, and to recognize successful individuals who have overcome these challenges.
- Get Informed! 4 - History of Mental Illness: provides a brief history of how mental illnesses have been understood and treated in the past and addresses the roots of some common stereotypes.
- Get Informed! 5 - The Brain: uses an interactive, 3-D brain model to introduce the main body organ associated with mental illness.



2.2 Module Overview (cont.)

2) Understanding Mental Illnesses!

This module connects learners with current knowledge about mental illness. It covers major groups of mental illnesses such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Its goal is to equip learners with a comprehensive and accurate understanding of mental disorders.

- Understanding Mental Illnesses 1 - Mood Disorders: introduces learners to both bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder; asks learners to reflect on the lesson by producing a piece of artwork or evaluating informative animation videos about one of these topics.
- Understanding Mental Illnesses 2 - Anxiety Disorders: introduces learners to the different disorders associated with anxiety, and asks students to put themselves in the shoes of someone who is suffering from an undiagnosed anxiety disorder by producing a 'Dear Abby' letter based around symptoms that they learned about in class.
- Understanding Mental Illnesses 3 - Schizophrenia: introduces learners to one of the most stigmatized disorders – schizophrenia; asks students to complete a role-play and crossword puzzle based on what they have learned.
- Understanding Mental Illnesses 4 - Eating Disorders: introduces learners to anorexia and bulimia, two disorders commonly associated with teenage girls; asks learners to explore the relationship of these disorders to conceptions of beauty popularized by the media through making a collage of conflicting social images that may encourage disordered eating.
- Understanding Mental Illnesses 5 - Attention Deficit Disorder: explains the symptoms of ADHD, and asks learners to participate in activities that may help them understand the challenges faced by young people living with this disorder.

3) The Keys to Mental Health

This module asks students to take a step back to think generally about the various aspects of mental health, and encourages an understanding of steps that can be taken to promote and maintain positive mental health. It concludes by asking students to research the mental health resources close to them via phone, internet, and in their community.

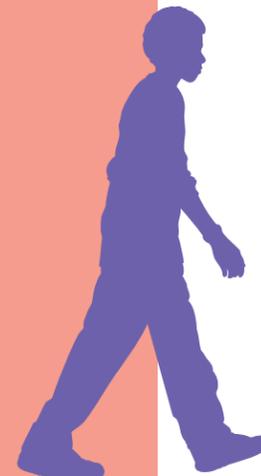
2.2 Module Overview (cont.)

- The Keys to Mental Health 1 - Stress: introduces learners to the concepts of both positive and negative stress, and strategies for stress-management.
- The Keys to Mental Health 2 - Sleep: helps learners to understand that aspects of mental health may be strongly impacted by their lifestyle.
- The Keys to Mental Health 3 - Ingredients for Mental Health:; asks learners to do independent research about the ingredients for a mentally healthy life, and to creatively express their key findings.
- The Keys to Mental Health 4 - Access to Mental Health Resources: asks learners to create resource pages for mental health resources available in their area in order to better understand what supports exist in their community and beyond, as well as different approaches to care.

4) Mental Health and Society

This module promotes an understanding of all the resources available to young people to access mental health care and information. It concludes the unit by asking students to take a step back to think generally about mental health and its various aspects in social environments.

- Mental Health and Society 1 - Supporting Friends and Family: asks learners to think about ways that they can support friends and family by exploring firsthand accounts from young people living with mental illness, and completing an interactive video and discussion.
- Mental Health and Society 2 - Mental Health in the Workplace: asks learners to explore their skills and interests in order to apply them to career opportunities; asks learners to identify problems that may arise in their work environment as well as ways to address these problems.
- Mental Health and Society 3 - Mental Illness and the News: asks learners to investigate a powerful source of information – the news – by reading articles addressing mental health/mental illness and evaluating whether these present a holistic, healthy understanding of mental illness or whether they perpetuate stereotypes, based on what they have learned about stigma.
- Mental Health and Society 4 - Mental Illness and the Law: asks learners to explore their rights and responsibilities in the context of the law and mental health in order to better understand their country's healthcare policies, as well as make informed decisions in care.



3. Getting Started

3.1 Preparing to Talk about Mental Health

This module asks students to take a step back to think generally about the various aspects of mental health, and encourages an understanding of steps that can be taken to promote and maintain positive mental health. It concludes by asking students to research the mental health resources close to them via phone, internet, and in their community.

Talking about mental health and mental illness in the classroom may raise some issues that are sensitive for some young people. As one in five youth may suffer from mental illness, it is almost inevitable that some of your students have experienced the effects of mental illness, or will at some point during their lives. It is important to understand that young people may feel uncomfortable sharing their experiences, or may not want to discuss topics of a personal nature.

If a student approaches you with concerns about their mental health or the mental health of a friend or family member, or if you notice behaviours that may be characteristic of a mental illness, it is important to take action in order to assist that individual. This can include finding appropriate health and community resources best suited to the situation and circumstances. It is also important to understand and convey to your students that stress is a natural part of mental health and in moderation can be a positive influence on performance and achievement. This does not discount that students feeling stress beyond what can be considered a 'normal' range may need to seek professional help. Stress is normal and manageable, but there is a tipping point at which stress can become detrimental to a student's health and well-being.

Further information on what can be considered a healthy level of stress can be found here: http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=2-28

Before using the modules provided in the Mental Health Thematic Classroom, it is advised that you speak to the school guidance counselor and school administration so that they may be prepared for a potential increase in students who wish to talk about their personal struggles or be referred to a mental health professional. Make sure a guidance counselor is available following class to address any questions or concerns.

Discussions about mental illness may raise the issue of suicide. While this is appropriate within the broader context of mental illness, it is important that the discussion not become focused on suicide. Any discussion of suicide should: 1) avoid portraying suicide as romantic, heroic or tragic; 2) avoid increasing knowledge about methods of suicide; and 3) emphasize the importance of seeking help and of everyone's responsibility to tell a trusted adult if a friend mentions thoughts of suicide, even if that person asks for it to be kept a secret. Emphasize that everyone has a personal

3.2 Setting up Your TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom

To set up a thematic classroom, follow the instructions provided below.

Join or login to TakingITGlobal

- If you have a TakingITGlobal account, begin by signing in. If you are not yet a member of the community, begin by creating a free account.

Access the Mental Health Thematic Classroom Landing Page

- Access the Mental Health Thematic Classroom Landing Page in one of the following ways:
 1. Click on 'Resources' at the top of the TIGed home page (www.tiged.org) or enter www.tiged.org/resources into the address bar of any browser to access the TIGed Resources page. Once there, scroll down to the 'Thematic Classrooms' section and select Mental Health from the list by clicking the heading.
 2. Enter <http://www.tigweb.org/tiged/projects/mentalhealth/> into the address bar of any browser.
- Once on the mental health thematic classroom landing page, click 'Set up your virtual classroom' to proceed.

Identify Your School

- The next step is to identify your school so that the thematic classroom you create can be housed within it.
 - If you are new to TIGed and are not yet a member of a school, you'll be asked to search for your school. Do this by selecting your country from the drop down list under "School Search" and entering your school's name in the keyword field before clicking "Search".
 - ♦ If you find your school in the list of search results, you can join the school.
 - ♦ If your school does not appear in the search results, you can add it. You will be asked to enter basic information about your school, create your school's TIGed web address, set up a registration code for other teachers to use when joining the school, and set student privacy settings.
 - If you are already a teacher within one or more TIGed schools, you will be asked to confirm the school within which you'd like to create your classroom. You'll then choose whether to import the thematic classroom content into an existing classroom or create a new one.

3.2 Setting up Your TIGed Mental Health Thematic Classroom

Create Your Classroom

- Click “Create Class” from your school page to create your classroom. You’ll be able to import the mental health thematic classroom content, select the online tools you’d like to employ, and otherwise configure your classroom.

Payment

- Thematic classrooms are provided to you **free of charge** through the support of the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health. However if you would like to use the virtual classroom platform to teach about other subjects, you do have the option of purchasing an annual TIGed membership.

Confirmation

- After successfully creating your TIGed thematic classroom you’ll view a confirmation screen with a summary of information about your classroom. You can print this page for your records, but the information displayed here will also be available at any time through your school and class settings.

3.3 Getting Support

Visit the TIGed support page at www.tiged.org/support to access video tutorials, frequently asked questions, real-time support through virtual office hours, and a comprehensive User’s Manual that will help you make the best of what TIGed has to offer. If you cannot find what you are looking for, simply email the TIGed team at education@takingitglobal.org for personalized assistance.

4. Related Mental Health Resources

4.1 The International Student Video Conference on Mental Health

Connect with other classrooms around the world through video conferencing to discuss issues related to mental health. Students will have a chance to hear guest speakers and interact with students in different locations, fostering global awareness and understanding. These conferences will be held annually for World Mental Health Day. Sign up information and further details about how to participate will be posted to the Mental Health Thematic Classroom landing page.

4.1 Mental Health Games

The thematic classroom includes two interactive trivia games created to enhance student learning in the classroom. These games allow students to engage with the material through a fun and engaging medium. Access these games through the thematic classroom, or by visiting www.tigweb.org/games.

Mind Match: Mental Health Trivia: A card matching game that tests speed, memory and mental health knowledge through trivia questions and interesting facts about mental health.

Brain Waves: Mental Health Trivia: A game show style trivia game that allows participants to compete for points by answering questions about mental health and earn increasing points by answering questions of an increasing level of difficulty.

5. Activity Planner

While it is recommended that educators use the full set of activities, those with limited time may wish to use a condensed version of the program or to select individual lessons using the table below. Please note that the subjects and 21st century skills utilized for each activity is not an extensive list (e.g. each of these activities is relevant for a health class), but rather a guideline for incorporating these activities into a variety of classroom settings.

Activity Planner

Module/Activity	Time	Core	Subjects most closely aligned	21st Century Skills
Module 1: Get Informed!				
1: Introduction to Mental Illness	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Issues • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Initiative and Self-Direction • Information Literacy
2 : Stigma	45 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts • Life Skills • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Information Literacy • Leadership and Responsibility
3 : Experience with Mental Illness	30-40 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Language Arts • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Initiative and Self-Direction • Information Literacy
4: History of Mental Illness	60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Global Issues • History • Language Arts • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Information Literacy • ICT Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
5: The Brain	45-60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Language Arts • Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • ICT Literacy

Module/Activity	Time	Core	Subjects most closely aligned	21st Century Skills
Module 2: Understanding Mental Illnesses				
1: Mood Disorders	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Language Arts • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction
2: Anxiety Disorders	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Information Literacy • Leadership and Responsibility
3 : Schizophrenia	45 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • ICT Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction
4 : Eating Disorders	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Language Arts • Media Studies • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • ICT Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction
5: Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder	30 mins..	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Language Arts • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Information Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction

Module/Activity	Time	Core	Subjects most closely aligned	21st Century Skills
Module 3: The Keys to Mental Health				
1A: Stress (in-class/meditation exercise)	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Communication and Collaboration • Flexibility and Adaptability • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Initiative and Self-Direction
1B: Stress (online discussion)	30-45 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Language Arts • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Collaboration • Flexibility and Adaptability • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Initiative and Self-Direction • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
2: Sleep and Mental Health	30-60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Skills • Science • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy
3: The Keys to Mental Health	30-60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Language Arts • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction
4: Access to Mental Health Resources	45 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Initiative and Self-Direction • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Leadership and Responsibility

Module/Activity	Time	Core	Subjects most closely aligned	21st Century Skills
Module 4: Mental Health and Society				
1: Supporting Friends and Family	30 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • ICT Literacy • Information Literacy • Flexibility and Adaptability • Initiative and Self-Direction • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Leadership and Responsibility
2: Mental Health and the Workplace	30-60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts • Life Skills • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Leadership and Responsibility • Productivity and Accountability
3 : Mental illness and the News	60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Language Arts • Life Skills • Media Studies • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • ICT Literacy
4 : Mental illness and the Law	60 mins.	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civics • Life Skills • Social Studie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Collaboration • Information Literacy • Media Literacy

6. Resources and References

Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health, www.teenmentalhealth.org

This award-winning website provides written information, videos, blogs, PowerPoint presentations and downloadable resources in clear language. The site targets youth and their families, educators, and healthcare providers.

Canadian Mental Health Association, www.cmha.ca

CMHA National has a comprehensive range of information available to download from their website, including a complete series of pamphlets with vital information on mental health and mental illness. Additionally, you will find many resources pertaining to mental health and high school for teachers, parents and students at www.cmha.ca/highschool

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, <http://www.aacap.org/>

The AACAP website contains a wide range of information on childhood and adolescent mental health and illness geared toward different audiences, including educators and parents.

Parents and Teachers as Allies http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/Youth/Parents_and_Teachers_as_Allies.htm

By Joyce Burland, Ph.D., National Director, NAMI Education, Training and Peer Support Center, Second Edition, 2003. Available through NAMI, c/o Lynne Saunders, Colonial PlaceThree, 2017 Wilson Blvd. Suite 300. Arlington, VA. 22201-3042 or by fax (703) 524-9094. (\$1.00 per copy)

Parents and Teachers as Allies is a useful guide that can help parents and teachers identify the key warning signs of early-onset mental illness among children and adolescents. It focuses on specific age-related symptoms of mental illness in young people, which may differ from criteria for diagnosis among adults.

National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

The NIMH website contains up-to date and reliable information about a wide range of issues relating to mental health and illness across the lifespan.

World Health Organization [WHO] (2004) Prevention of Mental Disorders. Geneva, Switzerland

* More information on specific mental illnesses, classroom resources, and links for young people are provided in the files and bookmarks sections of your Mental Health Thematic Classroom.

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For a corresponding toolkit for students, download the guide to action from:

tigurl.org/mhgta

OR

teenmentalhealth.org/guide2action

For further information, please contact one of the following:

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