

The Jed Foundation (JED) is dedicated to protecting emotional health and preventing suicide for America's teens and young adults, giving them the skills and support they need to thrive today—and tomorrow.

We do this by helping schools in three key ways. We develop, evaluate, and strengthen mental health, substance misuse prevention and suicide prevention programs and systems designed to safeguard student mental health and build connected school communities. We develop evidence-based resources and forge powerful partnerships to ensure more teens and young adults are able to access the resources and support they need to navigate life's challenges. And we work across systems to ensure that students, families, and communities know when and how to support teens and young adults who are struggling with a mental health issue.

Storytelling is a powerful way to achieve these goals. This is why we are proud to partner with Principle Pictures and PBS-WETA's WellBeings on *Our Turn to Talk*, a new documentary film. *Our Turn to Talk* follows teen mental health advocate and podcast host Anastasia Vlasova during her senior year of high school as she explores how mental health intersects with growing up, learning about yourself, and taking a stand in the world. Using her own story as a springboard, Anastasia invites us to accompany her as she meets, talks, and learns from a diverse group of young people who share the ups and downs of their mental health journeys. Alongside powerful stories of hardship are equally powerful stories of hope. The film beautifully integrates stories of, hope, help, healing, and transformation, finding inspiration from young storytellers who shared their journeys as part of the first This Is My Brave National Teen Show. Viewers of all ages will come away inspired and uplifted.

Our goal is to share the wisdom of the young storytellers in *Our Turn to Talk* with as many audiences as we can, because we are confident that young people, families, schools, and other youth-serving professionals and decision-makers will benefit from its messages. The more people we can equip to have sometimes hard—but much needed—conversations about mental health and suicide, the stronger the safety net we can build for all teens and young adults.

That is why JED, in collaboration with Principle Pictures and PBS-WETA's WellBeings, develops resources and calls to action that proactively address the needs of young people and their families to prevent youth suicide.

Our Turn to Talk contains mature mental health and suicide related themes and content. It's important that viewers with personal experience with suicide or mental health challenges have adequate support readily available when they watch. Viewers younger than 15 years of age may benefit from viewing with an adult present or nearby.

jedfoundation.org 1





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ABOUT

Teenagers are putting an end to mental health stigma. To do it, they're telling their own stories—unfiltered—in the documentary film and teen-hosted podcast series *Our Turn to Talk*. From skyrocketing rates of anxiety and depression to the impacts of racism, social media, and the pandemic, their struggles and triumphs carry a powerful message: Storytelling saves lives. That truth is what motivated high school senior Anastasia Vlasova to start a podcast. And audiences join her on her journey as she shares her story and travels across the country to give other teens a chance to share theirs. Real, raw, and life-affirming, *Our Turn to Talk* comes at a time when it's needed most. It's become a defining film, podcast series, and impact project to normalize conversations about mental health with young people and all those who care about them.

OUR TURN TO TALK TESTIMONIALS

- "Our Turn to Talk is a powerful call to action...at times heartbreaking and at times hopefilled, it's being released into a world that truly needs it. There is so much to learn from these brave teens and families."
- Pam N., high school counselor in Plymouth County, Massachusetts
- "Our Turn to Talk authentically elevates the perspectives of youth and young adults to influence the mental health conversation, while communicating to teens everywhere that their story matters and can save lives."
- Alison Malmon, Founder and Executive Director, Active Minds
- "Our Turn to Talk is a ground-breaking documentary for GenZ. There's more and more evidence that storytelling is connected to better mental health outcomes and that storytelling really can save lives. It's a must-watch film to help start this important conversation in our homes, classrooms, and communities."
- Jennifer Marshall, Co-Founder, This Is My Brave

"Amazing film—so important, so timely. Anyone who knows teenagers needs to see this."

- Nicole, parent of four teens



"My son didn't think mental health had anything to do with him. Then he watched this film and opened up about his own struggles...I'm so grateful."

- Holly, mom of 16-year-old

"Such a big part of our world as school counselors is how much we help students with coping. And that's why I love this film, because it really gives them a head start."

-Deirdra Hawkes, Director of Programs and Advocacy, American School Counselor Association

"This is incredibly powerful. I am a high school counselor, and my department struggles with breaking down the stigma all the time. It is REAL. I so appreciate this movie using youth voices and youth stories."

- High school counselor in Jackson County, Missouri

"The film is beautifully and brilliantly done. It should be incorporated into schools."

- High school counselor in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

"I'm so excited that this documentary is out there. Thank you for this documentary."

-High school counselor in Harris County, Texas

"THIS IS EXCELLENT!! I'm bringing it to our school."

-High school counselor in New London County, Connecticut



A NOTE FROM THE FILMMAKERS

Beth Murphy, Patrice Howard, Steph Khoury

"We believe in storytelling as one of the most powerful ways to build empathy, inspire action, and create change. We all know about post-traumatic stress syndrome. But there's also something called post-traumatic growth. Because the experience of trauma is something that unites us all, we want to highlight the ways young people who have dealt with adversity have been transformed by their experiences. Resilience and hope are the defining qualities of their lived experiences and we can all learn from their wisdom. We are so grateful to the brave storytellers who shared their stories with us and to Jennifer Marshall, founder of This is My Brave, whose work breaking down stigma through live storytelling was an inspiration for the film and podcast."

Anastasia Vlasova, Podcast Host, Our Turn to Talk

"My generation is the first to be outspoken about our mental health. But we have a long way to go to help others do the same. Our Turn to Talk is using storytelling and research to demonstrate that our feelings are more than teenage angst. With every worry, stressor, and childhood trauma we share through conversation, we defy the societal norm of concealing what might stigmatize us. In doing so, we're shaping a new more empathetic world where mental well-being is a priority for everyone. This film and its companion podcast series transcend generational barriers, revealing that vulnerability is an aspirational strength and source of connection for everyone."

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

BETH MURPHY, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER, OUR TURN TO TALK



Beth is mom to an incredible teen daughter and athlete who struggled with depression, anxiety, and an eating disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic. She is also the founder of Principle Pictures, a media and impact company dedicated to storytelling for social impact—through films, podcasts, news reports, and complementary impact campaigns. Her work premiers at top-tier film festivals globally and can be found across national and international media outlets, including PBS (FRONTLINE, POV, Independent Lens and NewsHour), The New York Times Op-Docs, TIME, History Channel, The Sundance Channel, Discovery Networks,

Lifetime, ABC News, Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting, The Washington Post, PRI The World, NHK, Canal Vie, and many others. Her honors include: Emmy Award, World Press Photo Award, Overseas Press Club Award, Scripps Howard Award, National Headliner Award, Webby Award, RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Award, AWRT's Gracie Allen Award, One Shared World International Outreach Award, and Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.



PATRICE HOWARD, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER, OUR TURN TO TALK



Patrice Howard is a multimedia journalist, documentary filmmaker, and writer with a passion for sharing stories about people and issues that don't always make headlines. She joined Principle Pictures in 2018, where she is producing character-driven documentary films and digital-first stories. She directed and produced *Our Turn to Talk*, this documentary film focused on teens living—and thriving—with mental illness. She is also a producer on the podcast. Patrice was previously a bureau chief and on-air correspondent for Feature Story News, covering US news for international broadcast and digital networks. She is a graduate of Boston University's College of Communication and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism where she received the Video Storytelling Award.

STEPHANIE KHOURY, EDITOR/WRITER



Stephanie Khoury began her career as a storyteller by documenting life through her drawings and now spends her time collaging moments into films. As a documentary film editor, she's worked on several films, long and short, that aim to inspire empathy and understanding. Her work has been published on NPR, The New York Times Op-Docs, National Geographic, and she's contributed to series for TIME, Vox Media, PBS, and Newest Americans. In 2019, she was named a Karen Schmeer Diversity in the Edit Room Mentee. Stephanie is a graduate of the Documentary Studies and Production program at Ithaca College, where she also minored in Art and Environmental Studies and was honored with the Faculty Award for Documentary Studies and Production program.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to help viewers reflect on the stories and themes raised in *Our Turn to Talk*. It contains information about core themes, offers questions to consider during and after viewing, and includes resources for learning more or getting help if needed. *Our Turn to Talk* contains themes and issues that are ideal for generating productive reflection and conversation. It is ideally viewed in a group or with trusted friends or family members. The content and the sensitivity with which it is treated are likely to evoke a range of emotions, thoughts and physical reactions, all of which can be shared as part of a larger conversation about important but often challenging topics, including but not limited to suicidal thoughts and actions. The personal reflections *Our Turn to Talk* surfaces are an important part of the experience and offer invaluable opportunities for meaningful conversation and connection.

We anticipate that viewers of *Our Turn to Talk* will include a mix of individuals with their own mental health journeys and stories. Some will have passed through periods of intense struggle and will view the film while in the process of healing or from the vantage point of having recovered. Others may be struggling currently and not yet able to see light on the horizon. And still others will encounter *Our Turn to Talk* having not yet experienced mental health challenges, in their own lives or the lives of people they love, that will later become a part of their story. We expect that regardless of the personal lens one has, viewing *Our Turn to Talk* will affirm and help normalize the feelings and experiences associated with asking and answering some of the most difficult questions in life:

- What happens when life feels unbearable?
- How do you find solace, sanity, and connection in the midst of mental and emotional confusion?
- What makes a life worth living, especially when you feel hopeless or disconnected?

We hope that by featuring the answers that the young people discovered, viewers will come away with a deeper understanding of how mental health affects everyday life and relationships, how tightly it is woven into individual and collective well-being, and how vital it is to have compassion for ourselves and others who may be struggling. Talking about mental health and/or thoughts of suicide and its effects on individuals and families isn't easy, but open dialogue is necessary for ensuring we provide everyone who needs it with access to care, love, and support.

If you watch with a small group, be mindful that other viewers bring a diverse array of life experiences and sensitivities to your shared viewing experience. It will be important for facilitators to create an open and supportive environment, where honest and perhaps tender feelings, experiences, and impressions can be shared safely. Collective, authentic conversation is potent in healing and stigma reduction and encouraging and supporting both of these is a primary goal of this film.



HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

Our Turn to Talk is best experienced communally, as part of a group, class, or with trusted friends and/or family. Because it is likely to evoke strong reactions, it is an effective springboard for initiating reflection and conversation related to a wide variety of feelings, thoughts, and opinions. In this way, it is a powerful tool for enhancing self-awareness and for deepening understanding of—and compassion for—common mental health experiences so many contemporary youth and adults experience.

Getting Started

Any organization that wishes to host a screening can visit The Jed Foundation's website at https://jedfoundation.org/our-turn-to-talk/ to get a link to view the film with their community. For a detailed screening checklist click here.

What to Know about the Film's Key Themes and Messaging

This film features young people sharing their stories across an array of topics and themes. With Anastaisa accompanying viewers through each person's journey, the film is authentic, real, and powerful. The stories also touch on a wide variety of themes: mental health challenges, suicide, coping and well-being, stigma, recovery, healing and growth, relationships, gender identity and sexual orientation, racism, and community prevention and promotion. While some elements may be hard for viewers with who share similar stories, the overarching message is one of hope, help, and healing. Taken as a whole, the film offers powerful fodder for rich reflection and conversation. The topics included are handled with care and compassion and meet the standards for language and representation meant to destigmatize mental health issues and to empower and protect young people.

Having candid conversations about how people feel, what they struggle with, and what supports they have or need in place to cope with stress saves lives. *Our Turn to Talk* enables viewers to have candid conversations about critical topics in their own lives and the lives of those they love.

- By 2021, more than 30% of young adults aged 18-25 experienced a mental health challenge. Over 60% of students met criteria for one or more mental health problems, a nearly 50% increase since 2013. (SAMHSA, 2021; LIPSON ET. AL., 2022)
- Between 2007 and 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 in the U.S. increased by 57%. (CDC, 2020)
- By 2020 suicide was the third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds. (CDC, 2020)
- Among college students, in the past year, 13% had serious thoughts of suicide, 5% made a suicide plan, 1% attempted suicide, and 23% engaged in non-suicidal self-injury. (Healthy Minds Study, 2021)



Film Participants

Anastasia (18) developed a passion for mental health advocacy after recovering from an eating disorder, anxiety, and depression—mental health issues that began in 7th grade when she started spending a lot of time on Instagram. Shame and embarrassment kept her silent about what she was going through for nearly five years. Only once she spoke openly about her experiences did her healing journey begin. And it wasn't long before her activism and advocacy started. While interning with a mental health organization her senior year of high school, Anastasia started a podcast for young people to share stories about their experiences and show the world how important it is to talk openly about these issues.

Young Elder (19) knows that while hurt people can go on to hurt others, it's also true that healed people can heal people. And that's her mission in her hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, a city shaped by structural inequality and systemic racism. While highlighting the community trauma people in Baltimore experience, Elder writes and performs powerful rap songs and is invited to join the Mayor's Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Starting in Season 2 of the podcast, she joins Anastasia as host.

Ryver (16) found it hard growing up in rural North Carolina where no one—not even her family—would support her coming out as transgender at the age of 13. She turned to music as her most powerful coping mechanism to battle depression, body dysphoria, and bipolar disorder. With her family now supporting her, she is embracing speaking out for herself and for others and sending a message that things really can—and do—get better.

Morgan Urso (17) was kicked off her Team Illinois hockey team after telling her coach that she was struggling with severe depression and suicidal thoughts. The news came as a blow to her and her family, who ultimately filed a lawsuit accusing Team Illinois Hockey Club and the Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois of discrimination. Morgan, now back on the ice, is sharing her story so that no other young athlete is sidelined while struggling with their mental health.

Dylan Buckner (18) was the star quarterback of his high school football team, even while going through an intense battle with depression. When his sports season was canceled due to the pandemic, Dylan's parents say the isolation made their son's struggle especially challenging, and he ultimately died by suicide. Dylan's parents and his brother are now sharing his story to help others recognize that mental illness can affect anyone, even those who appear to have everything going for them.



Teen Chorus

Most of the teens featured in the film's chorus shared the true stories of their mental health challenges in the first This Is My Brave National Teen Show. Watch it here.

Joe (17) has a dry sense of humor, a knack for card tricks, and a love of reciting poetry. When thoughts of suicide and self-harm haunt him, he finds refuge in writing. Joe says his commitment to ending stigma was critical to his survival. "If I hadn't talked about it, I wouldn't be sitting here," says Joe.

Abigayle (15) is a high school student battling PTSD, depression, severe anxiety, and anorexia after being sexually assaulted by a classmate. The thing that helps her push through pain? Dance. "I hope to create a safe feeling for people when they watch me dance. I want people to know that it is okay to struggle as long as you pick yourself back up stronger than before."

Jada (16) has struggled with clinical depression and anxiety for years. An incredibly talented musician, singer, and songwriter, Jada was adopted from China as an infant, something she ties to her mental health struggles because of feelings of loss and abandonment. "Now that I'm more open about my story, I can more easily accept how I feel," says Jada.

MaDarrius (18) was involved in a devastating dirt bike accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. The depression and anxiety provoked by his new reality felt overwhelming, until he discovered the healing power of music: "There's a lot of things I can't feel because I'm paralyzed—the ground that's under my feet. But music? I can feel it, it tingles in my body."

Daijah (16) was bullied for much of her life. She is a talented singer and linguist who spends her time writing and says it is the most effective way to work through her stress and boost her self-esteem. Daijah left her private school to engage in homeschool learning and learn from her fiercest supporter—her Mom.

Aarna (17) has been coping with anxiety and depression for a long time, especially as a child in India where the topic of mental health was rarely addressed. Now in the United States, Aarna is tackling stigma around mental illness by sharing her story and encouraging others to do the same through a peer-to-peer listening therapy program she started at her school and as a crisis line volunteer.

Kamri (17) hails from Baltimore, Maryland where she volunteers as a peer mentor with the Healing Youth Alliance to address untreated trauma and the stigma around receiving mental health treatment in the Black community. While Karmri is healing from her own trauma, she's teaching others how to help young people who need support.



WHAT VIEWERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WATCHING OUR TURN TO TALK

Things to keep in mind for viewers before they watch the film:

- → The film's complete run time is 65 minutes.
- This film contains honest conversations between young people about mental health, including suicide and thoughts of self-harm.
- → While the filmmakers have been careful in how they present these stories and all of the stories focus on turning points, hope, and healing, it does not mean the topics will be comfortable for all viewers. Individuals with current or recent mental health challenges, especially if they are youth under 15, should be in the presence of an adult who can monitor their reactions and provide support as needed while viewing.
- Remember that while these are stories of real people, this is a film, and you are in control of how you watch it.

Things to keep in mind for viewers after they have watched the film:

- At the end of the film, viewers should allow themselves time to relax and reflect on their personal reactions to the film and what they heard and saw.
- → If you are viewing as a group and planning to discuss the film after watching it together, it may be helpful to invite your group members to stand up and have a movement break before starting the conversation.
- → A brief period of journaling and/or quiet reflection can also offer a useful way to allow individuals or groups to process their observations of the film.
- → If you are watching alone or at home with others, it is a good idea to check in with a friend or with your group about how you are doing before dispersing the group or discussing your observations of the film together.
- → Allow space for a full range of emotional responses while you watch it. While this film was made to provide hope and comfort to viewers, if the content of the film is too disturbing or upsetting, stop watching it.
- → Delve into the guide and begin to engage on the discussion topics when you or your viewing group is ready.



- → If you find that post-viewing feelings, personally or in the viewer group you are supporting, are overwhelming or impacting someone's ability to function (for example, trouble sleeping, eating, concentrating, or enjoying things), please seek—or encourage seeking—help from a loved one or professional.
- → If someone needs to talk to someone right away, they can text HOME to 741-741 or call or text the Suicide Crisis Lifeline at 988. If this is a medical emergency or if there is immediate danger of harm, call 911 and explain that you need support for a mental health crisis.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

We encourage viewers to explore these important questions that inform the film's creation to spark conversation about how we can support each other, young people, and their families in the pursuit of emotional well-being.

- 1) What emotions did you experience most frequently and intensely while watching Our Turn to Talk?
- 2) Which person's story do you find the most relatable? What about that story spoke to you?
- 3) Which of the stories shared would you be most interested in knowing more about or continuing to follow?
- 4) What are your biggest takeaways from the film?
- 5) What questions do you have after watching the film?
- 6) What themes did you notice across the stories? What were the noticeable differences?
- 7) What turning points did you notice in the stories?
- 8) What parts of the stories surprised you?
- 9) What did you notice about the kinds of support and coping techniques young people in the film most relied on and found most helpful?
- 10) What did you notice about the role of help-seeking and treatment in the film?
- 11) What inspired you or left you feeling hopeful?



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Tell others about *Our Turn to Talk* and what you hope they will learn by watching. Share some of our social media language or create your own:

- In a time of uncertainty and change, many young people have experienced mental health issues. #OurTurnToTalk features relatable stories of struggle and hope.
- Talking about mental health can save a life. The doc #OurTurnToTalk goes deep with young people to discuss their experiences with mental health challenges and recovery.
- Ending mental health stigma happens by supporting conversations about the ways Our Turn to Talk relates to each of our lives and beliefs. Let's support each other by finding ways to tell our own stories of challenge, healing, and hope.

GET INVOLVED

Together, we can help America's teens and young adults grow into thriving adults. Here is how:

1) Get the Facts

Sound mental health is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our youth. Learn more about mental health, suicide prevention, and how to help yourself or a friend.

2) Become an Advocate

Your voice matters. Whether it's speaking up for a friend, hosting a fundraising event or spreading awareness online, you can exert an extraordinary influence on the lives of others. Advocacy actions you can take to make a difference.

3) Put Your Money to Work

Your financial support helps teens and young adults respond to their emotional challenges and lead lives of promise and possibility. Make a tax-deductible donation now or start your own Fundraise for JED page.

4) Take the Survey and/or Share Your Story

The filmmakers/podcast producers want to hear what you think! Click here to take the post-screening survey and have an opportunity to share your story. With new seasons of the Our Turn to Talk podcast in production now, there are lots of opportunities to have your voice heard.



FUTURE RESOURCES

The **Jed Foundation's Mental Health Resource Center** provides essential information about common emotional health issues and shows teens and young adults how they can support one another, overcome challenges, and make a successful transition to adulthood.

Young adulthood can be a time of significant change and intense challenges. We see the effects every day: a death from binge drinking, an overdose, a suicide. These tragedies are complex and their warning signs often subtle. With the right support and safety nets, the high school and college years can be safer and more manageable.

JED is leading the way to a comprehensive, community-based model of protecting student emotional health and preventing suicide at schools across the country. Working with campus leaders and professionals, JED helps to create campus- and high-school-wide prevention and intervention strategies and advises on best practice mental health policies, programs, and services.

NOTE: THIS GUIDE DOES NOT PROVIDE MEDICAL ADVICE

The information contained in this guide is not intended to be a substitute for—or to be relied upon as—medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers with any health-related questions you may have.

This guide is for informational purposes only.

NEED HELP NOW?

If you are struggling, there is good help available. Reach out for it.

For a referral for mental health treatment, call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to reach SAMHSA's National Helpline.

You can also find good information on how to find affordable mental health care, take care of your mental health while you are waiting for care, and find a good fit with a mental health professional in How to Get Help.

If you or someone you know needs to talk to someone right now, text HOME to 741-741 for a free confidential conversation with a trained counselor at any time.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, including substance misuse or suicide, text or call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.



If this is a medical emergency or if there is immediate danger of harm, call 911. Let the operator know that you are calling about a mental health emergency and follow these tips to ensure the police arrive prepared to respond appropriately.

If you're worried about yourself or a friend, trust that instinct and take action now.

Learn more about emotional health issues and what to do if you're worried about yourself or someone else in JED's **Mental Health Resource Center**.

Learn how to recognize warning signs that someone may be in distress and how to Help a Friend in Need.

Additional Crisis Services

Trans Lifeline: Call 1-877-565-8860

The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+) Helpline: Call 1-866-4UTREVOR (1-866-488-7386), chat online,

or text START to 678 678

Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then press 1, chat online, or text 838255

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or chat online

National Runaway Safeline: Call 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929) or chat online

Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): Call 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or chat online

Other Resources

How to Get Help

What You Need to Know About Suicide

How and When To Start a Conversation with a Struggling Friend