

# The Healthy Minds Network

## For Research on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health

Research Brief #5

December 2013

### The Need & The Opportunity

A small percentage of students are reached using traditional methods of primary and secondary prevention. Exploring innovative ways of reaching more students is warranted.

Page 2

### Developing innovative mental health applications

HMN is attempting to change the culture around mental health in the eyes of young people – introducing: *inkblots* & *tinyshifts*.

Page 2 & 3

### Upcoming Webinar

Harnessing Social Media: Entering the World of Young People to Promote Wellness and Resilience. Details about the webinar and how to sign up, herein.

Page 4

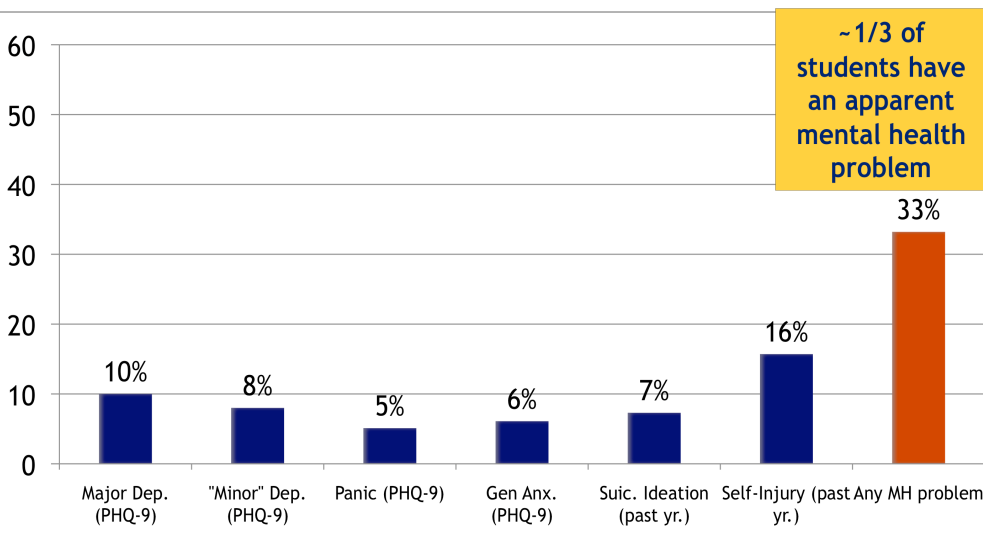
## Social Media as a Conduit for Mental Health Interventions

*Reaching young people in new ways.*

### The Problem

An estimated 1 in every 3 college students screens positive for a mental disorder, and less than 50% of these students receive mental health treatment<sup>1</sup>. The most commonly reported reasons for not seeking treatment include: “I prefer to deal with issues on my own”, “I question how serious my needs are”, “stress is normal in college/graduate school” and “I don’t have time”<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, there is the well-documented problem of perceived stigma and embarrassment associated with help-seeking behavior.

*The Need & The Opportunity (page 2)*



Source: Healthy Minds Study (2010-2012)



### HMN Announcements

**Webinar: *Harnessing Social Media: Entering the World of Young People to Promote Wellness and Resilience***

December 9, 3-4pm (ET) and December 11, 12-1pm (ET)

*See page 4*

**RSVP for The College Mental Health Research Symposium**  
March 11-12, 2014 in Ann Arbor, Michigan

RSVP: [healthyminds@umich.edu](mailto:healthyminds@umich.edu)

**University Eating Disorder Awareness Walk**

*See page 4*

## The Need

The alarming prevalence of mental disorders among college populations illustrates the need for the development of primary and secondary prevention measures. However, engaging students in health and wellness activities is challenging. Health fairs, educational seminars, and support groups are useful and necessary but the reality is, these venues only reach a small percentage of students.



## The Opportunity

The Internet is a natural forum for delivering mental health interventions to college students, given this age group's frequent use of online media and applications<sup>3</sup>. A number of online interventions have been developed for college students, with promising results; however, their reach and impact are limited by cost, stigma, and inconvenience. Because younger populations can be reached through social networks and online media, there is an exciting, untapped opportunity for universal prevention and intervention.

## Developing an Innovative Video-based Intervention

Now more than ever, preventive approaches need to include brief and captivating modalities to engage young people and motivate them to seek help and address their mental health. The inkblots video series has been developed with that premise. The videos were first created by a father-son team of Blake Wagner, Jr., Ph.D. (clinical psychologist) and Blake Wagner, III and have focused on coping skills and self-efficacy, largely from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. The central theme is that “tiny shifts can lead to big changes”—i.e., subtle changes in how we approach life can yield large and lasting benefits. The distinguishing feature of these videos compared to the majority of other online mental health resources is that they are not only grounded in evidence-based concepts but are also designed to be highly engaging and can be easily disseminated through social media channels.

The Wagners began in 2011 by holding student focus groups at a state university, a technical college, a private liberal arts college, and a school of nursing. The goal was to determine what mental health information students want, need, and are willing to use. Five characteristics were highlighted by the groups: engaging (e.g., humor, music, and fast pace); relevant (e.g., peer-aged narrators and actors, and issues with broad impact such as relationships, self-esteem, and anxiety); convenient/brief (i.e., at most a few minutes, accessible any time and place); confidential and anonymous (e.g., online); and practical (i.e., skills and next steps presented in a simple, clear manner). Preliminary assessments of the videos were conducted with several college classes (N=320), and the feedback was very favorable: 95% found the videos relevant, 91% said the videos provided a useful coping skill, and 93% said they would recommend the videos to a friend.

*Developing an Innovative Social Media Platform & Next Steps (page 3)*

## Developing an Innovative Social Media Platform

As a platform to disseminate the inkblots videos on a large scale and to encourage other young people to develop content of their own, HMN is developing an innovative social media platform (**tinyshifts**) that will serve as an anonymous, peer-to-peer support community for young people to voice problems, difficulties, and challenges to fellow peers who might be experiencing similar issues. The peer community can respond with helpful and practical tips, in the form of brief videos, photos, and text-based messages. We envision tinyshifts developing into an important source for young adults to quickly find solutions to life's challenges. Based on feedback from focus groups students often feel alone and isolated in their suffering. It is our hope that the peer-to-peer approach will foster a sense of universality among young people – to help normalize the most difficult life struggles and demands. Rather than dwell on problems and struggles, however, the site will focus on the positive: how to become more resilient and cope with challenges—a guide to surviving and flourishing in adolescence and young adulthood, by and for young people.

To increase the effectiveness and reach of the social media platform, we will integrate tinyshifts with other sites commonly used by young adults, including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and more. This integration will occur through both the ability to share content from tinyshifts to these general, but very active, social media platforms, as well as pages and accounts where tinyshifts can broadcast content.

## Next Steps

- ***inkblots* videos**

Starting in early 2013, Blake Wagner III joined The Healthy Minds Network (HMN) research team. We have continued to conduct focus groups with students to learn more about how to make the videos even more engaging and relevant. The focus groups have generated further positive feedback about the basic concept of the videos, and have provided many helpful ideas for improvement. Insight from focus groups and experts (including researchers of social media use) is informing the content and delivery of the messages with the aim of increasing the likelihood that the videos will be widely viewed.

In January 2014, we will begin a series of randomized controlled trials to assess the effectiveness of the existing inkblots videos. We have secured funding to produce 10 new videos over the course of the next year; and ongoing evaluations will be conducted following the development of these videos.

To date, the inkblots videos primarily target the “everyday” college student; themes include managing stress and worry, increasing self-compassion, improving relationships, and cultivating optimism. In addition, upcoming videos will target students with more severe and acute distress. These videos will largely focus on increasing formal and informal help-seeking as well as encouraging peer bystander intervention.

If you are interested in integrating the inkblots videos into your outreach programs and initiatives, please email us at [inkblots@umich.edu](mailto:inkblots@umich.edu) for more information.

- **tinyshifts social media platform**

We anticipate launching the tinyshifts website in March 2014. In order for tinyshifts to be successful and integrate with other popular social media platforms where people spend their time, visibility is vital and your voice can help make the difference. If you or your campus/organization would be interested in playing a role in the launch, please email us at [tinyshifts@umich.edu](mailto:tinyshifts@umich.edu) for more information.

# Next Week's Webinar!

(Dec. 9 3-4pm ET & Dec. 11 12-1pm ET)

## *Harnessing Social Media: Entering the World of Young People to Promote Wellness and Resilience*

The webinar will feature two panelists, Dr. Cliff Lampe and Blake Wagner III:

**Dr. Cliff Lampe** is a social media expert and associate professor in the School of Information at the University of Michigan. He researches the social and technical structures of large-scale technology mediated communication, working with sites like Facebook, Wikipedia, and Microsoft. He has also been involved in the creation of multiple social media and online community projects, usually designed to enable

**Blake Wagner III** is the creative director of the Healthy Minds Network's inkblots project. He has been active in designing student outreach programs and motivational speaking. The inkblots ("Tiny shifts can lead to big changes") short film series grew out of his passion to merge often esoteric yet helpful evidence-based coping skills with a hip and digestible 2-to-4 minute film format.



***RSVP** by emailing us at [healthyminds@umich.edu](mailto:healthyminds@umich.edu) or using the contact form on our website, [healthymindsnetwork.org](http://healthymindsnetwork.org). In your RSVP, please include the following: your name and email address; your intended date of participation (December 9 or 11); and questions/comments related to social media or mental health for our panelists to address (optional). HMN webinars are free of charge and require no special software. Content will be the same at both sessions.*

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Zivin, K., Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S. E., & Golberstein, E. (2009). Persistence of mental health problems and needs in a college student population. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 117(3), 180-185.
- <sup>2</sup> Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Gollust, S. E. (2007). Help-Seeking and Access to Mental Health Care in a University Student Population. *Medical Care*, 45, 594-601.
- <sup>3</sup>Ryan, M. L., Shochet, I. M., & Stallman, H. M. (2010). Online Resilience Interventions Might Engage Psychologically Distressed University Students Who are Unlikely to Seek Formal Help. *Advances in Mental Health*, 9, 73-83.

### **First University Eating Disorder Awareness Walk Held at Boston University**

Hynes Recovery Services and co-sponsor, the F.R.E.E.D. Foundation, announce the first University Eating Disorder Awareness Walk, *WalkTowardRecovery*, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 4, 2014, in response to poor body image, eating disorders and co-occurring depression in college students today. For more information, [click here!](#)

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