

CHECK • CONNECT • CARE

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH



FACILITATOR GUIDE

WHAT THIS GUIDE IS FOR

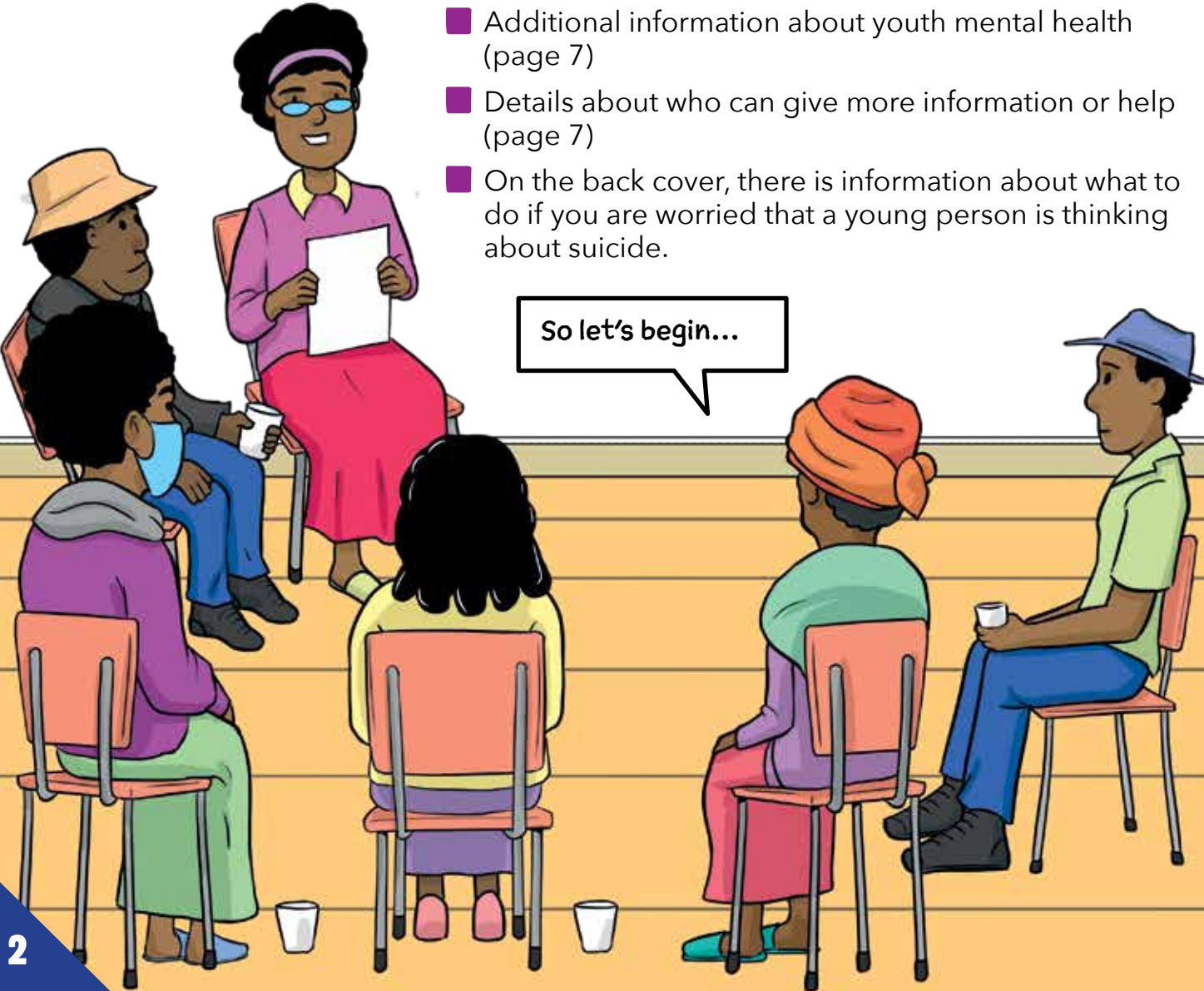
**Our youth are having a difficult time –
but they often find it hard to talk about
this, or to ask for help.**

This guide will help you to organize and run a two-and-a-half hour community meeting to talk about youth mental health, what it is, and how parents/caregivers and community members can help to support the youth.

How to use this guide

This guide is divided up into the following sections:

- How to plan the community meeting (page 3)
- How to run the meeting (page 4)
- What to do straight after the meeting (page 6)
- Additional information about youth mental health (page 7)
- Details about who can give more information or help (page 7)
- On the back cover, there is information about what to do if you are worried that a young person is thinking about suicide.



So let's begin...

1 PLANNING THE MEETING

BEFORE THE MEETING, read through the information on page 7 very carefully. You must be able to share this, and correct any incorrect information, in the meeting!

Also, make sure you have everything you need to run the meeting.



WHO should come? The meeting is for community members, but mostly parents/caregivers of learners at your school. The dialogue will work with small and large groups, from 3 to 40 people. Invite an appropriate number based on what your venue can handle.

WHEN should the meeting happen? Think about the best time for people to come to a meeting, and get home safely.

WHERE should the meeting happen? Anywhere that everyone can be together, and can speak and be heard, and (if possible) can sit down. This could be your school, or a church or a community hall.

HOW will you let people know? Think about how your school usually communicates with parents/caregivers and the broader community. Also think about the ways people in your community are given information about community meetings (for example, hand-made posters at places like the taxi rank, or the clinic, or a local shop, or the church). Remember to tell people what the meeting is about!

What you will need for the meeting

- 1 Copies of the handout
- 2 This facilitator guide
- 3 Something to write with, and something to write on

Setting up before the meeting

If possible, arrange the chairs in a circle.

2 RUNNING THE MEETING



Make sure the meeting is a safe space for everyone - this is a sensitive topic.

Questions to get the small group discussion going

- ? What do you think of the story?
- ? What feelings are the different young people feeling? Why might they be feeling these things?
- ? Can you remember the kinds of feelings you had, when you were their age?
- ? Do you think any youth you know might be having any of these feelings

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION • 5 min

Welcome and thank everyone. Introduce yourself. Remind them of what this meeting is about.

SET THE RULES • 5 min

Set the rules for the meeting: Everyone needs to give everyone else a chance to say what they want. No-one must be forced to say anything. Everyone must listen carefully to what other people are saying, and respect their viewpoint and opinion. Remember that what is spoken about in this meeting is confidential.

HANDOUT • 5 min

Hand out the handout. Make sure everyone has a copy, or that everyone can share a copy.

READ THE STORY • 10 min

Ask them to look at the cartoon story. You can now EITHER read the story to them (or get someone else to), OR you can ask for four people to volunteer to read the different characters in the story.

DISCUSS • 20 min

Ask them to discuss the story with two or three other people. Read out the questions (in the margin) to help them start their discussion. Remind them of the rules. Tell them they have 20 minutes. Whilst they are discussing, walk around the room and check that everyone is able to participate.



SHARE • 15 min

After the 20 minutes tell them to stop. Ask if anyone would like to share anything from the discussion. They don't have to. Make it clear you are not asking for a report-back, because you do not want the meeting to go on for too long.

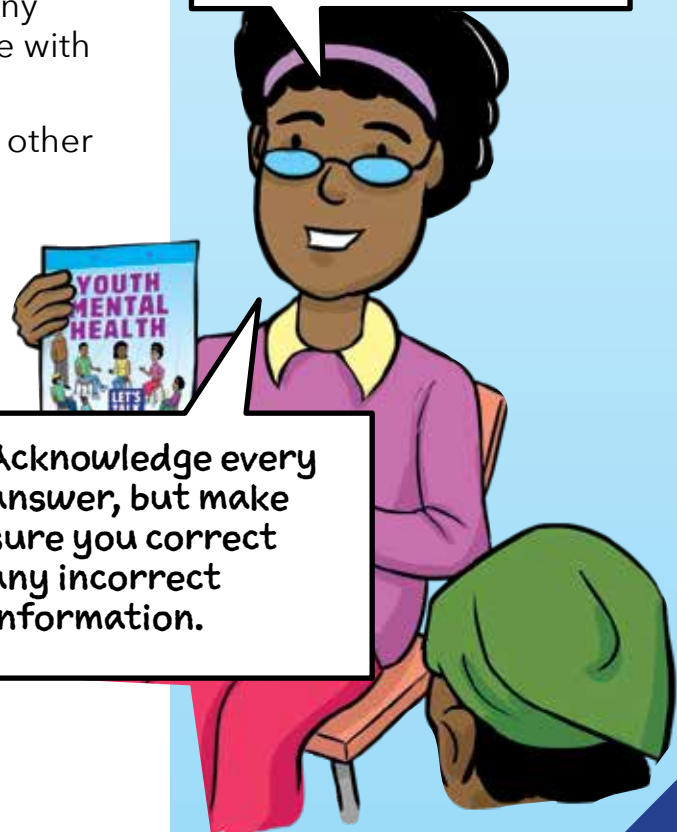
LET'S TALK • 30 min

- Remind them of the different feelings of the characters in the story.
- Ask them whether anyone can explain what depression means. Ensure they understand what this is (see page 7).
- Explain how COVID and the lockdown could have contributed to this - because of fear, loss of family and friends, loss of jobs, not being able to spend time with others.
- Ask whether anyone can explain anxiety. Ensure they understand this (see page 7). For example, people who are suffering from anxiety may worry so much about what other people think of them that they do not want to be with others.
- Ask them to look at the story again. Are there any signs that any of the children are having trouble with their mental health?
- Ask them if they know of, or have heard of, any other warning signs about mental health problems.
- Correct/provide more information as necessary, including about the mental health continuum (see page 7) - make sure they understand that helping young people quickly when they are struggling can help make sure they do not struggle in the future.
- Show them that they have information about the warning signs in their handout. They can remember the importance of warning signs by remembering the word "CHECK".

Remember to keep time.



And remember that there is information about mental health, depression and anxiety on page 7 of this guide!



Acknowledge every answer, but make sure you correct any incorrect information.

Questions to get discussion going – the 3Cs

- 1 How can we **CHECK** on how our young people are doing; and how we are doing?
- 2 How can we help our youth **CONNECT**? Youth need to talk about how they are feeling; so how can we encourage them to talk to someone? How can we **CONNECT** caregivers of children to talk about how they are feeling?
- 3 How can we show our youth that we **CARE**?

LET'S DO • 30 min

Tell them that there is only 30 minutes left. Divide the room in half. Ask the people in the one half of the room to discuss, with two or three people near them, ideas for how young people could be helped. Ask the other half to discuss how those caring for young people (i.e. parents/caregivers/teachers) could be helped. Ask the questions in the box to help get the discussion going.

After 15 minutes, ask each small group to contribute one NEW thing that could be done (so nothing that has already been said; and only one thing). Write these down. Add suggestions as necessary (for example, **CARE** is not just telling our children that we love them; but also encouraging physical activity and social connection; so someone in the community could organize a soccer team, or a dance class. These things are also good for adults! Show them the **CONNECT** and **CARE** parts of their handout. Now ask them which of the ideas on the list does not need additional resources, or a lot of time and energy, and could be tackled immediately. Try to cut the lists down to a couple of things that could be done immediately.

LET'S COMMIT

Ask them who would be responsible for making each of these things happen.

CLOSE

Remind everyone that they have information about the 3Cs in their handout. They also have free numbers that anyone can call for help. Ask if there are any worries or questions. Thank everyone for coming.

AFTER THE MEETING

- 1 Give people time to finish talking to each other - don't rush them out.
- 2 Allow people to approach you individually about questions or concerns they did not want to raise in front of everyone else. Remind them of the information and the contact numbers they have in the handout.
- 3 Follow up on any tasks allocated at the meeting.

ABOUT YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH



THRIVING
Feel good about yourself; have good relationships; cope and respond well to everyday stress; be a productive member of the community

SURVIVING
Cope with everyday routines; but could feel worried/anxious/distressed about one or more areas of life

STRUGGLING
Often feel worried/anxious/sad; struggle to cope with school; bad relationships; may find tasks of daily living hard; may abuse alcohol or drugs; may start showing signs of mental illness such as severe anxiety or depression.

What is mental health?

Everyone's mental health can range from 'thriving' to 'surviving' to 'struggling'.

Why is youth mental health so important?

Mental health problems often start between the ages of 10 and 19. The risk of depression, self-harm and suicide is greatest between the ages of 15 and 19 than at any other time of life. Youth who struggle with their mental health are also more likely to struggle in the future. And if they have children, this could affect their own children. Things like violence, racism, crime, poverty, bullying and so on, also badly affect our young people's mental health. If we give our young people the support they need, we can stop them from moving towards 'struggling', and help them move back to 'thriving'.

What is depression?

Depression is more than just feeling a bit down. Look at the warning signs (under CHECK) in the handout. If you are worried that a young person might be suffering from depression, suggest that they call/SMS/WhatsApp one of the numbers on the back cover of this guide.

What is anxiety?

Someone who suffers from anxiety constantly worries about every day situations so much that it affects their daily living. This can also affect them physically.

Go through this page before the meeting, to make sure you have good information you can share with community members. You can also get lots of good information on the SADAG website (www.sadag.org)

What can schools do?

Young people spend a lot of time at school. So schools have an important role to play in **checking** (for warning signs in students); **connecting** teachers, students, and caregivers with projects or organisations that can help; and **caring** by helping all students feel safe, respected, and appreciated, and giving extra care and help to students who need it.

This is a component of the Check • Connect • Care Youth Mental Health Programme, implemented by UNICEF in partnership with PID and Jive Media Africa.



GETTING HELP

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

If you, or anyone in your community, thinks that a young person might be thinking about killing themselves, call one of the numbers below for help.

Childline – 116

This is an organization that can help children and young people with information about things that are affecting them, and with counselling. Children or young people can call them any time of the day or night. They can also message or WhatsApp them on their cellphone on Monday to Friday, 11am-1pm or 2-6pm to immediately chat to a counsellor. This number is free on any cellphone network. There is also help for parents/caregivers on their website: www.childlinesa.org.za/parents/for-parents/issues-affecting-parents/

SADAG – 0800 456 789 (or SMS 31393)

This is an organization that can help anyone who is struggling with their mental health. Anyone can call them any time of the day or night, any day of the week. This number is free on any cellphone network.

Lifeline – 0861 322 322

This is an organization that can help anyone who wants to talk to someone about the struggles they are having with their mental health. Anyone can call any time of the day or night, any day of the week. You will have to pay some of the cost of the call. If you are struggling because of gender violence, you can call 0800 150 150 for free.

If you are struggling because of HIV or AIDS, you can call 0800 012 322 for free.

SUICIDE CRISIS NUMBER – 0800 567 567

Available 24 hours. All 11 official languages of South Africa are supported.

Teen Talk – www.teentalkapp.org

This is an app that any young person can download on their cellphone for free. They can then talk to another young person who has been trained to support others.