



Teacher Guide to Accompany Text, Talk, Act

About Text, Talk, Act

¾ of all mental health problems present themselves before the age of 24, and only half of young people seek treatment. Responding to this need, [Text, Talk, Act](#) was created in partnership with the Obama Administration, The University of Arizona, young people, and mental health, dialogue and social media experts.

Text, Talk, Act uses text messaging to facilitate a face-to-face conversation on mental health. Participants gather in small groups (3-4 people) with one cell phone per group. They text START to the number 89800 to receive a series of text messages that guides their group through a conversation on mental health: why it is important, how to care for it, and how to help a friend in need. The text messages include videos, social media interactions, polling questions and discussion questions.

About This Guide

This guide is designed to help your students get the most from their Text, Talk, Act experience. We offer suggested talking points to introduce Text, Talk, Act, basic information about mental health to set the stage, and instructions for leading participants through Text, Talk, Act in a classroom or group setting.

Data Reports

During Text, Talk, Act, students will be prompted to go to a webpage (<http://q3.onecounts.com>) and answer the questions below. If you are interested in receiving your school's responses to these questions, please email your request to: raquel@texttalkact.com AND ask your students to include their school name in the School/Community field on this page (please note, the school name will not be displayed on the live webpage; rather, we will only use it to create the data report for your school):

- If your school/community could do one thing to improve mental health, what would it be?
- If our country could do one thing to improve mental health, what should it be?



Discussion Guide

1. Opening Activity

5 minutes

Introduction

Introduce Text, Talk, Act

- In January 2013, President Obama called for a national conversation about mental health. This topic is especially important for young people because 3/4 of all mental health problems begin before the age of 24. Today you will have a chance to participate in Text, Talk, Act. You will be using your cellphones and text messaging to talk about mental health, why it is important and how to help a friend in need. You'll share your ideas with young people from all across the country instantly. National and local leaders want to know what you think about this issue, and today is a chance to make your voice heard. The responses you provide through text messages will be compiled in a report and shared with national and local leaders who make decisions on mental health programs and funding for youth.

Mini-Discussion

Before beginning Text, Talk, Act help the group establish a shared definition for "mental health."

- Ask students what mental health means to them. Below is a definition of mental health. If the students' responses don't include all of this definition, add missing ideas to theirs.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Presentation

Provide basic information about mental health and mental illness.

- Over the course of our lives, if we experience mental health problems, our thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health challenges, including:
 - Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
 - Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
 - Family history of mental health problems
 - Five signs that people may be experiencing mental distress*
 - Their personality changes.
 - They seem uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.
 - They withdraw or isolate themselves from other people.
 - They stop taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior.
 - They seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances.



- Mental illnesses can include things like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse
- Mental health problems are common (one in four people in our country experience mental distress at some time during their life) but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

*For more information about the five signs visit: <http://www.changedirection.org/>

2. Text, Talk, Act

40 minutes

Provide instructions & assistance to students

- Now that we know a bit more about mental health, we are ready to talk about it. During Text, Talk, Act you will have a chance to talk about how to take care of your own mental health and how to help a friend who might be dealing with a mental health challenge.
- **Instructions**
 - Invite students to divide into groups of 3 people. Each group should have one own cellphone.
 - Make Sure Everyone Understands the KEYWORDS. Let students know that they will receive a series of text messages to help them talk about mental health. The script advances to the next question when you send a text that begins with the keyword. Keywords are indicated in CAPS at the end of each message. It works most smoothly if participants type the keyword and then any message they want to add all in one text. Most problems people report with the script are actually due to missing or incorrect keywords.
 - Talk First, then Text. For questions that ask groups to text in their responses, it works best if participants discuss each question as a group and then one person types a short summary.
 - Getting Started. When everyone is ready, invite them to text "START" to 89800, just as if 89800 were their friend's number and "START" were "what's up?"
 - Some students may have short codes blocked on their phones. If this is the case, they will receive an error message. For these students, have them text START to 778-588-1995.
 - If you want a data report of your school's responses, remind students to include the name of your school in the dialog box on this page: (<http://q3.OneCounts.com>).
 - You may want to observe the groups and make yourself available if a group has questions.
- **Timekeeping**
 - You may also want to text "START" to 89800 and follow the prompts, letting the group when it is time to move from one question to the next.

3. Closing Activity

10 minutes

Lead a debrief of Text, Talk, Act

- Once everyone is done with Text, Talk, Act invite the group to discuss a few closing questions.
 - What was it like to participate in Text, Talk, Act?
 - Did you hear anything surprising?
 - Did you learn something new?



- In the coming days, is there anything you would like to do to follow-up on this conversation?
- Are there any actions you want to take as a group to follow up on this conversation?
- What would you like to see your school or community do to improve mental health?

Troubleshooting

- The keywords are NOT case sensitive.
- It sometimes takes a few seconds for a text to come through, just as it does when texting a friend.
- If students don't get the next question, have them type the keyword again and be sure it is the first word in your text.
- If students get a message that isn't about mental health, they typed the wrong keyword at the beginning of your message. Have them go back to the last text that was on topic, and type the keyword given there again.
- Anytime the keyword is typed, the script will send you the next question. If it advances before the group has typed all they want to say, don't worry. Just have them type the message they want to send and then the keyword again and they'll be back on track.
- Most of Text, Talk, Act works fine on any phone, but there are few links that only work on smart phones.
- There is no limit to how long a message you can send. A phone may only show 160 characters, but Text, Talk, Act will see your whole message.
- Standard text rates apply, so groups should use someone's phone who has a high or unlimited text limit.

We'd love to hear your group's experience with Text, Talk, Act! Please send comments to raquel@texttalkact.com.