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## **Awareness of Mental Health Among Adolescents**

Gloria Ortiz-Wilson

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**Awareness of Mental Health Among Adolescents**

Gloria Ortiz-Wilson

Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

### **Introduction**

The focal point of this capstone project is to bring mental health awareness to the adolescent community in Soledad, California. With the numbers rising in the likelihood of adolescents developing a mental health disorder, it is extremely important for adolescents to know the different types of mental health disorders and the signs of these disorders (Abrams, 2023). Between 20-30% of adolescents have a form of depression, 37% have anxiety disorders, and there has been a 16% increase of suicide in youth 12 and older (Valdez et al., 2022). Because of adolescents' increasing risk for mental health issues, there is a need for increasing their awareness of mental health illnesses. To address this need, I developed a set of lessons that educated students on mental health illnesses and provided them with resources and coping methods. My capstone project started with teaching adolescents the different types of mental health disorders and teaching them the signs for each mental health disorder. Second, this project will teach adolescents the reasons why it is important to learn about mental health. Lastly, this project will teach adolescents ways to cope with their mental health disorders by participating in art therapy and mindfulness therapy which includes breathing exercises. At the end of the lesson the students were provided with many different resources. My capstone project was presented in three lessons over a span of 3 consecutive days. The lesson plan was taught to 11th grade students at Soledad High School. In the class of 11th graders, 100% were of the Hispanic culture. The students were also bilingual but predominantly spoke English.

### **Needs Statement**

In the past 10 years, there has been an increase of approximately 40 % of mental health disorders among adolescents (Abrams, 2023). With the rates of mental health disorders increasing, it is important to bring mental health awareness to high school students. In addition, the mental health illnesses in adolescents are often unaddressed (Sapthiang et al., 2018). Due to the lack of knowledge it is unclear to society how these illnesses impact their social skills, academic performance and the behavioral risks that can occur. Because of this problem, there is a need for adolescents' awareness of mental health issues. In order to promote mental health awareness, this project taught students the importance of mental health. This included information about the three types of mental health disorders that are most occurring in the adolescent period and two different ways to cope with mental health issues.

Adolescence is a critical time; this is when there are changes to hormones and the body, changes in the social environment, and changes to the brain and the mind (Blakemore, 2019). In addition, the period of adolescence is significant for mental health illnesses to occur. This age is when the shaping of synaptic connections is still developing (Jamieson et al., 2005). The synaptic connections that remain may allow experience to mold and expand to a more adaptive brain, but may also open the door to illness and dysfunctional behavior (Jamieson et al., 2005). This also occurs because adolescents are faced with many obstacles that may cause them to develop a mental health illness. These obstacles are considered to be social, cultural or environmental (Bor et al., 2014). Some challenges that adolescents may experience can come from their home, school, friends or even physical, emotional and mental challenges. A challenge that can come from the adolescent's home can be parents divorcing or a change from becoming a single child to having a sibling. A challenge that may come from school can be difficult classes

or even bullying from peers. Friends can also create challenges, this may occur when friends start to partake in risky behaviors. Friends can also become negative influences. Although adolescents are faced with these obstacles there are also ways to maintain or prevent mental health illnesses. With the lessons that were provided to high school students it will encourage them to seek professional help and also teach them coping strategies that they are able to accomplish on their own.

For adolescents, the statistics indicate that the overall rates in mental health illnesses are higher than expected. As stated earlier, between 20-30% of adolescents have a form of depression, 37% have anxiety disorders, and there has been a 16% increase of suicide in youth 12 and older (Valdez et al., 2022). According to the data, currently in Soledad, California over 75% of the population is of Hispanic culture. In the 2016 Youth Survey, gender and race based discrimination were reported by adolescents. Some of the findings concluded the negative impact of discrimination on young people's mental health (Mission Australia, 2017). A majority of the families in Soledad have immigrated from different parts of Mexico. This can ultimately affect their children by creating a culture shock, which can lead to mental health illnesses. Other environmental factors that have been found to increase the risk of mental illness are being an immigrant in a culture with different sociocultural values, and growing up in urban settings, as opposed to rural environments (Blakemore, 2019). Hispanics and immigrants experience stressors from numerous life transitions including learning new language, culture, appearance, cuisine, formal and informal styles of interpersonal relationships, and finding living accommodations (Cervantes et al., 2013).

First, this project will educate high school students on the signs of the three mental health disorders. This project is intended to provide these students with extensive knowledge of the

signs of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. This project will inform the students that depressive disorders are characterized by episodes of a minimum of 2 weeks duration with a minimum of 1 to 2 symptoms; the symptoms can include depressive moods, loss of interest or pleasure, or an affect on one's emotions, cognition, and neurovegetative functions (Petito et al., 2020). In addition, signs for anxiety disorders will also be presented to the high school students. Adolescents with anxiety disorders may not recognize their fear of excessive worrying are inappropriate thoughts. In other situations certain symptoms are irritability, crying, and angry outbursts (Garcia et al., 2020). Lastly, suicidal ideation, the signs can be the underlying affect of other illnesses. These illnesses can include adjustment disorders, anxiety disorders and depressive disorders (Portzky et al., 2005). All the signs are vital for demonstrating the awareness of mental health illnesses to the adolescent community. Therefore, the signs provided students with preventive measures and also persuaded them to pay close attention to themselves and those around them.

Second, this project provided students with reasons why being aware of mental health illnesses is important. Depression negatively affects how one feels, and nearly 30% of adolescents develop a form of depression (Schwarz, 2009). When an individual has depression and a medical illness, it interacts and amplifies the effects of the medical illness (McLaughlin, 2011). Many individuals, including high school students, are unaware that depression affects overall health. Anxiety is a feeling of worriedness and nervousness. Along with depression it is the most common mental health disorder that adolescents face (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2020). Suicidal ideation is the third most common mental health illness and is the most common cause of death among adolescents (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2020). There are also many factors that can contribute to suicidal ideation; some factors may be bullying by peers, substance abuse,

additional mental health illnesses and negative in home situations (Ingram et al., 2023). After much research it seems essential to teach adolescents and or high school students about the importance of their mental health.

Lastly this project provides students with two forms of coping exercises. These exercises are intended to distract the student's mind or help them express their emotions without the need of vocalization. The first coping exercise is mindfulness breathing. Mindfulness-based interventions, this approach has been administered to adolescent populations in building resilience and for treatment purposes (Sapthiang et al., 2018). Students were provided with a blank canvas and were instructed to express their emotions utilizing art therapy. Art therapy is used to help adolescents with emotional, developmental and behavioral problems (Waller, 2006). Having students demonstrate the two forms of coping exercises, it will ultimately help them learn ways to deal with any mental health illnesses. The second coping exercise is art therapy.

The first coping method to help adolescents cope with mental health illness is mindfulness breath. Studies show that mindfulness breathing can help reduce mental health disorders. Anxiety disorders and mood disorders reflect the most prevalent mental health issues in adolescents, with depression being strongly related to suicide (Sapthiang et al., 2018). The utilization of mindfulness breathing allows adolescents to feel calm and in charge of their own capabilities. By placing adolescents in a quiet and safe environment they are able to relax and manage their emotions through their breathing. Ultimately, not only does mindfulness breathing have a positive effect on adolescents' mental health illness but it can also improve their behavior and classroom performance (Sapthiang et al., 2018). With the knowledge of mindfulness exercises adolescents can utilize this to prevent any mental health illnesses or even remediate depressive thoughts, anxiousness or suicidal thoughts.

The final coping skill that was taught was art therapy. By utilizing mental health programs, physical activities or activities that challenge their brain can help adolescents deal with any mental health issues they are facing (Haycock et al., 2020). Art therapy is a therapeutic activity that not only calms the brain but challenges it. This form of therapy is a positive way for adolescents to cope with any mental health illness. Studies found responsive art therapy to be beneficial, enabling children and adolescents to better identify and express emotions safely and also giving them the confidence to do so (Nielsen et al., 2019). Art therapy can be utilized as a preventative measure as well as a remedial one. Art therapy provides an opportunity to manage any overwhelming experiences. This is done by identifying one's feelings nonverbally (Nielsen et al., 2019). This is a valuable way to help adolescents express themselves and their feelings without actually having to verbalize their emotions.

The overall objective brought awareness of mental health illnesses to the adolescent community. Adolescent's were provided with knowledge on mental health illnesses, strategies for coping skills along with resources to help accomplish the goal of bringing mental health awareness to adolescents. This was accomplished by presenting students at Soledad High School with 3 lessons discussing the symptoms and importance of mental health. Once the lessons were completed, students will not only have a better understanding of mental health illnesses but will have the proper tools and resources to help themselves. Hopefully students will also provide support for others who may need it; by informing those of the importance of mental health and giving them resources to seek help.

### **Theory**

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory proposes 8 stages of psychosocial development. The ages of Erik Erikson's 8 stages range from birth to death. Erikson believed that personality

develops throughout each stage. Erikson was interested in discovering how social interaction and relationships played a role in the development and growth of human beings. The stage that this project is used to demonstrate the challenges adolescents face is the adolescence stage, 12-18 years old. The basic challenge for this stage is identity vs. confusion. Erikson believes that the conflict of identity vs. confusion is an experiment for adolescents' identity and their roles. When adolescents are supported during their exploration of identity and are granted with freedom to explore different roles, they are more than likely to emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self. They may also feel a sense of independence and control. During this process adolescents explore their interests, values and goals, this will help them form their unique identities. When adolescents aren't allowed to explore their own identities and have their freedom they may become overwhelmed which can result in role confusion. Adolescents may experience unsureness of their place in the world along with their values. Erikson believes the lack of exploration and freedom can ultimately lead to role confusion or confusion about their personal identity (Carducci et al., 2020).

The psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson will allow his ideas of identity vs. confusion to further explain to students the importance of exploring their identities and the value of having freedom. This will play a big role for adolescents and their mental health illnesses. Identity confusion can cause stress which may ultimately lead to anxiety and possibly depression. In this stage feeling accepted and fitting in can significantly affect an adolescent's self-esteem and sense of identity. Adolescents are more than likely to develop strong and positive identities if they feel accepted or valued. When they feel excluded it may lead to role confusion and can cause them to struggle with identity formation. This can be stressful for adolescents and lead them to have anxiety and depression (Carducci et al., 2020). Success in this stage can lead to the virtue of

fidelity. Fidelity involves being able to commit to oneself, accepting of others, even when there may be differences in opinions. If adolescents don't have the support, time, or emotional capacity to explore their identity, it may lead to unresolved identity issues. They can also have feelings of uneasiness about their roles and uncertainty about their future. When adolescents feel a sense of pressure this can result in negative behaviors and feelings of unhappiness and unworthiness (Thompson, 2020).

### **Consideration of Diversity**

In Soledad, California a majority of the population consists of Hispanic families, with some of them being immigrants. The diversity in Soledad High School is slim. About 2 % of the students are Asian, 2 % are white, 2% are two or more races, and highest of all, 95% of students are Hispanic. According to the public school review, 68% of students at the high school are eligible for free lunches and 10% are eligible for reduced lunches. This indicates that families in this area have special statuses: in other words, the families have lower incomes. According to the statistics, the Hispanic ethnicity is the majority race in the small town of Soledad. In addition, this curriculum is not specified for adolescents of Hispanic culture. The curriculum is intended to relate and resonate with adolescents for all races but was specifically designed for the Hispanic population in Soledad High School. Even though the students spoke both English and Spanish, the curriculum was taught in English.

Because there is a stigma in Hispanic culture in regards to mental health illnesses, presenting a mental health awareness curriculum to the students in Soledad was most prevalent. Religion can be a protective factor for mental health in Hispanic culture. This also contributes to the stigma against mental illness and treatment; believing they are filled with demons, lack of faith, and sinful behavior. There is a perception in Hispanic communities,

especially among older people, that discussing problems with mental health can create embarrassment and shame for the family. This results in fewer adolescents seeking help. Bringing awareness to the hispanic students also encourages them to not fear seeking help and will help reduce the stigma that comes with mental health illnesses.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The focus of this project is on the mental health of youth in Soledad, California. Throughout the span of 3 days, the following learning outcomes were taught to students in the 11th grade.

1. Students will be able to indicate the different signs for the following three mental health disorders: Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidal Ideation.
2. Students will list 3 reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses.
3. Students will demonstrate the following 2 coping exercises: mindfulness breathing exercises and art therapy.

### **Methods**

#### **Location and Participants**

This project on mental awareness was conducted at Soledad High School in Soledad, California. The 11th grade class consisted of 29 boys and girls, ranging from ages 16 to 17. All the students in this class are Hispanic. Three lessons were presented to the students over three

days. The lessons were presented consecutively: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The students were all bilingual but the 3 day curriculum was presented to the students in English.

### **Procedures and Materials for Day 1**

On day one, students were presented with a powerpoint on the definition and symptoms of depression (see Appendix A). Students were provided with the following definitions and symptoms of mental health illnesses: Depression is a mental health illness that causes severe symptoms that affect how a person thinks, feels and handles daily activities and situations. Anxiety is another mental health illness that causes individuals to respond to certain events or things with dread and fear. Once the terms and symptoms of depression and anxiety were given to the students, they were then presented with a quick quiz (see Appendix B). This quiz consisted of three short and long answer questions. They were required to list 2-3 symptoms of each mental health illness that was discussed on day 1. The presenter, teacher and class had discussions after each lesson discussing factors that can cause mental health illnesses to occur.

### **Procedures and Materials for Day 2**

On day 2 we reviewed the terms and symptoms for depression and anxiety that were presented to the class. Next the students were introduced to the definitions of suicide and suicidal ideation. Suicide is when one ends their own life to escape pain or suffering that they have experienced. Suicidal ideation is when an individual has wishes and contemplates taking their own life. Next students were shown a music video called "1-800-273-8255" by Logic. This music video shows a young man that is gay and was not accepted by his family and peers. He becomes depressed and considers suicide or has suicidal ideation, he then calls the suicide hotline to receive emotional support. After the students were shown the music video they were presented with the symptoms and changes in behaviors. The students were then provided with

the phone number to the suicide hotline and, crisis text line. The students were also provided with the names and numbers of the counselors, psychologist and therapist that are provided at Soledad High School.

Students were then introduced to mindfulness breathing, mindful breathing is paying attention to the sensation of the breath coming in and out of the body. As a class, we participated in a mindful breathing exercise using a video on youtube that was made by Indiana University School of Medicine. This exercise lasted a total of 8 minutes and 44 seconds. Finally students were sent another quick quiz (see Appendix C) that contained 5 questions based on the topic of suicide and mindful breathing. After day two, the learning outcome one; students will be able to indicate the different signs for the following three mental health disorder: Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidal Ideation was completed.

### **Procedures and Materials for Day 3**

On the third and final day of the curriculum students were given another refresher on the three mental health illnesses and mindfulness breathing. After the recapitulation, students were provided with the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses. The three reasons shared with the class were: (1) Raising awareness reduces the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and seeking treatment. (2) Awareness enables you to establish a positive sense of self and cope with daily life stressors and lastly, (3) Awareness will also help you maintain physical health, build healthy relationships and work productively.

Lastly, students were familiarized with art therapy. Art therapy is used to help individuals interpret, express and resolve their emotions and thoughts. A four minute video was shown to the students that featured a student that utilized art therapy to overcome her depression. This video was made by the Children's Hospital of Colorado. Students were then provided with paint,

markers, colored pencils, paper and canvases and had 20 minutes to express themselves in the form of art. Once the activity was completed, students had to complete one last quick quiz (Appendix D) based on the importance of mental health awareness and why art therapy is beneficial. On the completion of day 3 students will have completed two more learning outcomes, the students will be able to list the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses and students will have demonstrated the following 2 coping exercises: mindfulness breathing exercises and art therapy.

### **Results**

The students were given the following quizzes; quick quiz day one, quick quiz day two, and quick quiz day three. These quizzes were sent to the students via email on google forms. The students took the quizzes in six groups of four and one group of 5 for a total of 29 students. Each quiz had a selected day and time that it was to be completed. They worked together to complete the quizzes, once quizzes were completed they submitted it and it was recorded on google forms.

Learning Outcome 1 was that students will be able to indicate the different signs for the following three mental health disorders: Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidal Ideation. Students were provided with a minimum of 5 signs for each mental health illness during the 3 day curriculum. Students were provided with a quick quiz on days 1 and 2. The students were asked to list 2-3 signs of each mental health illness that were discussed in the curriculum. The students were able to list a maximum of 3 signs for each mental health illness which resulted in 100% of students who passed. On day one, 29 out of 29 students were able to list 2-3 signs of the mental health illnesses presented on that day. On day 2, the 27 students that attended class were all able to list 2-3 signs for the mental health illness suicidal ideation. This learning outcome was fully met.

Learning Outcome 2 was that the students will list 3 the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses. According to the results of the quick quiz on day 3, the students were able to identify 3 reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses. Students scored 100% as groups when identifying the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses. The students had access to the quick quiz via google forms and were able to answer the questions. Due to the students working in groups, I am unable to know which students individually met this learning outcome but it was clear that it was a consensus of the group resulting in this outcome being fully met.

The final learning outcome was that students will demonstrate the following 2 coping exercises: mindfulness breathing exercises and art therapy. Once mindfulness breathing and art therapy exercises were explained to the students they were then required to demonstrate each exercise. On day 2 students were shown a video on mindfulness breathing and demonstrated the mindfulness breathing exercises. On day 3, students were given paper, paint brushes and paint and instructed to paint what they felt. Overall students were able to successfully demonstrate the coping skills of mindfulness breathing and art therapy; 27 out of 27 students demonstrated mindfulness breathing on day 2 and 29 out of 29 students were able to demonstrate art therapy on day 3. A successful student demonstration leads to learning outcome three being fully met.

### **Discussion**

The focus of this project is to bring mental health awareness to the adolescent community in Soledad, California. As previously stated, the numbers of mental health illnesses in the adolescent community continues to rise. This is why it was crucial to have the students gain awareness of the three main mental health illnesses: Depression, Anxiety and Suicidal ideation. The three learning outcomes that were set for this project were fully met by the students at

Soledad High School. Throughout the three day curriculum, I gave the students a review of the information discussed the previous day. I believe this project was successful due to the repetition of the material that was presented. In addition, I believe that the choice of art therapy resonated well with the students. When the students were presented with the activity they were eager to participate. To my surprise even the boys in the class enjoyed the art therapy activity. Due to the positive result of the art therapy activity, I can foresee these adolescents utilizing this coping skill during a mental health crisis. Overall, I believe that the students were able to learn from the curriculum and can apply what they learned in their daily lives.

Other than the learning outcomes being fully met, there were some challenges that occurred. The first challenge was technical difficulties; I had to send each student an email to receive access to the google forms for the quizzes. Some students did not have access to the forms or they never received it. This led me to direct the students that did have the forms to sit with a table that didn't have the forms so they could work together to complete the forms. The second challenge was finding activities that would be appealing to high school students. Although the art therapy was captivating for the students, the mindfulness breathing activity was not so appealing to them. They did participate in mindfulness breathing but were not as excited for it when compared to the art therapy activity. Lastly was that the teacher of the class was only able to show my powerpoint presentation through google slides. The change in presentation format completely changed the layout of my presentation, this made some slides hard to see and read for the students.

A few ways this project could have been more successful would be being more prepared for any technical difficulties and presenting more coping strategies to the students. Technical difficulties sometimes come unexpectedly but if I would have brought paper copies of all the

google forms I would have saved time and created a stress free environment for the students. Due to the technical difficulties, I did notice that some students were becoming stressed since they were unable to access the forms. Although I felt mindfulness breathing and art therapy were great coping skills, I should have presented the students with other options. Some students may benefit from the coping skills of mindfulness breathing and art therapy, but others may not. Providing the students with more options for coping skills could have possibly piqued their interests and helped them either now or in the future if needed. In conclusion, I believe that the project was successful. I hope that adolescents continue to gain awareness of mental health illnesses not just in Soledad but everywhere. I hope they utilize coping skills to help them overcome their mental health illnesses and to dismiss any stigmas and seek help and treatment if needed.

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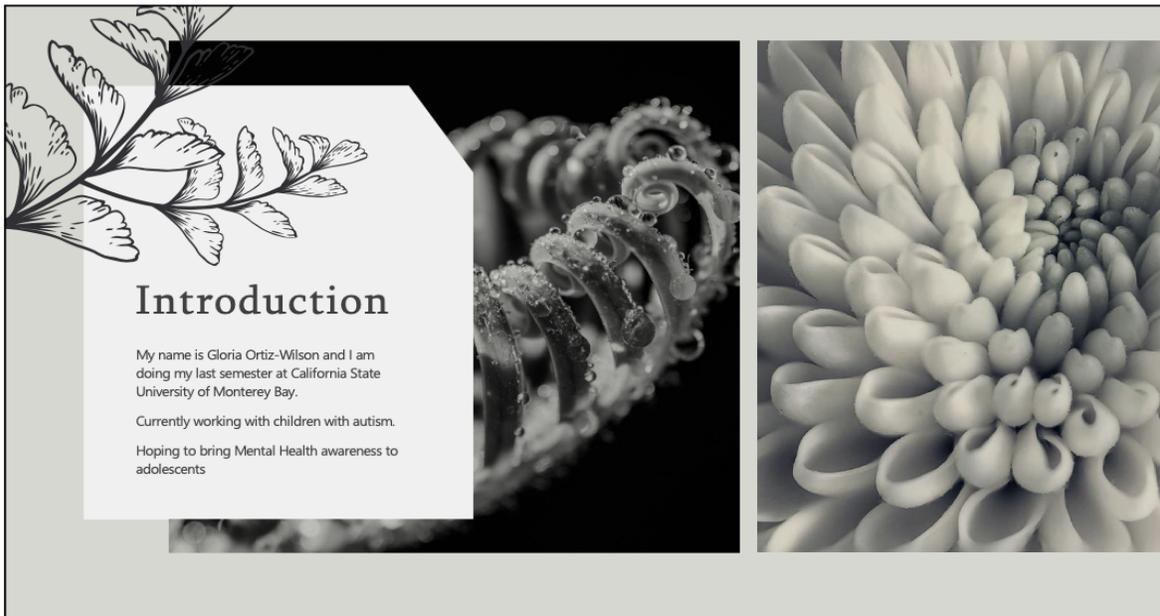
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*Appendix A*

*Mental Health Awareness*



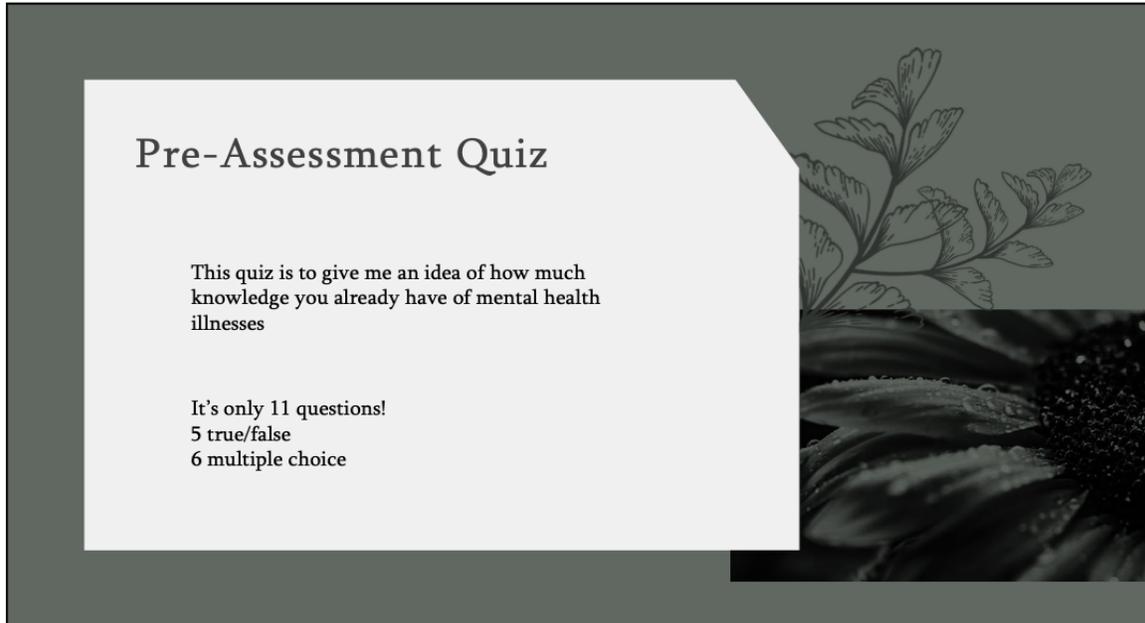
1



2

*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



3



4

*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*

**Depression Symptoms**

- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Appetite or weight changes
- Sleep changes
- Anger or irritability
- Loss of energy
- Self-loathing
- Reckless behavior
- Concentration problems
- Unexplained aches and pains

5

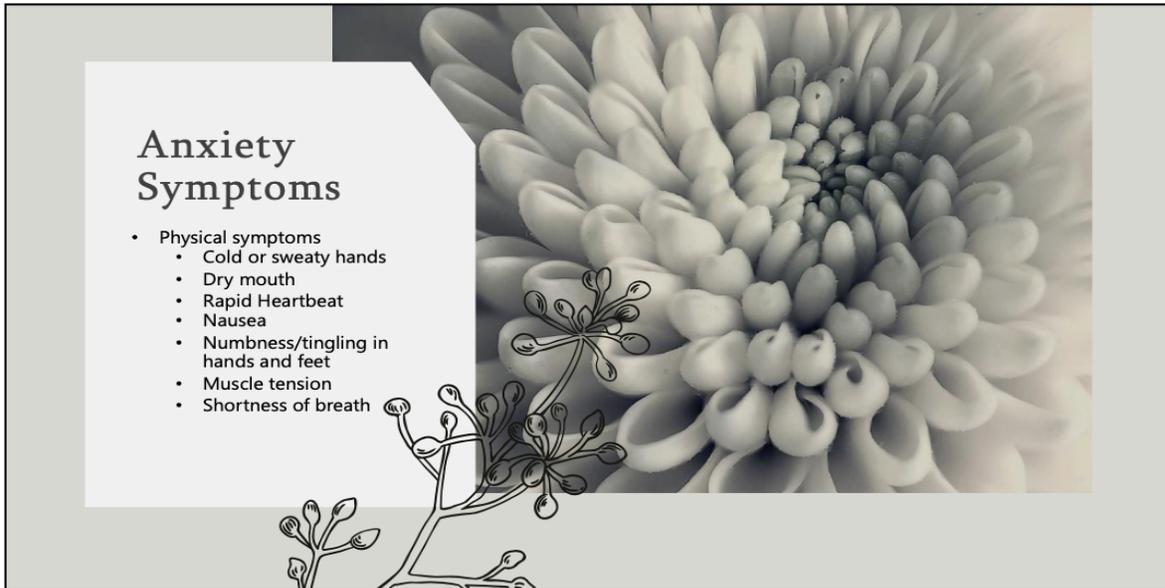
**Anxiety**

Anxiety is a mental health illness that causes you to respond to certain things and situations with fear and dread. You may also experience physical signs of anxiety, such as a pounding heart and sweating.

6

*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*

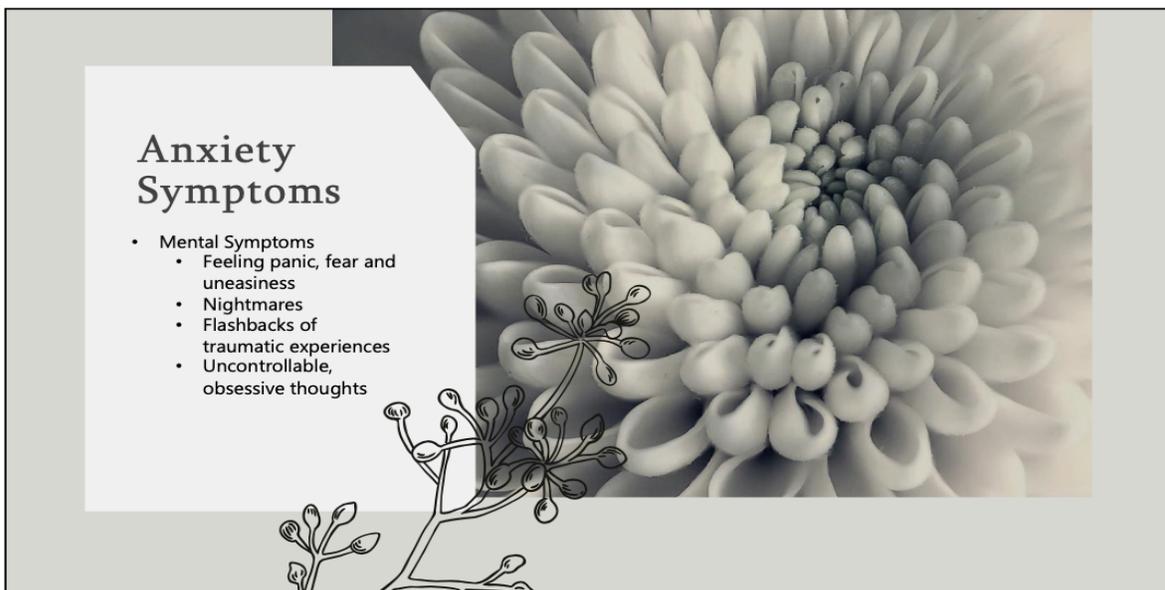


**Anxiety Symptoms**

- Physical symptoms
  - Cold or sweaty hands
  - Dry mouth
  - Rapid Heartbeat
  - Nausea
  - Numbness/tingling in hands and feet
  - Muscle tension
  - Shortness of breath

The slide features a background image of a large, detailed chrysanthemum flower. In the bottom left corner, there is a black and white line drawing of a plant branch with several buds and small flowers.

7



**Anxiety Symptoms**

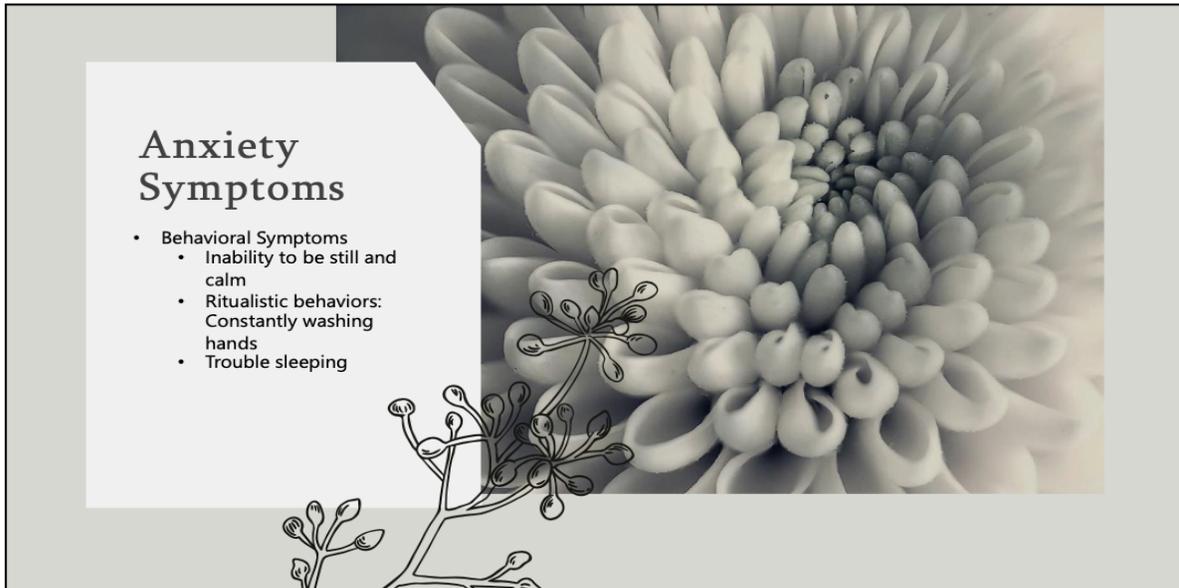
- Mental Symptoms
  - Feeling panic, fear and uneasiness
  - Nightmares
  - Flashbacks of traumatic experiences
  - Uncontrollable, obsessive thoughts

The slide features a background image of a large, detailed chrysanthemum flower. In the bottom left corner, there is a black and white line drawing of a plant branch with several buds and small flowers.

8

*Appendix A (Continuation)*

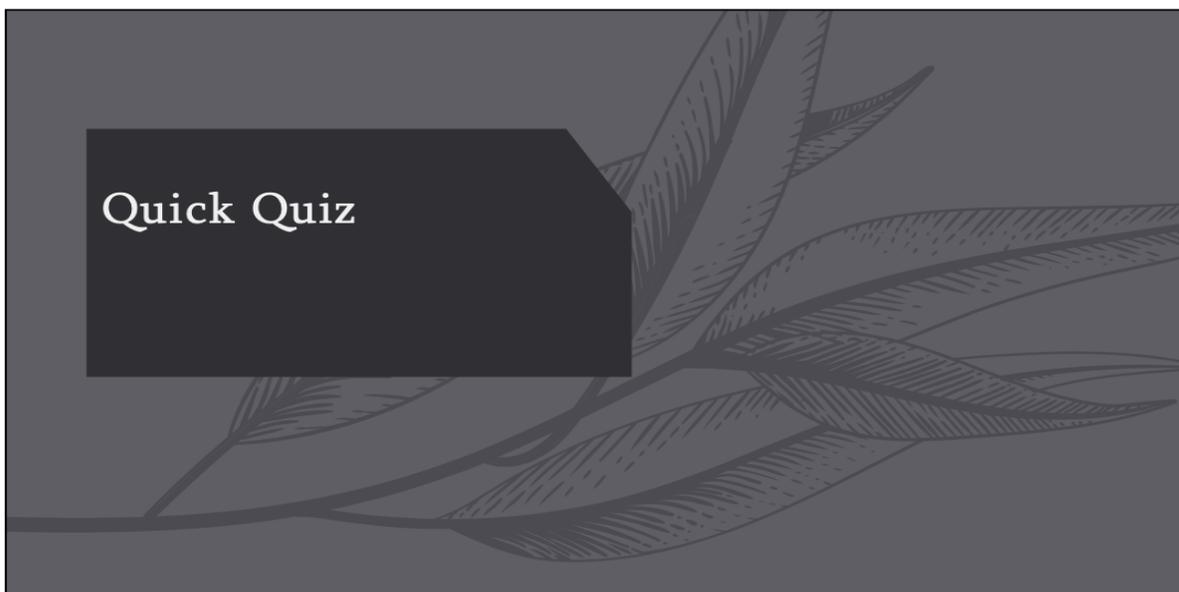
*Mental Health Awareness*

A slide titled "Anxiety Symptoms" with a background image of a large, detailed flower. The text is contained within a white box on the left side of the slide. The background also features a line drawing of a plant with small flowers at the bottom.

**Anxiety Symptoms**

- Behavioral Symptoms
  - Inability to be still and calm
  - Ritualistic behaviors: Constantly washing hands
  - Trouble sleeping

9

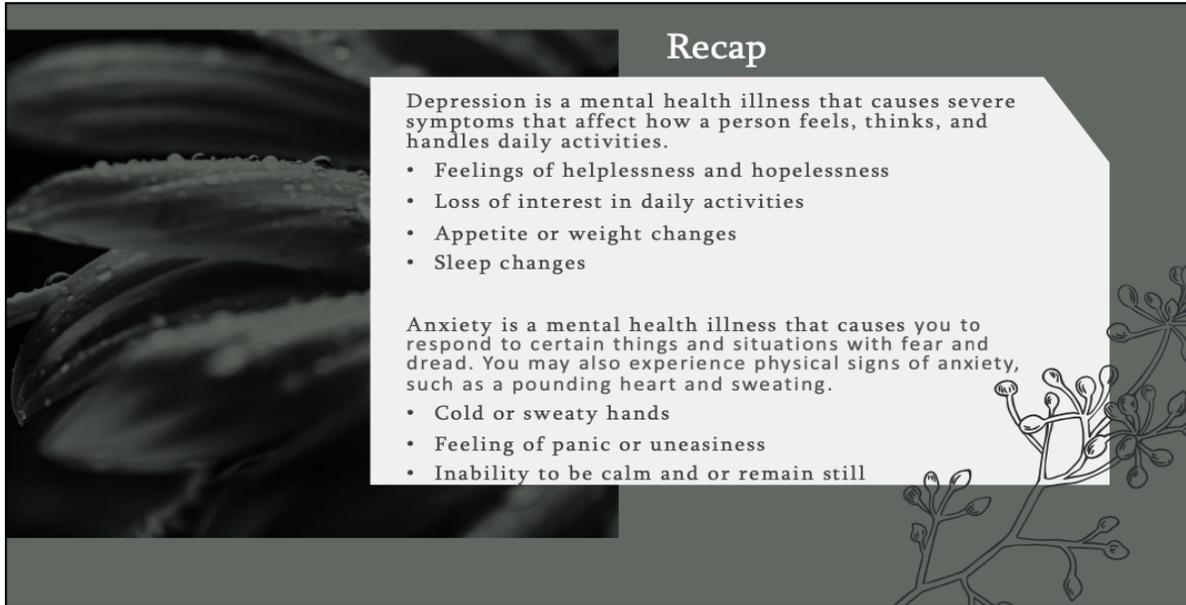
A slide titled "Quick Quiz" with a dark background and a pattern of stylized leaves. The text is contained within a dark grey box on the left side of the slide.

**Quick Quiz**

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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



### Recap

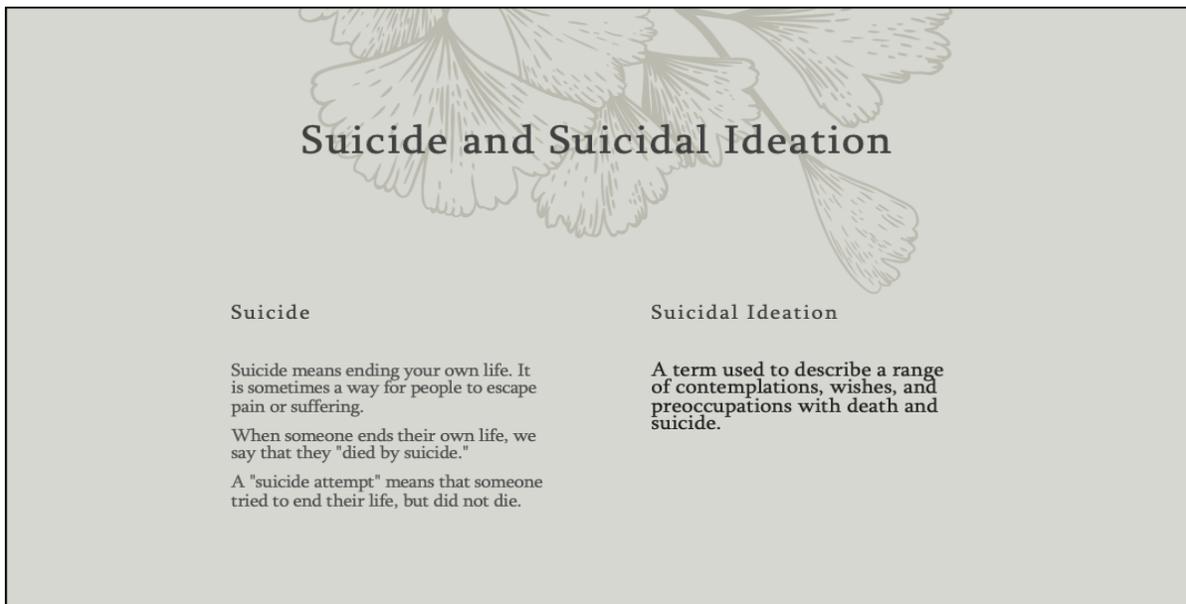
Depression is a mental health illness that causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities.

- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Appetite or weight changes
- Sleep changes

Anxiety is a mental health illness that causes you to respond to certain things and situations with fear and dread. You may also experience physical signs of anxiety, such as a pounding heart and sweating.

- Cold or sweaty hands
- Feeling of panic or uneasiness
- Inability to be calm and or remain still

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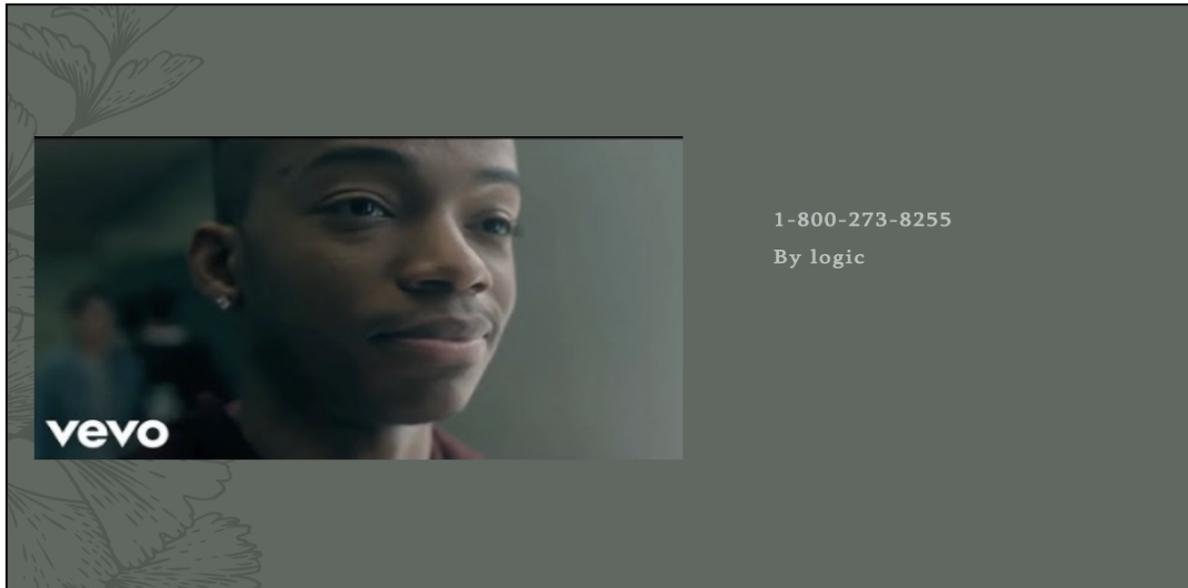
## Suicide and Suicidal Ideation

<b>Suicide</b>	<b>Suicidal Ideation</b>
Suicide means ending your own life. It is sometimes a way for people to escape pain or suffering.	A term used to describe a range of contemplations, wishes, and preoccupations with death and suicide.
When someone ends their own life, we say that they "died by suicide."	
A "suicide attempt" means that someone tried to end their life, but did not die.	

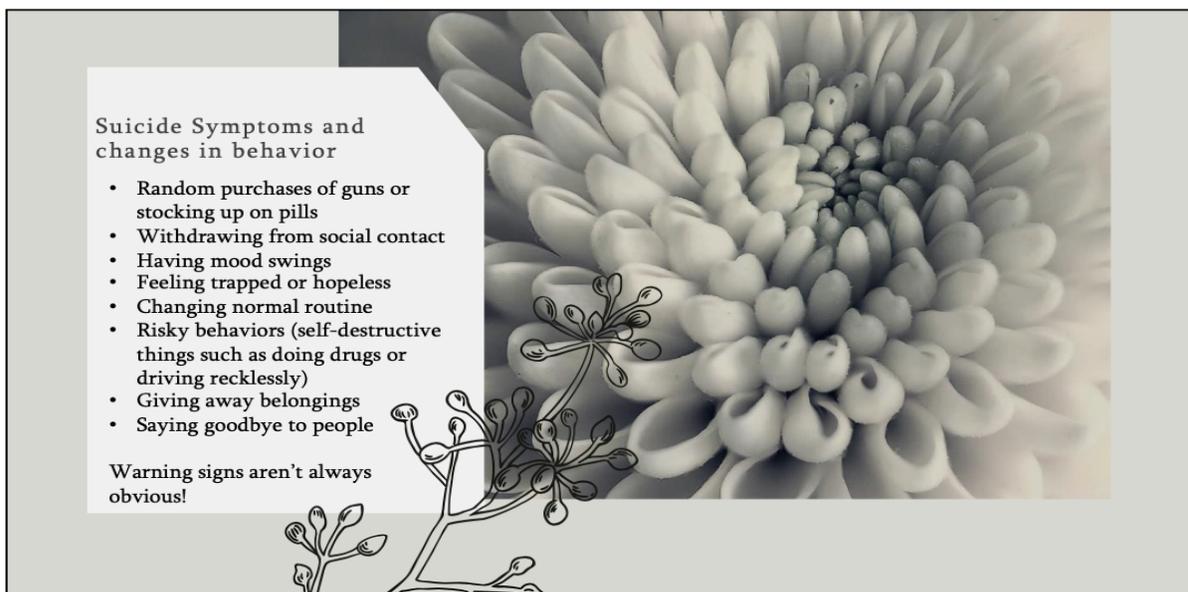
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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*

**Resources**

<p><b>Suicide Hotline</b> Call/text 988</p> <p>The 988 Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States</p>	<p><b>Crisis text line</b> Text HOME to 741741</p> <p>Crisis text line is a 24/7 service that provides support for those who are contemplating suicide. They offer texting services. They offer messaging through WhatsApp</p> <p>Or you can go to the website <a href="https://www.crisistextline.org/">https://www.crisistextline.org/</a></p>	<p><b>School Counselors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophia Reeder</li> <li>• Diego Ortiz</li> <li>• Simony Politron</li> <li>• Sandra Moreno</li> <li>• Kirk Cooper</li> </ul>
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**Introduce Mindfulness Breathing**

Mindful breathing is paying attention to the sensation of the breath coming in and out of the body. This means noticing the breath, how and where you feel it in the body without trying to change it. Mindful breathing is a deep breathing exercise. Deep breathing uses big breaths and controls the length.

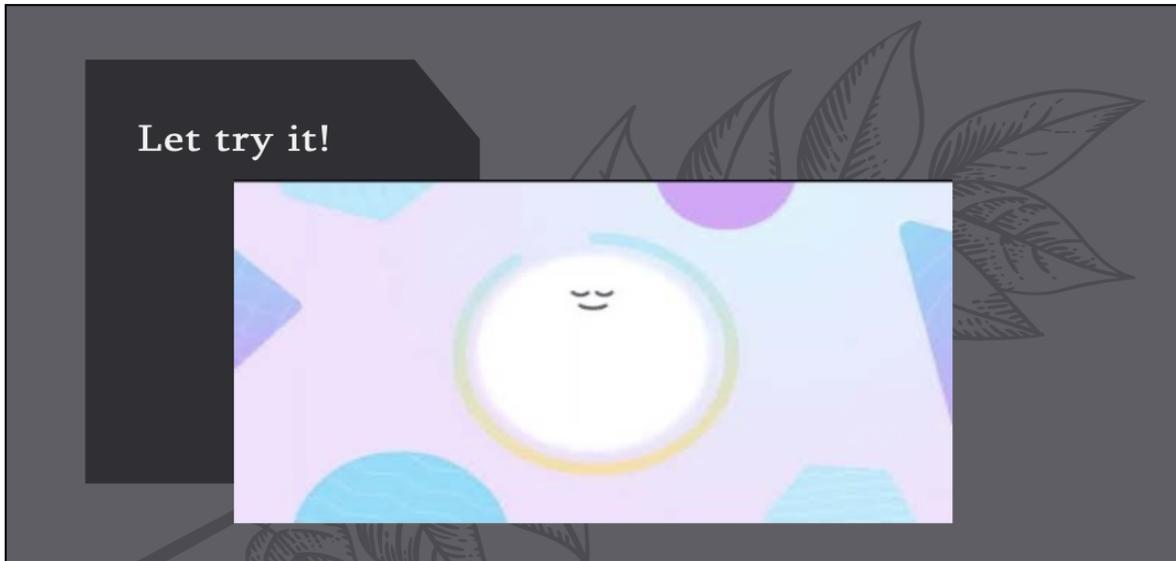
How does this help with Depression, Anxiety and Suicidal Ideation?

Mindful breathing calms the nervous system that controls the body's involuntary functions. It also causes to experience the present moment nonjudgmentally and openly which can effectively counter the effects of any stressors, feelings and uncontrollable emotions.

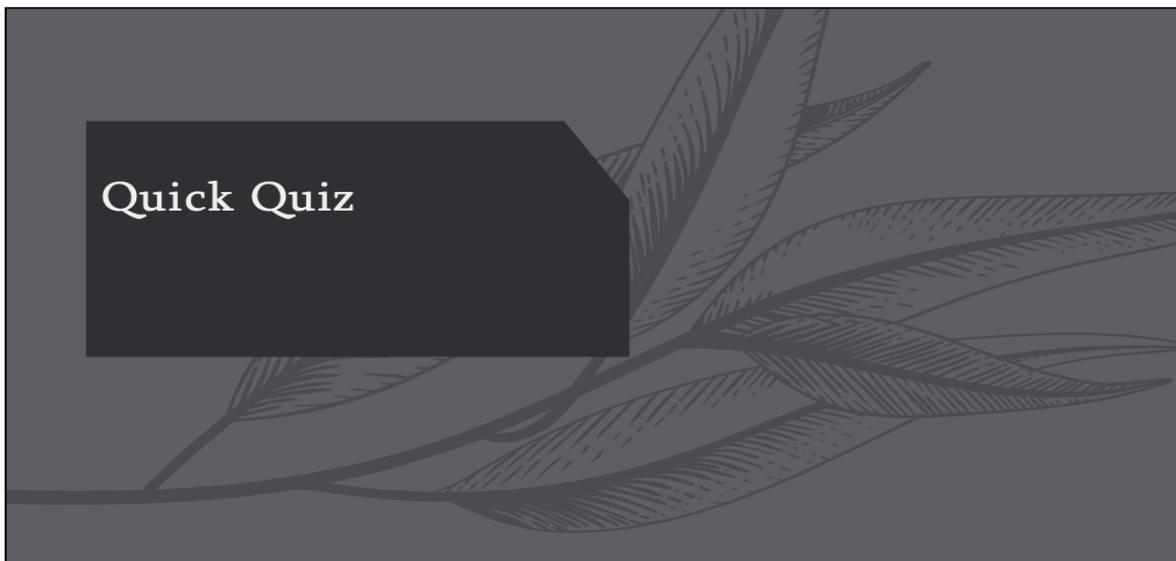
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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



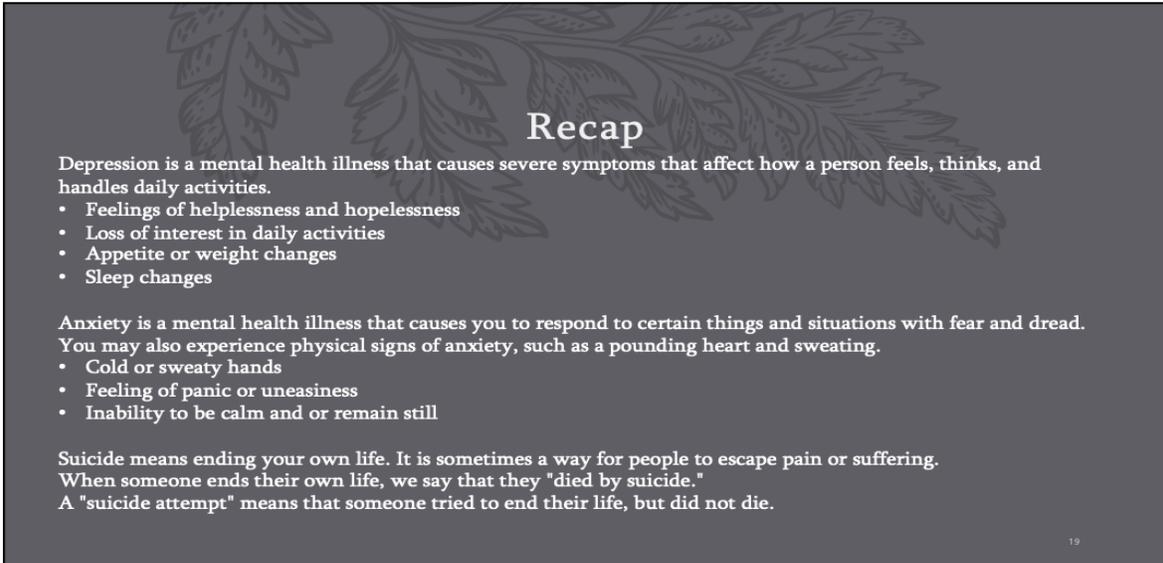
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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



## Recap

Depression is a mental health illness that causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities.

- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Appetite or weight changes
- Sleep changes

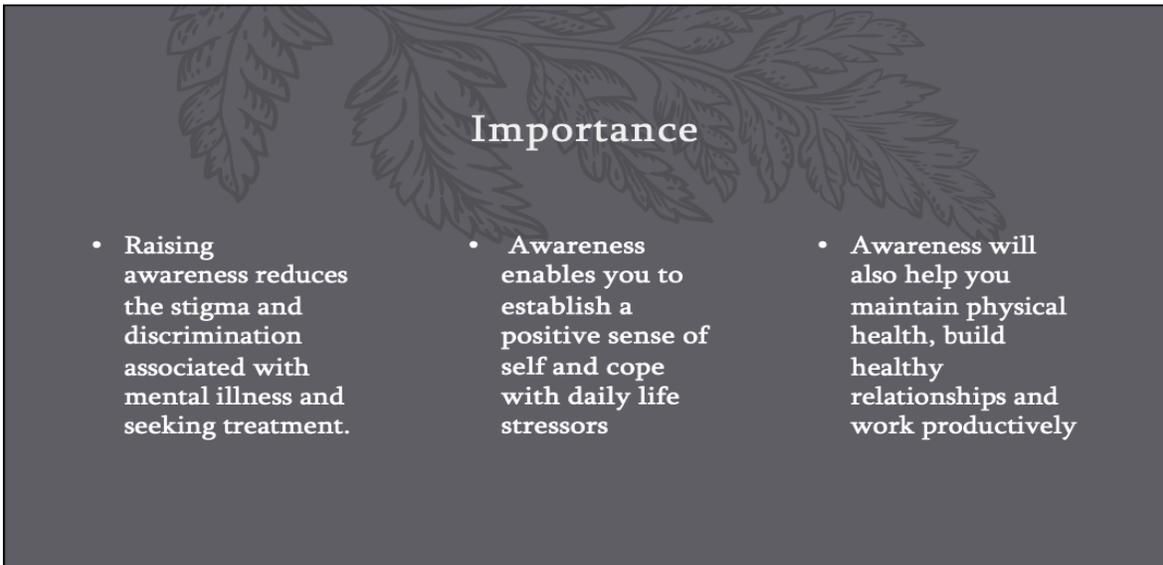
Anxiety is a mental health illness that causes you to respond to certain things and situations with fear and dread. You may also experience physical signs of anxiety, such as a pounding heart and sweating.

- Cold or sweaty hands
- Feeling of panic or uneasiness
- Inability to be calm and or remain still

Suicide means ending your own life. It is sometimes a way for people to escape pain or suffering. When someone ends their own life, we say that they "died by suicide."  
A "suicide attempt" means that someone tried to end their life, but did not die.

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## Importance

- Raising awareness reduces the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and seeking treatment.
- Awareness enables you to establish a positive sense of self and cope with daily life stressors
- Awareness will also help you maintain physical health, build healthy relationships and work productively

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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*

## Art Therapy

- Art therapy is a tool used to help patients interpret, express, and resolve their emotions and thoughts



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## Post-Assessment

Take a few minutes to complete the post-assessment



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*Appendix A (Continuation)*

*Mental Health Awareness*



*Appendix B*

*Quick Quiz Day 1*

## Quick Quiz Day 1

Before you leave class today, answer the following questions.

What's one important thing you learned in class today? \*

Long answer text

What are some symptoms for depression? (list 2-3) \*

Long answer text

What are some symptoms for Anxiety? (list 2-3) \*

Long answer text

*Appendix C*

*Quick Quiz Day 2*

## Quick Quiz Day 2

Before you leave class today, answer the following questions.

What's one important thing you learned in class today? \*

Long answer text

What are some warning signs for Suicidal Ideation? (list 2-3) \*

Long answer text

What are some resources that adolescents (teenagers) can use when having a mental health crisis? \*

Long answer text

What did you learn from the coping exercise of mindfulness breathing? \*

Long answer text

What other coping exercises can you use when dealing with a mental health illness? (list 2-3) \*

Long answer text

*Appendix D*

*Quick Quiz Day 3*

## Quick Quiz Day 3

Before you leave class today, answer the following questions.

What's one important thing you learned in class today? \*

Long answer text

Why is mental health awareness important? (List at least 3 reasons) \*

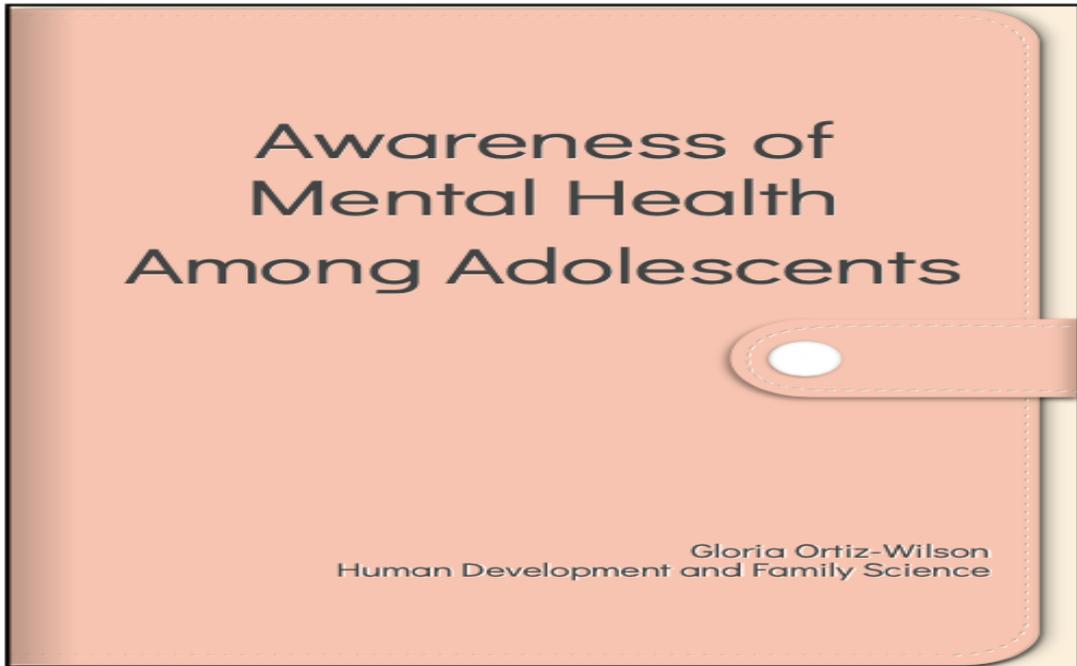
Long answer text

What are the benefits to Art therapy? \*

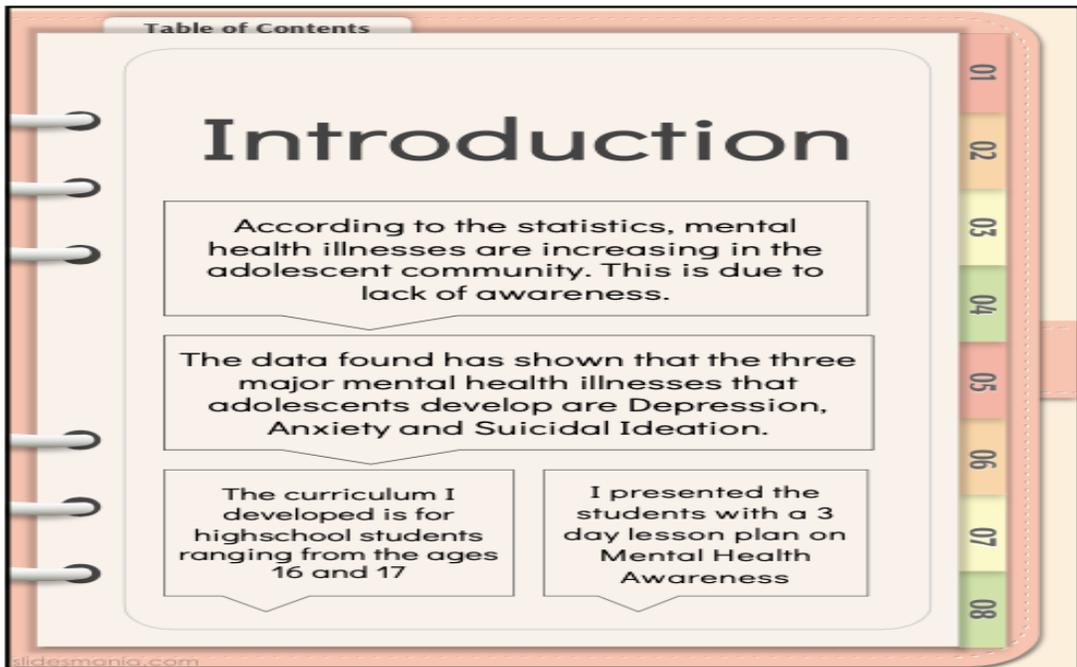
Long answer text

*Appendix E*

*Capstone Project*



1



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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project

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# Needs Statement

- The increase in mental health illnesses in adolescents is severely unaddressed.
- Due to the lack of awareness many are unaware of how mental health illnesses impact adolescents academic performance, social skills and also the behavioral risks that can develop.

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## Needs Statement: Research Findings

About 37% of adolescents have Anxiety disorders

20-30% of adolescents have a form of Depression

There has been a 16% increase of suicide in youth 12 and older

Given that adolescents is a sensitive phase in development, this is where psychological, social and vocational pathways and independence are being laid down. It is no surprise that mental disorders, even relatively brief and milder ones, can derail and seriously limit adolescents causing a blockage in their full potential.

(Valdez et al., 2022; McGorry et al., 2017)

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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project

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### The Psychosocial Theory

8 stages of psychosocial development ranging in ages birth to death

Erik Erikson



June 15, 1902 - May 12, 1994

Erikson believed that personality develops throughout each stage.

Erikson was interested in discovering how social interaction and relationships played a role in the development and growth of human beings.

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### The Psychosocial Theory

In this project the stage that I chose to focus on was identity vs. confusion. The age range in this stage is 12-18.

Overall this stage is important for adolescents so they are able to find their identity and gain confidence, self worth and acceptance. When confusion occurs adolescents tend to have feelings of uneasiness which can lead to Anxiety or Depression.

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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project

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### Learning Outcomes

I designed a 3 day workshop for a group of male and female high school students in a junior class. It focused on the following learning outcomes...

<b>Learning Outcome 1</b>	Students will be able to indicate the different signs for the following three mental health disorders: Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidal Ideation.
<b>Learning Outcome 2</b>	Students will list the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses.
<b>Learning Outcome 3</b>	Students will demonstrate the following 2 coping exercises: Art therapy and mindfulness breathing.

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### Methods

**Location:** Soledad High School  
425 Gabilan Dr, Soledad, CA 93960

**Demographics:**

- 29 students
  - 17 females
  - 12 males
- 100% of Hispanic culture
- Over 75% of students eligible for free/reduced lunches, this indicates that family incomes meet certain criteria.



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### Implementation of My Project

My project was presented in the form of a three- day workshop. Each workshop was about 45 minutes long.

★ Lesson 1

- I presented the class with a power point presentation. On day 1 we discussed the following:
  - Introduced the mental health illnesses and provided them with symptoms (Depression and Anxiety)
  - Students were given a quick quiz that consisted of three questions
  - Lastly there was an open discussion discussing circumstances that can cause Depression and Anxiety

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### Implementation of My Project

★ Lesson 2

- On day 2 we discussed the following:
  - Introduced the mental health illness and gave them definitions and signs (Suicidal Ideation)
  - Students were provided with resources (Suicide hotline, crisis text line, etc)
  - Students were introduced to mindfulness breathing and participated in 8 minutes of mindfulness breathing
  - Students were given a quick quiz that consisted of five questions
  - Lastly there was an open discussion discussing the videos shown and activity.

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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project

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**Implementation of My Project**

★ **Lesson 3**

- On day 3 we discussed the following:
  - Students were provided with reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses.
  - Students were Introduced to art therapy and its benefits
  - Students were then given art materials (paper, paint, markers and colored pencil) then participated in art therapy for 20 minutes
  - After the completion of the activity students were given one last quick quiz that consisted of three questions.

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**Results**

**Learning Outcome #1**

Students will be able to indicate the different signs for the following three mental health disorders: Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidal Ideation.

Day 1

Day 2

The students were given a quiz and were asked to list 2-3 symptoms for each mental health illness

Quiz on Depression and Anxiety 29/29 students were able to list 2-3 symptoms for each mental health illness

Quiz on Suicidal ideation 27/27 students were able to list 2-3 signs of Suicidal Ideation

**Learning Outcome fully met**

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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project

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## Results

### Learning Outcome #2

Students will list the reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses.

The students were given a quiz and were asked to list 3 reasons why it is important to be aware of mental health illnesses

Students completed the quiz in groups and scored 100%

Due to students working in groups I was unable to know which students individually met Learning Outcome 2

Learning Outcome fully met

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## Results

### Learning Outcome #3

Students will demonstrate the following 2 coping exercises: Art therapy and mindfulness breathing.

Students were presented with the following activities: Mindfulness breathing and art therapy

Day 2: 27/27 students demonstrated mindfulness breathing

Day 3: 29/29 students demonstrated art therapy

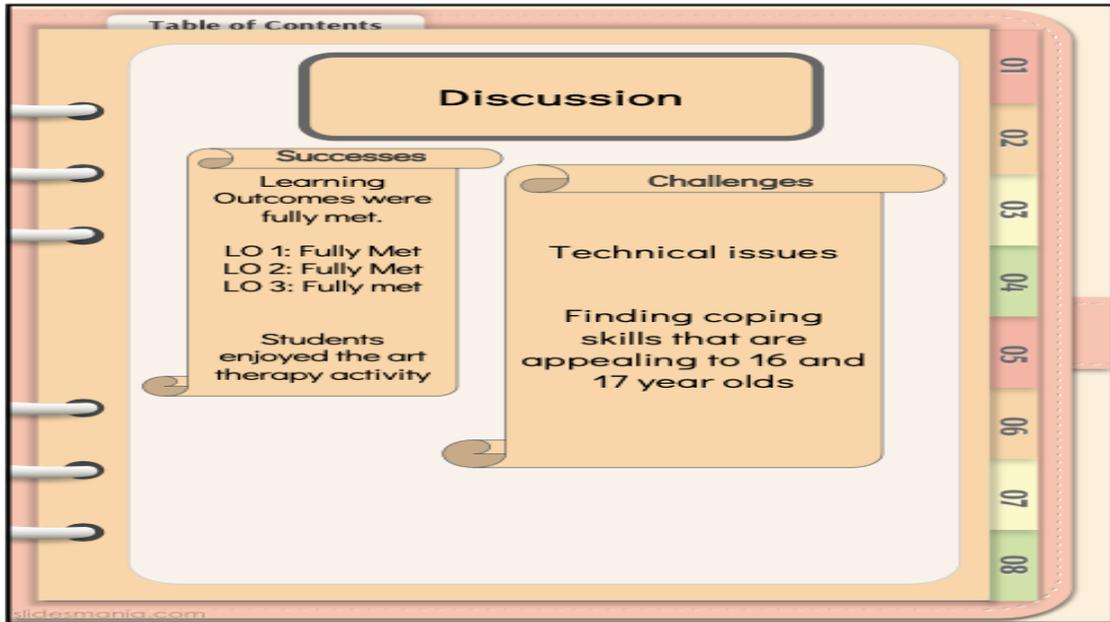
Learning Outcome fully met

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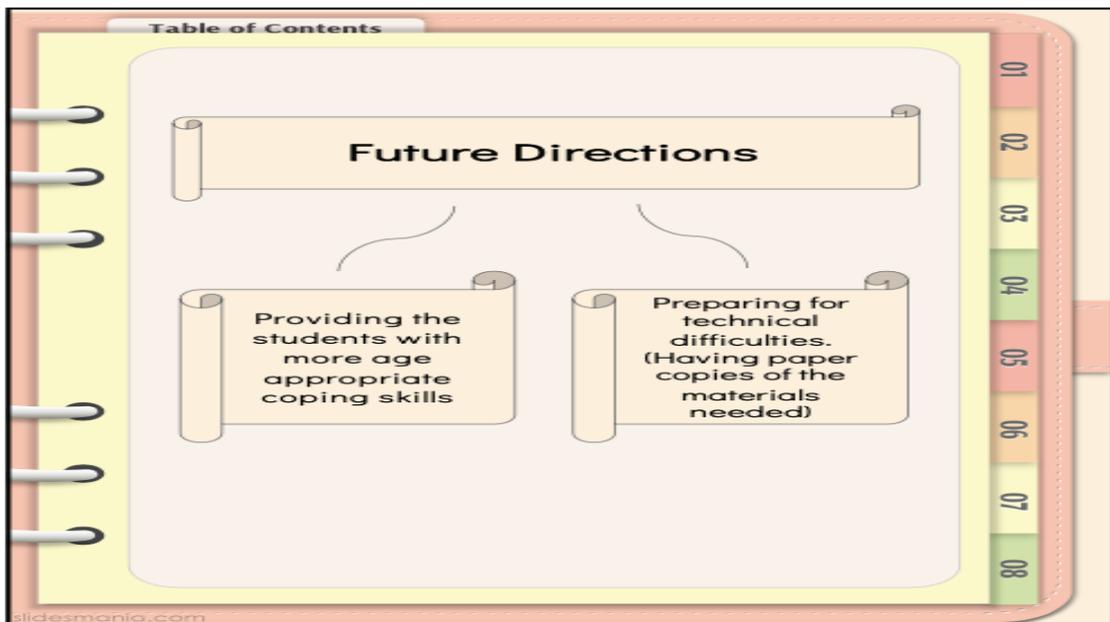
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Appendix E (Continuation)

Capstone Project



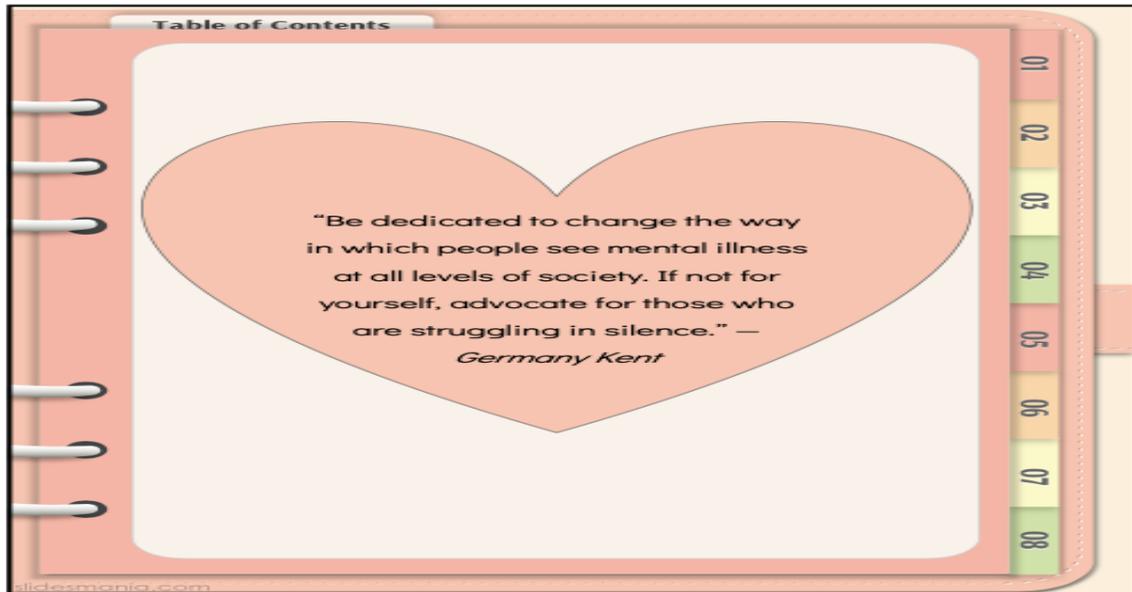
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*Appendix E (Continuation)*

*Capstone Project*



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