

* MENTAL HEALTH MEDIA GUIDE

The Tip Sheet

[ILLUSTRATION SPACE]

ABOUT

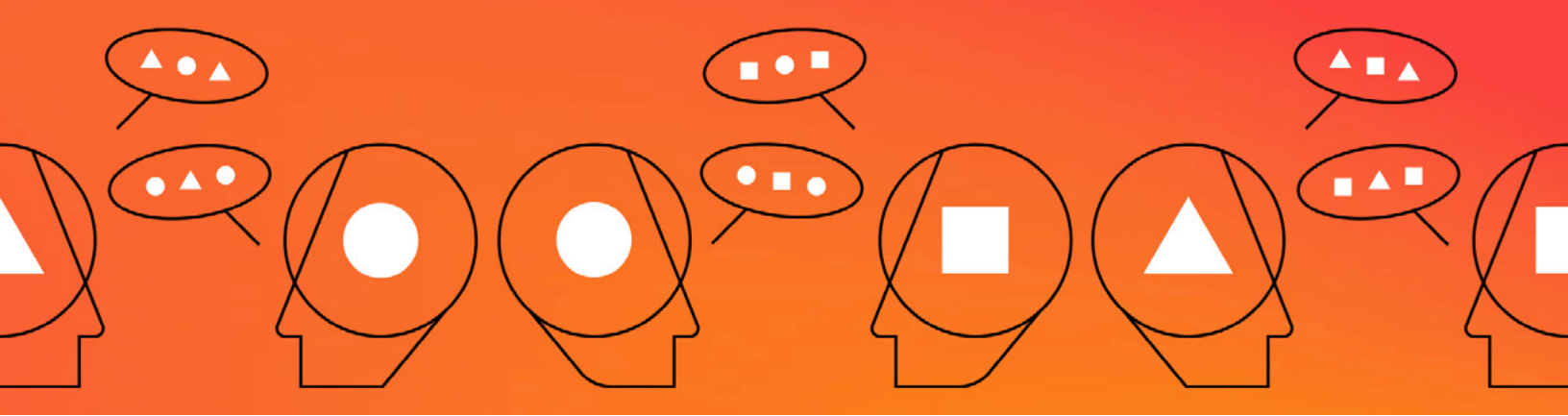
The Mental Health Media Guide is a groundbreaking and comprehensive resource to help content creators expand positive mental health portrayals.

WHY IT MATTERS

Entertainment media has the power to shift culture around mental health, influencing audience perceptions and the way we speak up, seek help, and support others.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



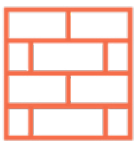


TODAY'S MENTAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE

What You Need to Know



Prevalence of mental health conditions continue to rise: The percentage of Americans experiencing a mental health condition is rising, and nearly one-quarter of people with a mental health condition report an unmet need for treatment.



There are many barriers to help-seeking: Cost is the most common obstacle to accessing mental health care but cultural norms and perceptions also play a role. Many believe that mental health challenges aren't serious enough to require treatment, or that asking for help is a sign of weakness. People also fear judgment, making them uncomfortable talking about mental health with family or close friends, and in some cases perceive greater stigma than actually exists.



Mental health is underrepresented in media: Viewers are still limited in the number and diversity of stories they are likely to see, and the nature of those portrayals is not always helpful or supportive to people who are struggling.



Self-care can help, and technology is making treatment more accessible: There's growing acknowledgement among both clinical experts and the general public that self-care practices can be critical to emotional health and wellbeing and many are incorporating these practices into their daily lives. At the same time, new telemedicine and technology platforms allow people to access clinical care more readily and take a more proactive approach to mental health care.



There is widespread support for prioritizing mental health: Nearly 80% of people believe that mental health is a priority and almost 90% feel that making mental health care more accessible and affordable is important.

Storytelling Tips

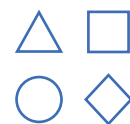
01

Portray the Full Mental Health Continuum

Look for opportunities to expand depictions of mental health and treatment to reflect the full continuum of experiences — from thriving to actively coping to really struggling — and help viewers understand that treatment, coping strategies, and self-care can benefit anyone, at any time. [See full tip.](#)

02

Diversify Representation



Represent diverse characters and communities in your mental health storylines to help viewers from all backgrounds feel seen, recognize warning signs and symptoms, and reach out for help when they need it. [See full tip.](#)

03

Spotlight Support from Friends and Family Members



Elevate stories of friends and family members who are supportive — or eventually become supportive — to make it less scary for viewers to ask for help and to normalize the concept of peer support. Within these stories, share information on how to effectively support someone who is struggling, including recognizing the warning signs of a problem. [See full tip.](#)

04

Show Conversations About Mental Health and Help-Seeking

Show conversations about mental health happening in relatable and positive ways to make viewers more comfortable with the concept of speaking up and asking for help. [See full tip.](#)





Storytelling Tips

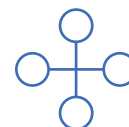
05

Depict Effective, Realistic Help-Seeking and Treatment

Provide realistic depictions of effective therapeutic experiences to help diminish some of the fear and misconceptions surrounding treatment and make it more likely people will seek the help they need.

[See full tip.](#)

06



Represent the Complex Causes of Mental Health Challenges

Portray the complex factors that contribute to mental health challenges to better equip viewers to support themselves and the people they care about. [See full tip.](#)

07

Highlight the Power of Coping Skills and Self-Care



Minimize depictions of self-care that make it seem like an indulgence or luxury only for those who can afford it. Integrate storylines that show a broader range of self-care and coping practices with an emphasis on the positive impact they can have on our mental health. [See full tip.](#)

08

Consider the Impact of Language

Try to avoid: incorrect usage of medical terminology (like *schizo*, *psycho* and *bipolar*); defining people by their feelings or conditions (say *person experiencing depression* instead of *depressed person*); and talking about suicide in a way that stigmatizes that behavior (use *died by suicide* instead of *killed himself* or *committed suicide*). [See full tip.](#)



Storytelling Tips CONTINUED

09

Move Past Stereotypes

Be mindful of stereotypes when depicting mental health challenges or themes and aim for authenticity over tropes. [See full tip.](#)



10

Be Cautious About Overstating & Reinforcing Stigma

Watch out for narratives that overemphasize stigma, judgment, or mistreatment toward people dealing with mental health challenges, which can prevent viewers from speaking up and getting help if they are struggling themselves. [See full tip.](#)

11

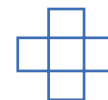
Avoid Sharing Potentially Harmful Details

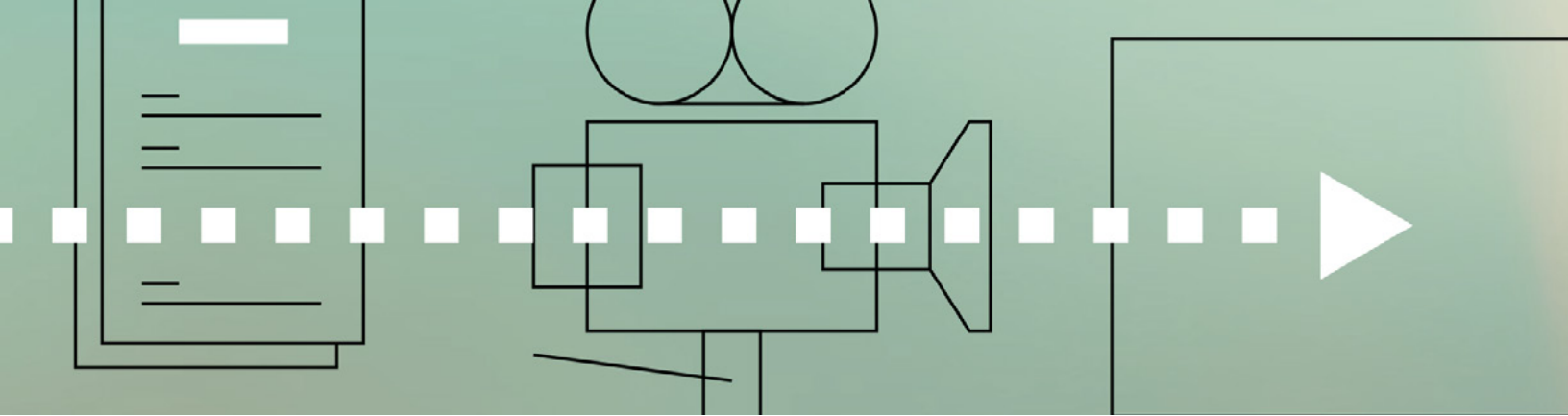
Examine storylines involving harmful behaviors and ensure they are not unintentionally providing information or reinforcing perceptions that could make viewers more likely to engage in those behaviors themselves. [See full tip.](#)

12

Provide Resources & Calls-to-Action

Provide your audience with ways to take action as part of their viewing experience, to help turn an emotional reaction into a positive outcome. [See full tip.](#)





Step by Step Process

No matter what phase of the production cycle you're in, there are steps you can take to maximize your project's positive mental health impact and minimize any potential for harm.

1

Identify Mental Health Themes

Identify the mental health themes within your project, browse the relevant sections of [the Guide](#), and establish your intent. Whether your project has mental health at the heart of its story or the mental health themes are more tangential, there are ways to create meaningful impact.

2

Connect With Experts

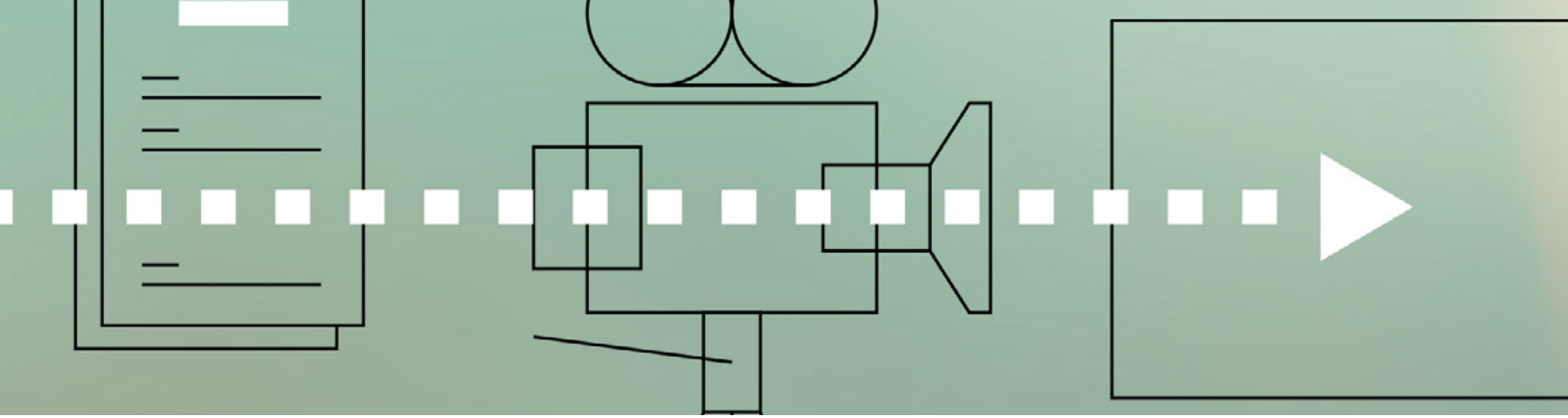
Engage an advisor with mental health expertise to help you maximize positive impact and mitigate potential harm, including developing a plan to support cast and crew. Get started by checking out the [Expert Directory](#).

3

Consider Potential Pitfalls

Anticipate potential themes or scenarios in your story that could contribute to emotional struggles among viewers, influence harmful behaviors, reinforce negative stereotypes, or create barriers to help-seeking.





Step by Step Process CONTINUED

4

Expand Your Vision, Increase Your Impact

Brainstorm ways to maximize impact within your story, whether it's through more diverse representation, incorporating conversations about mental health and help-seeking, depicting effective and realistic treatment options, or countering negative stereotypes.

5

Support Your Audience Before, During & After Viewing

Make a plan to support viewers by incorporating resources into your content, which can help audience members turn an emotional response into help-seeking and other positive actions. Also, consider how your marketing materials, social media content, and other aspects of your project can impact viewers.



MENTAL HEALTH MEDIA GUIDE

FIND MORE ONLINE

Visit MentalHealthMediaGuide.com for a growing list of audience resources and further in-depth recommendations based on your project's genre, specific mental health conditions, intersecting identities, and more.

