

# TURN THE TABLES: QUIETING THE SILENCE

## WELCOME

Thank you for taking the time and creating the space to come together to talk about a sensitive and demanding issue. Mental health affects each of us, and spreading awareness starts with a conversation. We appreciate your willingness to have that important conversation. We hope it will be meaningful for you and will spark positive change toward #QuietTheSilence around mental illness.

Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person's emotions, thinking, or behavior. They often involve significant changes in a combination of these and can have real, harmful effects on a person's daily functioning and well-being. Approximately one in five adults in the United States lives with a mental illness, with only about 44 percent receiving treatment.<sup>1</sup> One significant reason for this is the stigma associated with mental illness: In a 2018 survey, 25 percent of adults indicated it was their primary barrier to seeking treatment.<sup>2</sup>

As former First Lady Michelle Obama once said,

“Sadly, too often, the stigma around mental health prevents people who need help from seeking it. But that simply doesn't make any sense. Whether an illness affects your heart, your arm or your brain, it's still an illness, and there shouldn't be any distinction. We shouldn't treat mental health conditions any differently. Instead, we should make it clear that getting help isn't a sign of weakness—it's a sign of strength—and we should ensure that people can get the treatment they need.”

This dinner guide provides tools for thoughtful and productive conversations about mental health. Its purpose is to help us understand the origins of stigma and figure out how to take action against it.

### Why #QuietTheSilence?

The Blue Dove Foundation's platform, #QuietTheSilence, aims to help individuals and organizations create programs and events centered on mental health and substance use. By sharing individual experiences and quieting the silence on these issues, we hope to empower more individuals to ask for help when they need it, speak up about mental health and take action towards eliminating the shame and stigma felt by many.



<sup>1</sup> “Mental Illness.” National Institute of Mental Health, Feb 2019. [nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> Greenberger, Heidi M, and Reena L Pande. “Barriers to Behavioral Health Care”. AbleTo, Inc. 2018. [ableto.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/AbleTo\\_Barriers-to-Behavioral-Health-Care\\_WhitePaper.pdf](https://www.ableto.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/AbleTo_Barriers-to-Behavioral-Health-Care_WhitePaper.pdf).



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## Mental Health Care: Important Facts to Know

- 56% of Americans seek help for mental health issues.
- 25% of Americans have to choose between paying for daily necessities and paying for mental health services.
- 53% of Americans who have not sought treatment come from low-income households.<sup>3</sup>
- 10.3% of adults with a mental illness are uninsured.<sup>4</sup>
- The average delay between the onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is 11 years.
- 60% of U.S. counties do not have a single practicing psychiatrist.<sup>5</sup>

A number of obstacles to mental health treatment remain aside from stigma, with many being especially prevalent in minority populations. These can include a lack of available resources; racism; discrimination in treatment settings; language barriers; and financial hurdles such as inadequate health insurance. Despite LGBTQ+ adults being two to four times as likely as heterosexual adults to experience mental health conditions,<sup>6</sup> there remain relatively few mental health care providers from this population. This lack of representation extends to many other marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities and racial and ethnic minorities. Diversity among mental health care providers is essential to making treatment accessible for every population. There is plenty of work to do toward making sure every individual, regardless of background or identity, has easy access to quality mental health care.<sup>7</sup>

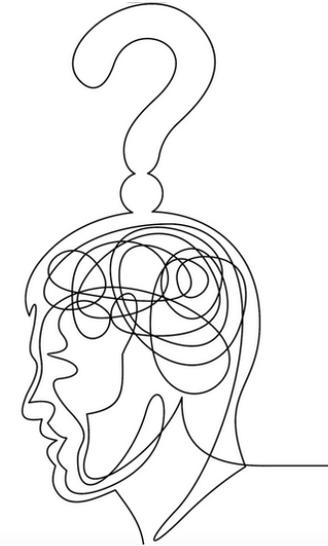
<sup>3</sup> “New Study Reveals Lack of Access as Root Cause for Mental Health Crisis in America.” National Council for Behavioral Health. [thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/new-study-reveals-lack-of-access-as-root-cause-for-mental-health-crisis-in-america/](https://thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/new-study-reveals-lack-of-access-as-root-cause-for-mental-health-crisis-in-america/)

<sup>4</sup> “Mental Health in America - Access to Care Data”. Mental Health America. [mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-access-care-data](https://mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-access-care-data)

<sup>5</sup> “Mental Health By the Numbers.” National Alliance on Mental Illness, Sep 2019. [nami.org/mhstats](https://nami.org/mhstats)

<sup>6</sup> “LGBTQJ.” National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2020. [nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQJ](https://nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQJ)

<sup>7</sup> Shushansky, Larry. “Disparities Within Minority Mental Health Care.” National Alliance on Mental Illness, Jul 2017. [nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/July-2017/Disparities-Within-Minority-Mental-Health-Care#:~:text=As%20shown%20in%20the%20most,aren't%20getting%20proper%20care.](https://nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/July-2017/Disparities-Within-Minority-Mental-Health-Care#:~:text=As%20shown%20in%20the%20most,aren't%20getting%20proper%20care.)



## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

REPAIR  
THE WORLD

Repair the World mobilizes Jews and their communities to take action to pursue a just world, igniting a lifelong commitment to service. We believe service in support of social change is vital to a flourishing Jewish community and an inspired Jewish life.

werepair.org  
@RepairTheWorld

 The Blue Dove  
FOUNDATION

The Blue Dove Foundation was created to help address the issues of mental illness and addiction in the Jewish community and beyond. Based in Atlanta, we work with people and organizations across the United States and around the world.

thebluedovefoundation.org  
@TheBlueDoveFoundation

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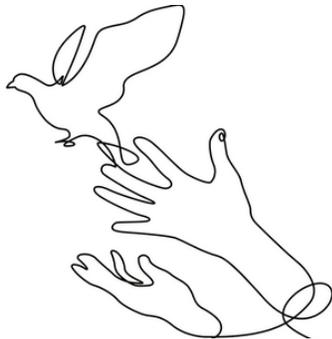
## APPETIZER

### Framing

When talking about mental health, it is important to create a safe space of trust and respect. Take a moment to read through the following instructions for setting intentions and guide for respectful conversation. Feel free to discuss any other guidelines with your group that are not listed.

### Set an Intention

**Kavanah** is the Hebrew word for intention. It involves a concentration of the mind on a certain act so it has purpose and direction, as opposed to being performed in a meaningless or unthinking way. In Jewish and other faith or spiritual traditions, it is often viewed as an essential element of prayer and reflection.<sup>8</sup> With this in mind,  **set an intention** for yourself going into this conversation. Focus on this intention throughout the discussion, bringing your full self and attention to this conversation.



### Guide to Respectful Conversation

1. Acknowledge the courage it takes to share. It's OK to take a break if you feel overwhelmed. Just be sure to stay mindful of what others might be feeling as well.
2. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this conversation is to talk, listen, and remain open to different perspectives.
3. Speak from personal experience. Everyone has a different level of understanding and connection to these issues, and individuals can only speak for themselves.
4. Maintain confidentiality. Allowing yourself and others to be vulnerable requires complete trust that personal information will not be shared outside of this conversation.
5. Create a space for everyone to have a voice, but be respectful of those who choose not to share. All voices should be welcomed and listened to, but no one should feel pressured to speak.<sup>9</sup>

### Sharing Stories



Take a moment to reflect on a mental health issue you or someone you know has experienced or is living with. If you feel comfortable, share this story with your group. If you don't feel comfortable, listen to others with compassion and an open mind. If nobody is comfortable sharing an experience, consider using one of the stories included here to help facilitate conversation.

<sup>8</sup> "Kavanah, Or Intention". My Jewish Learning. [myjewishlearning.com/article/kavvanah-intention](https://myjewishlearning.com/article/kavvanah-intention).

<sup>9</sup> Loosely inspired by "Guide to Respectful Conversations." Repair the World, 2019. [werrepair.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guide-to-Respectful-Conversations.pdf](https://werrepair.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guide-to-Respectful-Conversations.pdf).

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## ENTREE

### Definition: Stigma



A set of attitudes that leads people to shun, reject, or mistreat others they perceive as being different or “other”.

### Societal Origins of Stigma

The following excerpt addresses cultural factors related to the stigma of mental illness. With a partner, read the excerpt and discuss the accompanying question.

“Cultural Influences on Mental Health” by Sofia Andrade:

Every culture has its own way of making sense of the highly subjective experience that is an understanding of one’s mental health. Each has its opinion on whether mental illness is real or imagined, an illness of the mind or the body or both, who is at risk for it, what might cause it, and perhaps most important, the level of stigma surrounding it.<sup>10</sup>



How has mental illness been stigmatized in your community, and what impact might this have on the treatment of people living with it in larger society?

When your group is ready, come back together to share any takeaways. Then find a new partner to work with for the following exercises.

## Shame and Vulnerability

### Definition: Shame



A highly unpleasant, painful self-conscious emotion arising from the sense of there being something dishonorable or troublesome in one’s own being or circumstances.

While you read the following excerpts by Brené Brown with your partner, reflect on what the ideas of shame and vulnerability mean to you.

“The Power of Vulnerability” TEDTalk (2011):

Shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection... ‘Is there something about me that, if other people know it or see it, [indicates] that I won’t be worthy of connection?’... The less you talk about [shame], the more you have it.<sup>11</sup>

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (2015):

Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional... the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection.<sup>12</sup>

With your previous discussions as a foundation, consider and discuss the following question as a group.



How can practicing vulnerability reduce shame and stigma?

<sup>10</sup> Andrade, Sofia. “Cultural Influences on Mental Health”. The Public Health Advocate, Berkeley Public Health, Apr 2017. [pha.berkeley.edu/2017/04/16/cultural-influences-on-mental-health](http://pha.berkeley.edu/2017/04/16/cultural-influences-on-mental-health).

<sup>11</sup> Brown, Brené. “The power of vulnerability” [Video file]. Jun 2010.

[ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_vulnerability?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?language=en).

<sup>12</sup> Brown, Brené. Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. New York: Gotham Books, 2012. Excerpts retrieved from [penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/310307/daring-greatly-by-brene-brown/9780593105108/excerpt](http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/310307/daring-greatly-by-brene-brown/9780593105108/excerpt).

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## DESSERT

### Making a Commitment

Reflect on the intention you set at the beginning of the meal. Did you follow through? Ask yourself this question when thinking about future steps towards action.

Below is a non exhaustive list of ways to act toward advocating for mental health awareness and supporting those who live with mental illness.

#### Action Steps:

- Engage in self-care and mindfulness on a regular basis.
- Continue to have meaningful conversations about mental health with your friends, family, and community.
- Learn how to recognize mental illness in yourself and others.
- Educate yourself and others about what services are available to help those living with mental illness.
- Listen to others who have had or are currently living with mental health issues, and offer your support.
- Find out about organizations in your community that promote mental health awareness, and support them.

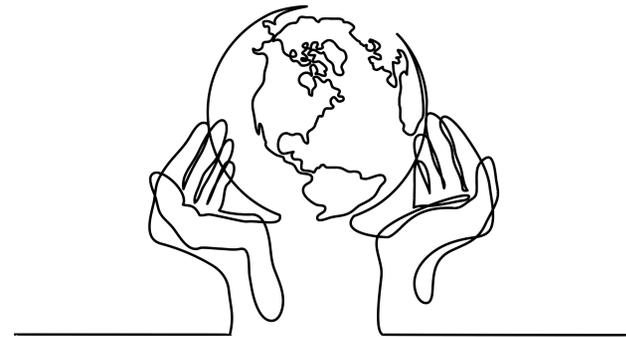
Now, set an intention for what will come after this conversation. It may be similar to the one you set at the beginning, or it may be completely different. Either way, this intention should act as a reminder and motivation to  **make a commitment** to continue learning and talking about mental health.



How will you support individuals in your family or community who struggle with mental health issues?

Take this time to share any thoughts that have not been said, and  **practice gratitude** for allowing the space for this conversation. You might consider thanking a specific individual for their valuable insights or just being grateful for your own willingness to be vulnerable. Or you may show appreciation to your group for fostering a safe discussion environment. Any way you can express gratitude is meaningful and important!

Your participation in this conversation about mental health has been a great first step toward #QuietTheSilence. **Thank you.**



## Alcohol and Drug Hotline

1-800-821-4357

Round-the-clock national hotline that provides resources about local alcohol and drug abuse treatment options. Calls are free and confidential.

## ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-422-4453

[www.childhelp.org/hotline](http://www.childhelp.org/hotline)

Round-the-clock hotline with professional crisis counselors that offers crisis intervention, information, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential.

## Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741

[crisistextline.org](http://crisistextline.org)

Round-the-clock support from trained crisis counselors.

## National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

[nami.org](http://nami.org)

The nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE

[thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org)

Part of the largest nationwide network of programs and expert resources. Its website has information about domestic violence, online instructional materials, safety planning, local resources and ways to support the organization.

## National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)

1-800-931-2237

[nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org)

The largest nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders, NEDA serves as a catalyst for prevention, cures and access to quality care. The NEDA Helpline (1-800-931-2237) is available Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET to provide support, resources, and treatment options for yourself or a loved one.

## National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255 (1-800-SUICIDE)

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Round-the-clock hotline for people in distress and their loved ones to access prevention and crisis resources and best practices for professionals. Calls are answered by local crisis lines whenever possible.

## Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) / National

## Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-4673

[rainn.org](http://rainn.org)

The nation's largest antisexual violence organization, RAINN operates the hotline in partnership with more than 1,000 local support specialists across the country and administers the Department of Defense (DoD) Safe Helpline. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.