A decorative green graphic on the left side of the slide, featuring various geometric shapes like circles, squares, and triangles, along with dotted lines and a large curved shape.

Digital Tools for Youth Mental Health Leadership Summit

National Academy of Sciences

Meet Active Minds

Active Minds mobilizes youth and young adults to lead a transformative movement in mental health, forever changing how it is valued and prioritized in society. By equipping, connecting, and amplifying the collective and diverse voices of youth and young adults, we are building a movement of lasting champions who are improving mental health norms for all.



**8+ million
students**

reached through our
campus programming
annually

Present at
**1,000+ schools,
workplaces, and
communities**
nationwide

**500+
student-led
chapters**

at high schools and colleges
nationwide

**10,000+
young adult
leaders**

advocating and
educating for
mental health

active minds

The Challenge

Nearly 70% of young people don't believe they have the expertise or basic knowledge to help a friend (Morning Consult MTVE Custom Mental Health Study, 2023).

Young people want to be there for their friends, but are afraid of saying the wrong thing.

This gap between intention and action leaves youth isolated precisely when peer connection matters most.



Our Response

Active Minds partnered with SHOWTIME/MTV Entertainment Studios to create A.S.K. Acknowledge, Support, Keep-in-Touch.

An interactive YouTube digital experience that teaches emotional support skills through practice, not lectures.

asktohelp.com

The logo features the lowercase letters 'a.s.k.' in a white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the letters is a solid orange horizontal bar.

acknowledge
support
keep-in-touch

active minds

**We brought
together young
mental health
leaders from
across the
country to
develop A.S.K.
for young people,
by young people**



Jorge Alvarez
Rutgers Alumni



Brandon Bond
University of Michigan Grad



Anushka Gupta
NYU Undergrad



Morgann Noble
Howard University
Undergrad



Alyssa Garza
LSU Grad Student



Tre Moss
St. Ambrose University Grad



Trace Terrell
Johns Hopkins University
Undergrad




Kaitlin Chau
Boston College Grad
Student



Meera Varma
UCLA Grad Student
UCLA Alumni

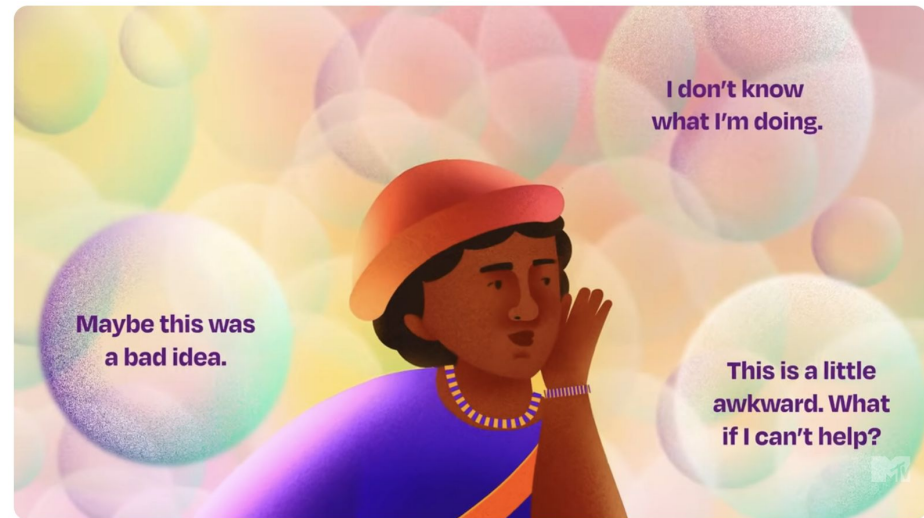


Jaiden Singh
University of Arizona
Undergrad



Together we came up with the new
Stop, Drop and Roll
for providing emotional support
to the people in our lives

Why This Format Works



Acknowledge

Create a supportive space by letting them know you're here for them.



Support

Validate their feelings and ask what they need.



Keep in Touch

Check back in regularly and consistently.



Evidence Base and Impact Data

Initial Validation (internal evaluation)

- After being introduced to A.S.K., 72% said they feel more prepared to support their friends (Morning Consult x MTV, April 2024)

Evidence Base and Impact Data

Summer 2024 Program Evaluation with SmithGeiger - Statistically significant results

- Participants saw statistically significant increases in empathy, active listening, and knowledge of emotional support
- Knowledge of emotional support increased 11%
- 14-17 year olds showed continued improvement in empathy and active listening through two-week follow-up

Evidence Base and Impact Data

Two-Week Follow-up

- 9 out of 10 youth felt confident they could provide emotional support to a friend
- 2 out of 3 used learnings from A.S.K. in some or most conversations with friends

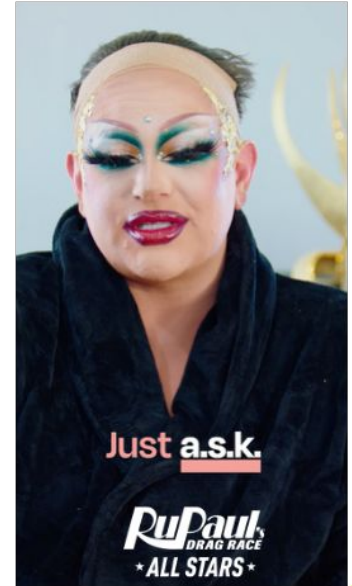
Evidence Base and Impact Data

What Youth Told Us:

- “It’s the perfect guide for when you don’t know what to say.”
- “I spent a lot of time thinking that people never cared but never considered that they just didn’t know how to ask if I was ok.”
- A lot of times, people just want you to acknowledge that they are here and are worth listening to.”

Harvard Partnership – Additional External Validation

- August 2024: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's Center for Health Communication partnered with us
- Created evidence-based training for content creators on emotional support
- Key finding: Training creators in how to provide emotional support significantly increased viewers' perceived AND objective abilities to provide emotional support
- This proves our approach works not just directly, but through influence — the content young people consume can be helpful, not harmful



What makes A.S.K. different:

- Time-bounded (not infinite scroll)
- Agency-building (not passive consumption)
- Connection-promoting (not isolation-inducing)
- Evidence-based (not algorithmic chaos)
- Free and accessible (not exploitive)

+ **Safety by design:** This is about being a friend, not a therapist. We also emphasize validation over problem-solving. We provide additional resources at asktohelp.com/learn for those who want to go deeper.

Lessons for the field:

- Technology as an amplifier, not a replacement
- Co-design is non-negotiable
- Format matters as much as content
- Start with the relationship, not the intervention
- Use technology's superpowers: technology can teach what scales human connection
- Measure what matters

The balance we must strike: What KIND of technology, designed HOW?

Final thought: We won't solve the youth mental health crisis by keeping youth off screens alone. We'll solve it by giving them evidence-based tools on the screens they're using and investing in creating a better world off-screen.

Visit asktohelp.com or scan the QR code to access A.S.K.:

