

# programming guide



a guide for creating supportive  
programming and communities



## about

Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for students. More than 15,000 students each year join an Active Minds chapter located at more than 400 high schools, colleges, and universities nationwide. Through education, advocacy, and outreach, students are empowering a new generation to speak openly about mental health, support each other, get help when needed, and take action for suicide prevention.

**Join the Active Minds movement to change the conversation about mental health.**

 ActiveMindsInc |  @Active\_Minds |  @Active\_Minds

**activeminds.org**

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We encourage the dissemination of this guide.  
Please provide credit to Active Minds.

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# introduction



# SLW



# introduction

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**Stress Less Week** is dedicated to spreading awareness about stress and anxiety and creating supportive communities where speaking up about one's struggles is a sign of strength and self-awareness.

Inside this toolkit you'll find numerous resources designed to help you develop programming that makes an impact on your campus. The programmatic suggestions are based on feedback we received from Active Minds chapters across the country, but consider this toolkit a template, as opposed to a prescription.

# stress less week

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## Programming Ideas for Students

### “Laugh More” Event

**Goal: To raise awareness about stress, stress management, and anxiety disorders by encouraging your peers to Laugh More.**

1. Host a stand-up comedy night. (Don't forget to insert commentary about Active Minds, stress management, and anxiety disorders throughout the show!)
2. Screen a funny movie. (Hand out popcorn and resources!)
3. Host a laughter yoga class. Check out [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org).
4. Host a laugh-in. Gather a group of people and start laughing.
5. Post jokes across campus. Think restrooms, residence halls, dining halls, classrooms, etc.
6. Pie Your Professor (or T.A.)  
Recruit professors to be pied and contact local bakeries or stores to obtain pies (use the donor support letter online to help) and make sure you have a plan to keep everything and everyone relatively clean.
7. Create a PSA or video.  
Give your fellow students a tip or two on managing stress, a few signs of anxiety disorders, a resource on campus, and a plug for your chapter.

### Host a Speaker

**Tabling Goal: To personalize and normalize stress, trauma, and anxiety disorders and publicly demonstrate advocacy for speaking up and seeking help.**

Go to [activeminds.org/speakers](http://activeminds.org/speakers) to see if an Active Minds Speakers Bureau member is right for your campus. If you're interested in booking a speaker, fill out the interest form as soon as possible.

### Pet Therapy

**Goal: To provide stress relief infused with information on stress management and anxiety disorders by experiencing and discussing the therapeutic nature of being with animals.**

1. Get clearance to have animals on your campus.
2. Contact your local animal shelter to inquire about an animal visit.
3. Reserve a venue, preferable outside.
4. Recruit enough volunteers so that you have plenty of help to supervise the animals.
5. Set up your educational materials and engage your peers in discussion about the helpfulness of animals in stress relief and anxiety reduction.

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## Recess!

**Goal: To provide informative outreach about mental health, stress management, and anxiety disorders to the broader campus community through fun, back-to-childhood activities.**

1. Reserve a space in a central outdoor area or gym.
2. Organize recess activities such as jump rope, hula hoop, kickball, dodgeball, and 4-square. (Don't forget to reserve or buy equipment!)
3. Publicize the event throughout campus.
4. Table at your event with your Laugh More and other educational materials.

## Library Oasis

**Goal: To provide informative stress relief to the broader campus community by taking study breaks to popular campus study spots.**

1. Reserve space in your local library and/or other study areas on campus.
2. Organize the activities you would like to offer.  
Some study breaks are simply snacks and space for socialization; others include free massages, yoga, board games, play-doh, and puzzles.
3. Publicize your event throughout campus.
4. Stock a table at your event with your Laugh More and other educational materials

## Screamfest

**Goal: To relieve stress as a community by gathering people together to scream.**

1. Register your event with campus police/security, student activities, and any other department who may need to know why students are screaming in a large group.
2. Choose a time and central location for the scream.
3. Consider buying ice cream to give out to participants.
4. Publicize the event.
5. SCREAM!

## [Download the Guide to Organizing a Mental Health Panel Discussion](#)

For more programming suggestions from other Active Minds Chapters, check out [activeminds.org/programbank](http://activeminds.org/programbank).

*Whatever programming you do, don't forget to include an educational component and information on anxiety disorders. The goal of Stress Less Week is to get people thinking about how they cope and take care of themselves when they are stressed. Help people identify simple ways to take care of themselves and the importance of doing so. Remind people that laughter can help, but sometimes something more serious is going on and laughter isn't enough – help is needed. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems on college campuses. Let students know about how to tell the difference between stress and anxiety disorder and where they can go for help on your campus.*

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## Programming Ideas for Campus and Community Organizations and Workplaces

### **"Laugh More" Event**

**Goal: To raise awareness about stress, stress management, and anxiety disorders by encouraging your peers to Laugh More.**

1. Host a stand-up comedy night.
2. Screen or make and outing to a funny movie.
3. Host a laughter yoga class. Check out [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org).
4. Post jokes across your campus or community. Think restrooms, residence halls, dining halls, classrooms, etc.
5. Have a competition to see who can find the funniest Youtube video!

### **Host a Speaker**

**Tabling Goal: To personalize and normalize stress, trauma, and anxiety disorders and publicly demonstrate advocacy for speaking up and seeking help.**

Go to [activeminds.org/speakers](http://activeminds.org/speakers) to see if an Active Minds Speakers Bureau member is right for your campus. If you're interested in booking a speaker, fill out the interest form as soon as possible.

### **Pet Therapy**

**Goal: To provide stress relief infused with information on stress management and anxiety disorders by experiencing and discussing the therapeutic nature of being with animals.**

1. Get clearance to have animals at your chosen venue.
2. Contact your local animal shelter to inquire about an animal visit.
3. Reserve a venue, preferable outside.
4. Recruit enough volunteers so that you have plenty of help to supervise the animals.
5. Set up your educational materials and engage folks in discussion about the helpfulness of animals in stress relief and anxiety reduction.

### **Office Oasis**

**Goal: To insert informative stress relief into the office culture by taking strategic breaks.**

1. Reserve space in a common area.
2. Organize the activities you would like to offer.  
It could simply be snacks and space for socialization; others include free massages, yoga, board games, and puzzles.
3. Publicize your event in advance and throughout your office.
4. Have Laugh more and other educational materials on hand to insert some stress and anxiety information.

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## **Suggested Trigger Warning Language**

*Just about any program addressing mental health issues has the potential to negatively trigger a participant. It is increasingly important for the hosts of these events to give appropriate, advance warning to audiences about potential triggers. Below you will find template language in both short and long forms that you can incorporate into your event messaging. If you have any questions, please email [chapters@activeminds.org](mailto:chapters@activeminds.org).*

### **Short Version**

Active Minds programs address topics including, but not limited to, mental health, mental illness, non-suicidal self-injury, and suicide. We have taken great care to minimize possible triggers and promote positive and hopeful messaging. However, if you are concerned about being triggered by an Active Minds program, we encourage you to make an informed decision with your treatment provider about program participation, or consult with us at [email] before the program to talk more about the content and your concerns.

### **Full-Length Version**

Active Minds programs address topics including, but not limited to, mental health, mental illness, non-suicidal self-injury, and suicide. Programs may also include personal stories from individuals who have been impacted by mental illness, have survived a suicide attempt, or lost a loved one to suicide.

We take the safety of our programs and events seriously. We take great care to ensure, to the extent possible, that our programs and events minimize possible triggers to participants and promote positive, hopeful mental health messaging. We have taken precautions in the planning and execution of our campus programs and events to adhere to safety guidelines that promote positive outcomes.

However, even when precautions are taken, the discussion of suicide, losing someone to suicide, self-injurious behavior, and other mental health conditions may be triggering. Although it is never the intent of Active Minds programming to evoke distress, we caution that exposure to sensitive content may awaken trauma centers in the brain, or the recollection of challenging personal history. For this reason, we endeavor to include mental health professionals in our planning and execution of programs and events who can recognize triggers and intervene when someone is in distress, whenever possible.

If you are concerned about being triggered by some of the content featured in an Active Minds program, we recommend making an informed decision about your participation in this event with a treatment provider, ensure that you have access to appropriate care in the case that you are triggered, or consult with our organization for more information about the program. You can reach us at [contact information here].



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## Educational Resources and Fact Sheets You Can Download

[Got Anxiety? \(ADAA\)](#)  
[Panic Disorder \(NIMH\)](#)  
[Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(NIMH\)](#)  
[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Wallet Card](#)

[Generalized Anxiety Disorder \(NIMH\)](#)  
[Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(NIHM\)](#)  
[Social Anxiety Disorder \(NIMH\)](#)  
[The Trevor Project Brochure](#)

## Social Media Messages and Images

Click to download images you can share on social media to promote Stress Less Week.

[Take 10](#)  
[There's more to life than increasing it's speed](#)  
[About Anxiety](#)  
[Take your meds. Drink some water. Call your person.](#)  
[What were you worried about a year ago?](#)

## Printable Awareness Resources

[Stress Less Week Coloring Pages](#)  
[Laugh More 3x3" Stickers](#)

[Wallet Cards](#)  
[Laugh More Postcard \(Front\)](#)  
[Laugh More Postcard \(Back\)](#)  
[Stress Management Postcard \(Front\)](#)  
[Stress Management Postcard \(Back\)](#)

## Active Minds

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changing the conversation  
about mental health