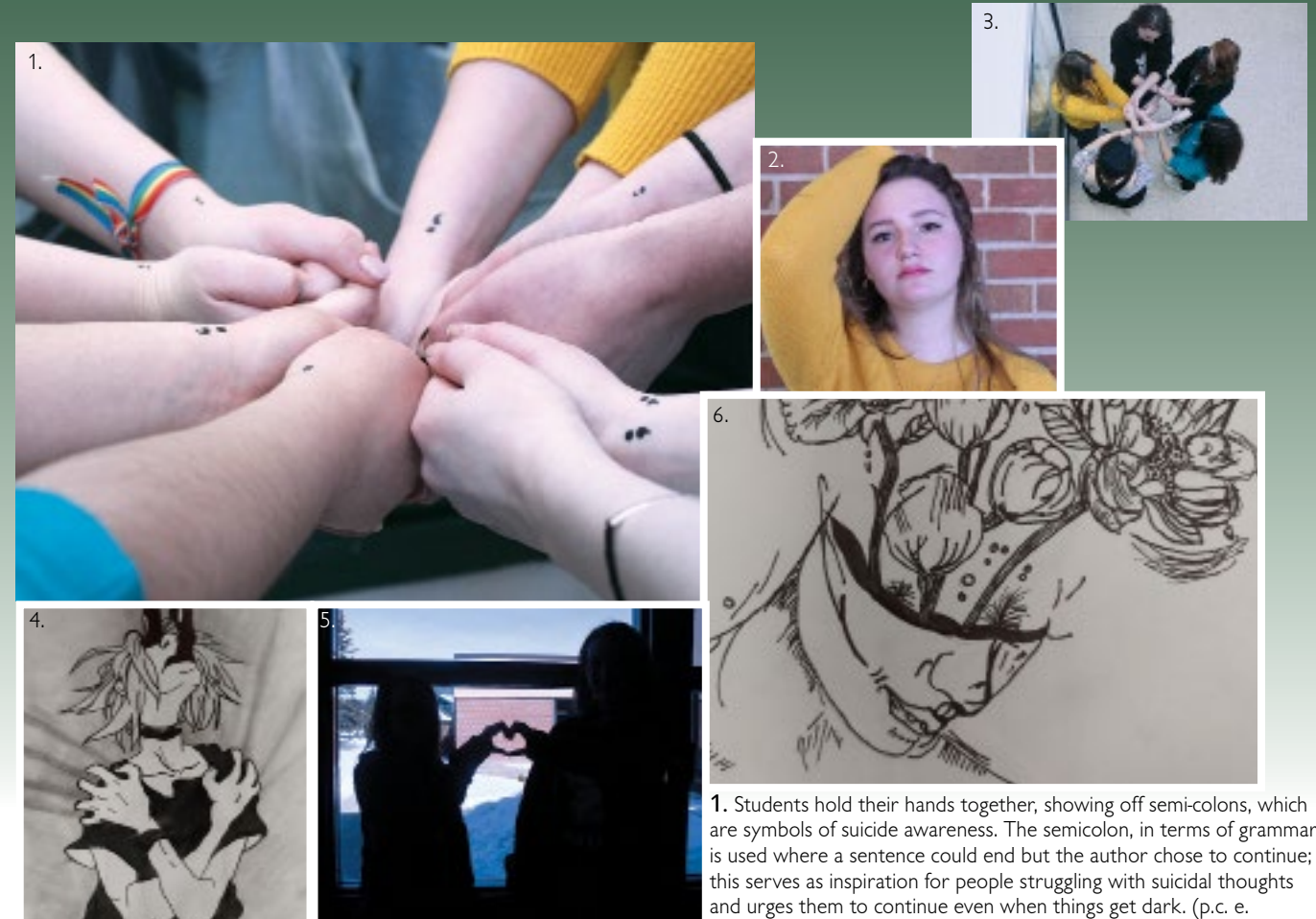


Facing Facts NEVER KNOWING

MENTAL HEALTH AT WPHS By: Abigail Woods

As health issues spread and evolve awareness becomes more and more important. Mental illness is just as real as getting the flu or breaking your leg; for some students, it's almost worse. As one anonymous student writes, "It has made me miserable. I don't have time to relax and compose myself everyday. I go to bed stressed, wake up stressed, and do it over again the next day. It eats me away." Despite this, many people who don't understand mental health don't think it affects people as harshly as it does. 19% of students at WPHS agree that some kids who say they deal with mental illness do so for attention. While no group of people is completely honest, this can be extremely harmful to people who are struggling; words can have a much larger impact than we often intend. You never really know what someone is dealing with in their mind; we often jump to assumptions defensively even though we really have no way to know if someone has a mental illness or not. Everyone has their own perspective on each person; you are not them, and therefore can't know what they deal with everyday- visibly or otherwise. Multiple students say that they've heard things akin to "anxiety is something you can turn on and off" and "it isn't an excuse for not participating" from their teachers. Students may not be aware of what mental health means to many people, but you would think, or at least hope, that teachers are trained to respect these issues at the very least. Beyond this, entertainment and media often portray mental illness in inaccurate ways. Students surveyed on mental illness in television and movies write, "I think it's good that today's society has shown more

of mental health and its effects and how nothing is wrong if you need to take a mental health break. However, some issues can be depicted wrong when they are used to be funny and as a joke." Another adds, "There is a right and wrong way to use mental health issues in TV and movies. If they are used right then it makes me happy that the creator is trying to spread awareness to mental health issues. If it is used the wrong way then it makes me upset." Addressing mental health is no easy task, but the conversation about it is extremely important. The nuances of language and conversation can make all the difference, but overall it is understanding each other that matters, and knowing that everyone can make a difference in someone else's life. 95% of students surveyed said that they knew someone who has struggled with mental health; the other 5% said they were unsure. That means that almost everyone in the school has a connection of some kind to mental illness, so why is it so taboo sometimes? The discussion about mental health will never be over. As it changes, so must we. In the grand scheme of life, what matters is your kindness to others. We all make mistakes in one way or another, but facing up to them and becoming better people is what makes us strong. Be kind to one another, because you never know all the details of someone else's story. To anyone struggling right now: you are not alone. You can do this, you are stronger than what you are fighting, and you can find your way out. On the next page the suicide hot line is provided for anyone in need and we urge you to seek help if you need it.



1. Students hold their hands together, showing off semi-colons, which are symbols of suicide awareness. The semicolon, in terms of grammar, is used where a sentence could end but the author chose to continue; this serves as inspiration for people struggling with suicidal thoughts and urges them to continue even when things get dark. (p.c. e. hambrough) 2. Allison Steppach '21, a student who struggles with anxiety and depression, poses for the camera. (p.c. e. hambrough) 3. Students reach across the circle and hold hands. (p.c. a. woods) 4. Artwork by Abagil Nichols '21. (p.c. a. nichols) 5. Sydney Guyette '21 and Briana O'Neil '21 create a heart with their hands in front of the windows in the clock tower. (p.c. a. woods) 6. Artwork done by Abagil Nichols '21. (p.c. a. nichols)



How does it affect YOU?

When they say it's not real?

"I feel so, so, so frustrated because it is an absolute huge part of today's world, unfortunately. Just because you haven't experienced something of this extreme, doesn't mean it doesn't exist and you can't help."

When they make suicide jokes?

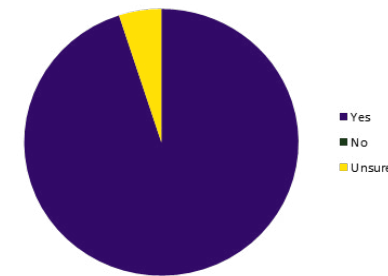
- Horrible
- Upset
- Uncomfortable
- Angry
- Terrible
- Worried

When someone says it's for attention?

"It makes me feel like I should try and change the fact that I have mental health issues because it makes me feel like everyone will hate me if I have mental health issues."

"Be careful about what you say around others. You never know what they have to overcome. Don't be an obstacle in their journey. Take their hand, and help them through the darkness, until they reach the light. But remember, you may be a part of their journey, but you have to let the adventurer take the lead. For the obstacles are their life, and you are a helping hand in it." -Anonymous

Do you know someone who has struggled with mental health?



Have you struggled with mental health?

