



## Alamosa High School Presents



**Students:  
\$5**

**Adults:  
\$8**

**"We're all in this together!"**

**November 17th, 18th, and  
19th at 7 PM**

## Mind In Shape: A New Club At AHS

**Brock Benton**  
—Staff Writer—

As we enter the second quarter, many students will fall victim to a plethora of obstacles. Due to school related and unrelated challenges, an individual may find themselves facing a mental or emotional health conflict.

However, accessing a support system can be difficult, especially when stigma is present. Stigma is when an individual associates a characteristic, circumstance, or quality as negative.

Today, many individuals and groups uphold a stigma around mental health. Upholding a mental health stigma can lead to discrimination.

Direct or indirect discrimination may result in a lack of understanding, reluctance to seek help, and bullying. Ways of discriminating include limiting opportunity for the individual, classifying them as an "attention seeker," or avoiding someone because of a characteristic they hold.

To solve the issue of stigma and accessibility, a new team has been created by Brock Benton. With the help of Tom Hays, our Alamosa High School mental health counselor, and other students.

Other students such as Sienna Gallegos, Megan Curto, Jude Walzl, and Olivia Tuioti-Mariner, the 'Minds in Shape' team has been officially established. The team's creation was possible

with funding from the Colorado Education Initiative. Within the Colorado Education Initiative, Youth Connections offered a grant for students to implement a desired project in their school.

Brock Benton saw the grant as an opportunity to transform the high school's mental health department. After working closely on an application with Tom Hays, the team was awarded \$5,000 in funding for the project.

Recently, many of the students received a brief introduction to the new team at the Bonfire on the 10th of October.

The 'Minds in Shape' team strives to allow for ease of receiving mental health services. The goal is accompanied by the plan to achieve maximum comfortability and lack of difficulty. Continuous advocacy and new ideas will surround our school.

The purpose of the team is to develop the pre-existing foundation the school already has but additionally expand on the foundation with a long-term, student-supported mental health department.

Unlike other "projects" which are finite in scope, this project hopes to truly create something that is sustainable through the years. The vision of this project is to make it long term. We want to effectively implement this to advance itself over the course of several years.

The department will offer information on who and where to go for help

as well as maintain an easy, comfortable, and safe process for obtaining specific help.

On top of achieving mental health goals, the project will be founded on the idea of collaboration with each member taking upon a leadership role. Every decision that is made will be put through a process of not only agreement, but active discussion of implementation. Our project will focus on group effort.

Currently, mental health is seen as an unorthodox topic. Rarely will

individuals accept the chance to have a conversation over mental health.

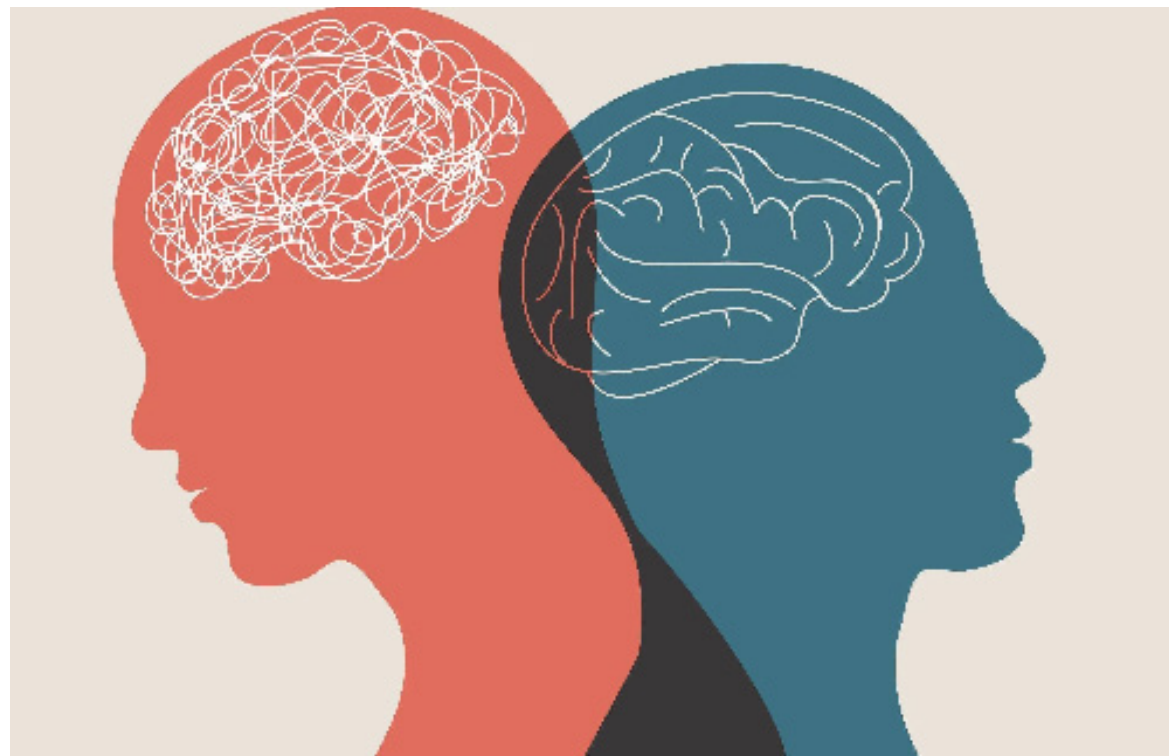
Not only will this help the students that are already seeking help but it will encourage other students to engage with the resources at hand. The purpose will be achieved through a phase-in process over the next two years.

Next year, information about the dangers of stigma and advocating for mental health will be the team's primary focus. Following the first year, the second year will establish formal educational opportunities and creative projects.

The long-term impact expected from the project, is simply a high school culture of de-stigmatized mental health issues.

Currently, our team is working hard each week to effectively transform the high school into something every student can be comfortable in each day.

Although our team is full, as of now, new ideas are welcomed. If anyone has any ideas or desires to talk to myself or anybody on the team, please reach out. The 'Minds in Shape' team wants to build this project around the student body, which is our number one priority.



**Minds In Shape** — Welcomes everyone with open arms.

Photo by: Brock Benton