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A lot of kids are struggling right now, in fact many are describing the current situation as a “youth mental health crisis.” Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people today, unfortunately in recent years we've seen significant increases in certain mental health disorders in youth including anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. Many factors shape the mental health of young people from individual to societal level forces. It is especially important to protect the mental health of minority and marginalized young people. Due to factors beyond their control, these groups are at a higher risk for mental health difficulties.

Step one in my project I would like all of the juniors as well as other kids to make posters to spread awareness and tell the raw truth of mental health. I was thinking we could hold a meeting or something of the sort and I would give them a mental illness subject to surround their poster on and through **CANVA** they would go on to make their posters about their topic and use their resources to reduce the stigma around mental health. I ask that the individuals focus on respect and knowledge when making these posters. Language in this assignment should work to destigmatize the presented information instead of reinforcing inaccuracies and misunderstandings often presented in pop culture today.

Step two of my project, I would like individuals to donate items to make bags to make in-patient stays a little more comfortable, items that can be brought in for Mid-winter Conference could contain socks, shower shoes, crayons, age appropriate coloring books, card games, books, stuffed animals, plain long or short sleeve shirts (all sizes), other comfortable clothes (no drawstrings and no controversial or offensive designs), you can also contact your local hospital to see what else they will accept.

Normalizing challenges with mental health is the key to reducing stigma. Encouraging respectful informed and researched conversations around mental health will help individuals struggling, feel better about their own problems and those of others. Far too many young people are struggling with their mental health and unable to get the support they need. We all have a role to play in supporting youth mental health and creating a world where young people thrive.

“If we seize this moment, set up for our children and their families in their moment of need, and lead with inclusion, kindness and respect we can lay the foundation for a healthier, more resilient and more fulfilled nation.” -Dr. Vivek H. Murthy Surgeon General of the United States

And I, Adryenne Rush, want to do my part to better myself and my peers.