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12th Grade (Senior)

Topic: How can the people of the world help to bring focus on the problems that we face?

<center>Share Your Story</center>

      In the world today, many different people face countless problems that they cannot often express. Individuals may feel unsafe, unappreciated, or even scared. A common example of this is depression and anxiety. In an article by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), experts found that an estimated 21 million individuals experienced a depressive episode. When one episode occurs, they are more than likely to return. Without help from experts, family, or friends, those with depression may fall even deeper into the darkness.

      As an individual in society today, I have seen multiple accounts of people with depression. Individuals may range from family members, friends, peers, teachers, and colleagues. The list can go on and on about possible people who have or will experience the struggles of mental health and the toll it may have on one's well-being. As the issue in the United States rises, people have begun to use their voices. An example of individuals speaking out is student-athletes. In the past year, hundreds of athletes have spoken out about how their mental health is causing problems within their lives, sports, and actions. Being a student-athlete myself, I know how sports take a toll on my brain and my mental health. Hearing those dedicated, hard working, and talented individuals speak out about their health and how even they need help, has made me feel at peace, confident, and most importantly, heard as an athlete.

      To continue, as more people speak up about the issues individuals face in the world today, people may begin to feel safe and express their own stories. When famous athletes, actors, actresses, writers, influencers, etc. express their stories and their traumas, others who may have been frightened to share their story begin to speak out. Within communities more civilians feel comfortable seeking help. The side effects of mental health often make others feel like they are not enough and

they cannot seek guidance through their troubles. Knowing that other people may be going through the same situation often provides comfort and relief.

      There are many other problems that individuals face in the world today, but depression and anxiety seem to be a rising and recurring problem. With the help of others speaking out about their problems and sharing their stories, these issues are becoming more noticed and heard. Individually, I have experienced these mental health issues. I believed that I was not enough, I was not capable, and I was not loved. With the help of individuals sharing their stories, I was able to overcome my problems and I am now the happiest I have ever been. When people bring the focus to problems individuals around the world face, they are not only saving themselves, but also thousands of others who may have been too scared to seek help.

      Growing up, a saying that always stuck with me was, "Choose kind. Be kind. You never know what someone is going through." This quote has not only influenced me as a person, but also my perspective. It has taught me to be kind, help others, and to share my story. I knew what it was like to experience someone not being kind and to suffer from mental health. I was able to hear others' stories and understand that **it is okay to not be okay.** The stories others shared really did save me and they can save the 21 million others as well. You truly never know what someone is going through, so be kind. Use your voice. Share your story.

Word count: 586

I really hope you enjoyed reading my paper as much as I enjoyed writing it. I know the problems people face in the world are often hard to talk about and that is why I felt it was important to write about it. I tried to incorporate my own memories and events into the story as best I could. I think it is so important for the world to know they can share their stories and be heard. Thank you for starting this contest and creating this opportunity!