Talking Points

Use these talking points to stay "on frame" in interviews and other speaking engagements.

Talking points are a key tool for spreading a well-framed message about mental health. Review these sample talking points and the annotations that explain why they work.

» Mental health is a psychological state of wellbeing.

Research shows that the public misunderstands mental health. To remedy that, provide a clear definition of mental health at the beginning of your message.

» Mental health is the balance of an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It exists on a spectrum that spans the entire population. Mental health is not simply the *absence* of mental illness.

» Children need our support for their strong mental health. Balance of behaviors, emotions and thoughts supports children's healthy brain development, and lifelong health.

To counter stigma, reframe the focus from mental health problems to mental health as a positive state.

» Strong mental health supports a positive outlook on life and enables us all to participate in life and accomplish our goals.

To help the public understand what mental health is, frame it as a desirable, positive state and distinguish it from poor mental health.

- It helps us realize our potential, cope with stress, work productively, enjoy strong relationships, and contribute to our communities.

Use inclusive language that defines mental health in terms that apply to everyone. Doing so will help counter the negative understandings that underlie stigma and the othering of people with mental health issues.

- Factors that affect it are both internal (such as our genetics) and external (such as our access to safe housing and job stability).

- Mental health affects our physical health, and vice versa.

» Children's mental health is affected by their caregivers' mental health and vice versa.

  - Children develop mental health through responsive interactions with adult caregivers.

  - Adult mental health can be shaped by the quality of interactions with the children they care for. Caring for a child with behavioral health problems can cause stress, exacerbating existing mental health issues.

» Mental *illness* disrupts the thoughts, emotion, and behavior that support our wellbeing. These disruptions cause distress and interfere with our ability to function at work, at school, at home, in the community, and in daily life.

» Mental illness affects many of us. It is one of the most common health conditions in the United States.

  - One in five people every year have a diagnosable mental health disorder. That's almost twice as many people who have diabetes.

  - It affects our friends, our families, and ourselves. Nearly half of all adults (46 percent) will experience some type of mental health disorder in her or his lifetime.

Counter stigma of mental health (as opposed to physical health) by showing that the two are linked.

Counter stigma by positioning this issue as one that affects many of us and use inclusive language.

Overcome stigma with inclusive language. Show that disorders are common, but avoid the word "normal" because it causes people to think in a binary normal/abnormal frame.

» Mental health disorders are preventable, treatable, and often curable.

- Those of us who are experiencing severe mental health disorders can achieve relatively high levels of wellbeing with the right treatment.

- More than half of people who are impaired at work because of mental health problems improve after just three weeks of treatment.

» Unfortunately, many of us with mental health challenges don't get the care we need.

- Nearly 60 percent of adults and nearly half of youth with a mental illness didn't receive mental health services in the previous year.

- People of color experience disparities in access to care. Blacks and Latinos used mental health services at about half the rate of whites in the past year. Asian Americans used services at about one-third the rate of whites.

» Lack of access to treatment for mental health disorders sets back our society. The economic impact of depression alone amounted to more than $200 billion in 2010.

» We can promote mental health with an integrated health care system to enhance quality and improve access to care. This would lead to higher-quality mental health care and make it easier for people to see providers.

» Building an integrated care system that supports

Use a positive tone to counter fatalistic attitudes about solutions to mental health disorders.

Use inclusive language that defines mental health in terms that apply to everyone.

Use inclusive language to counter stigma.

Avoid overwhelming readers with too many numbers and statistics. Choose one or two data points to support your assertion.

To counter fatalism and boost the public's sense of efficacy, end with concrete solutions.

people at all stages—children, parents and older adults—is smart way to make sure resources for wellbeing reach all areas in the community.

» We can help build up children's resilience by supporting their caregivers. Strong, responsive relationships with adults and experiences that support development make it easier for children to withstand adversity. Mental health supports for caregivers are resources that help foster those supportive relationships and positive environments for children.

» Investing in mental health supports our shared prosperity and helps all of us achieve our full potential. It also helps us prevent and address and overcome related societal challenges, such as homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Use the value of *Human Potential* to position this issue as a matter of collective concern.

» We need to make sure all people—regardless of where we live or who we are—have the opportunity to access the care we need.

Frame disparities around access with the value of *Fairness Across Places*. Research shows this is a more effective approach than framing disparities around differences between groups of people.

» When we support health and wellbeing, we help everyone reach their full potential and contribute to their communities. If we invest in systems to ensure all people are able to get the treatment they need, we will have a healthier, and stronger society.

Position mental health as an issue that affects society.

Conclude with a collective frame that positions issue as a matter that affects us all.