

Mental Health and Media

Youth Speaker: Emma Shark

Main Ideas & Concepts

- Talk about positives and negatives of how mental health and suicide is portrayed in media
- How social media/electronics/technology affect teens
- Give an opinion on mental health in the media from the perspective of a highschooler

Before We Begin...

- Mental health and suicide is a complex issue that is different for each individual and their situation, so generalizations are hard to make
- I am not an expert
- It is important to listen to those affected directly by suicide
- Different types of media I talk about:
 - Entertainment
 - News and journalism
 - Social media and online forums

Positives of Mental Health Portrayal in Media

- Increased discussions of mental illness and suicide
- Expose people to general knowledge about suicide risks
- Allow easy access to information and support for those who who don't have the resources

Romanticizing MH issues

- Makes it into a drama/love story/art statement
- Makes suicide into beautiful art with gorgeous imagery
- Displayed as something that is meant to be "overcome," used as a plot device, simple character development
- Mental illnesses can be "loved away"
- Makes people who died by suicide into heroes & angels

Going for Shock Value

- Going into detail about methods of suicide
- For-profit, to draw attention and audience
- Makes mental illness and suicide into an industry, similar to war and violence in a lot of mainstream media

Media Based off Neurotypical

- Most discussions of mental illness in media come from neurotypical people
 - Attempts to bring awareness don't have basic understandings down
 - Well intentioned but can be damaging to those affected by suicide and mental illness
- Can come off as ignorant
- It's a touchy subject that needs to be addressed with skill
- Important to listen to voices of those who have lived experience/are in heavily affected demographic areas

Things that should be discussed more in media

- Going to therapy/reaching out/talking/MEDs aren't discussed
- You shouldn't wait until crisis to intervene or talk about issues, do something before it becomes a problem
- More discussion of risk factors and causes of mental health
- Representation of people with mental illness that aren't portrayed as dangerous or ostracized

Timing of Suicide Discussions

- Only discuss in the aftermath of suicides, etc
- Prevention and recovery is less emphasized
- Leads to people not recognizing mental health issues in instances less extreme cases than suicide

How do Social Media and Phones Affect Youth

- Staying connected
 - Using social media can be essential to being included and in the loop
 - Being without (online) connections can strain relationships
 - An obligation to keep up with social medias
- Effects on energy levels
 - Social media can be draining
 - Doing goal oriented things online vs doing endless tasks
- Social media isn't inherently good or bad, it reflects the feelings/emotions of the person using it

Thanks For Listening

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