



Mental Illness
Foundation

Organizer of the

Partners for Life

Program

Why sensitize teenagers to depression?

- Statistics reveal that 80 to 90% of teenaged suicide victims suffered from some form of mental illness, most often depression.
- In the general population to date, an estimated 5 to 10% of teenagers are suffering from clinical depression.
- 70% of teenagers living with clinical depression are not diagnosed.
- Suicide ranks **second** in major causes of death of Quebec teenagers.
- The province of Quebec has one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

Confronted with this alarmingly high rate of adolescent suicide in Quebec, and knowing that depression is most often the cause of these suicides; the Mental Illness Foundation has taken on the mission of informing and sensitizing teenagers to the urgency of this problem.

The Partners for Life Tour

The Mental Illness Foundation's *Solidaire pour la vie* program is celebrating its 11th anniversary this year. The tour visits high schools across the province of Quebec giving presentations to 9th, 10th and 11th grade students, their parents and teachers on depression, in a continued effort to increase awareness and screening for the illness. The presentation material focuses on recognizing the symptoms of depression and resources available for treatment. To date, more than half a million mainly French-speaking teenagers, parents and teachers have been met in 91% of high schools across Quebec. This year, the funding has been allotted to coordinate *Partners for Life*, the English expansion of *Solidaire pour la vie*, translated, managed and presented by English-speaking activity leaders in a format tailored specifically for an English-speaking audience. *Partners for Life* is based on the solid foundation laid by *Solidaire pour la vie*, a program with ten years of credibility and success in the field, and is now available to teens, their families and teachers in the English-speaking communities of Quebec, with the tour beginning in January 2009!

The objectives:

To inform teenagers aged 14 to 18 years old, along with their parents and teachers, of the importance of detecting depression, as a matter of life and death in many cases. The goal is to prevent adolescent suicide by educating teens on depression and leading them to the appropriate resources:

- By informing teens and adults around them that depression is a treatable illness;
- By explaining the gravity of depression and its consequences, suicide being the most important;
- By distinguishing between depression and the blues;

For more information about the tour, visit our website: www.mentalillnessfoundation.org

- By informing them about treatments and steps to take if they or someone close to them may be suffering from depression, and helping them guide their friends or loved ones towards competent resources.

The message

Depression is an illness that affects people of all ages, including teenagers, and it is treatable. Depression that goes undiagnosed or untreated has serious and dangerous implications. Early detection is crucial, and action must be taken before it worsens and a crisis can occur. The message addressed to teens is one of hope: you can beat it and you can help your friend or loved one beat it.

The content:

Both the training received by our activity leaders and the written material of the presentation itself has been developed, adapted and is under annual evaluation by paediatric psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, school officials, communications specialists and teens. Our activity leaders complete a rigorous month-long training process, a total of 140 hours composed of workshops on public speaking, mental illness, referral and adolescence among many others.

Activity

Two trained activity leaders from the Mental Illness Foundation guide students through an interactive presentation. The presentation itself is divided into three sections:

- 1- What is depression and mental illness?
- 2- What are the symptoms of depression?
- 3- How to help yourself, a friend or loved one you are worried about.

At the end of the presentation, pocket-sized reference guides are given to each student and leaflets are given to all adults present. The presentation is designed to last the same amount of time as a regular school period: anywhere between 45 and 75 minutes.

For whom are the presentations intended

Secondary-level students and high school staff:

The presentations are tailored for students in grades 9, 10 and 11. We sincerely hope that school staff and any other individuals interested or concerned by adolescent depression will attend the presentations.

Parents

As a complement to the school visits, a team from the Foundation can be made available upon request or according to demand to offer presentations to interested parents.

CLSC and community group officials

The Foundation also welcomes community group workers who wish to better their knowledge of adolescent depression. They are invited to attend the presentations given to students in their school. However, if a CLSC wishes to form a group of at least 20 people, a team of presenters will be made available to meet them at the CLSC or in a local community group centre.

Framework of presentation

To ensure presentations run smoothly, the Mental Illness Foundation needs the collaboration of an appointed contact in your school. Once identified, this person's role will be:

- To act as the liaison between the school and the activity leaders from the Foundation;

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- To co-ordinate the logistics of the presentations given in the school;
- To complete an evaluation form after the presentation.

Our activity leaders can make several presentations (maximum of three per day), depending on the number of students in 9th, 10th and 11th grade in your high school.

During the presentations, we would greatly appreciate the presence of a teacher standing by who could maintain proper discipline in the group, if necessary.

The *Partners for Life* presentations we offer are **FREE with NO CHARGE** to your school.

It would be appreciated if the school cafeteria could provide lunch for the activity leaders, if possible.

To arrange a visit

1. Appoint a contact or liaison in your school.
2. Fill out the enclosed registration form.
3. Fax your registration form to the following number, and at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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A few words about the Mental Illness Foundation

Founded in 1980, the Mental Illness Foundation has, until recently, focused primarily on medical research. Among our achievements, we are particularly proud of the Fernand-Seguin Research Center built in 1990, at a cost of \$2.5 million.

The President and Founder of the Mental Illness Foundation, Dr Yves Lamontagne, Psychiatrist and President of the Québec College of Physicians, has worked tirelessly to demystify mental illness within the general public. Dr. Lamontagne's participation in the television show *Visa Santé* has made him very popular with the general public. He has also been awarded the Order of Canada and the Order of Quebec. Highly regarded by health professionals, his dedication to the cause is still as great as ever and is profoundly appreciated by the Mental Illness Foundation.

The mission of the Mental Illness Foundation is:

- To demystify and de-stigmatize mental illness within the general public;
- To contribute to the detection, screening and treatment of mental disorders;
- To finance innovative and relevant mental illness research programs;
- To support organizations directly involved in helping people suffering from mental illness.

The Foundation has chosen to position itself at the forefront of the urgent issue of adolescent suicide and urges depressed teenagers to seek early diagnosis and treatment before a crisis (suicide) may occur. The decision to afford great priority to *Solidaires pour la vie-Partners for Life* as a valuable tool in adolescent depression screening and prevention was a natural progression for the Foundation. Adolescent depression and suicide are issues we treat with urgency and action through our program, and our mission is still as vital and inspirational to our team as ever.

For more information about the tour, visit our website: www.mentalillnessfoundation.org

Organizations that support the *Partners for Life* Tour

- Association des CLSC et CHSLD du Québec
- Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ)
- Collège des médecins du Québec
- Conseil permanent de la jeunesse
- Dr Patricia Garel, child psychiatrist at Hôpital Ste-Justine
- Fédération des cégeps
- Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec
- Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec
- Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec
- Fédération des associations de parents des cégeps du Québec inc.
- Fédération québécoise des directeurs et directrices d'établissement d'enseignement
- Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec
- Ordre des psychologues du Québec
- Réseau des Carrefour jeunesse-emploi du Québec
- Revivre – anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder support association
- Suicide Action Montréal

A few numbers from the tour

- 597 029 people have attended our *Solidaire pour la vie* presentations since 1998.
- More than 50,000 students were visited during the 2007-2008 school year, representing close to 40 school buses each week.
- Since the beginning of the program in 1998, we have reached 91% of the province's 9th, 10th and 11th grade majority French-speaking high school students.
- *Solidaire pour la vie* teams have visited 17 administrative regions of Quebec, from Fermont on the Northern Coast to Coaticook in Estrie (Eastern Townships), from Rouyn-Noranda in Abitibi to Percé in the Gaspé region.
- 265 towns welcomed our tour.
- Some 140,000 kilometres were travelled during the 2007-2008 school year, the equivalent of 560 times the distance from Montreal to Quebec City.
- We are more than confident in our ability and motivation to achieve the same rate of contact in Quebec's English-speaking high schools starting January 2009!

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