

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

New program hopes to shed light on mental health issues

Hailey Giuffre, class of 2018

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The high school years are some of the most mentally challenging of a young person's life: class work is harder than ever, friends change like the weather, and parents just don't seem to understand. It is so easy to feel alone, especially in school. Westmont Hilltop is looking to broaden their spectrum of resources for students who may be coping with mental illness.

"We're looking to begin a new program starting the 2018-2019 school year. We've proposed it to the school board already and I have little to no doubt in my mind it will be approved," said Mr. Mitchell.

The new program is titled Behavioral Health-Works and it is described as an opt-in program where students who feel plagued by mental illness are given the opportunity to come forward and take a test to gauge where they fall on the mental health spectrum. From there, they will be given the proper resources needed to help begin the path of treatment.

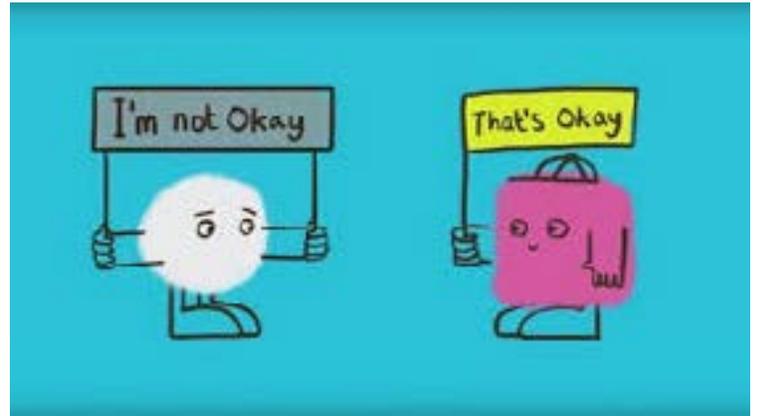
"The program is only being used in two other schools, currently," senior high guidance counselor Mr. Jones explained. "I'm excited at the thought of being the first school in western Pennsylvania, and the third school in the entire state, to be doing something so cutting edge and beneficial to the students."

The students also believe that this new program will be useful.

"I think the new system will be really helpful because it sounds like it will be more tailored to specific students and their individual needs," a Westmont senior said of the new program. "What would help now, though, is a full time social worker and more access to said social worker."

Our administrators at Westmont care deeply for the emotional well-being of their students and want them to know that there are people who care and are willing to help.

"Now, I am not a mental health professional, and I want to make that clear," Mr. Mitchell began, "but I want these students to know that they are not alone. Mental illness is not uncommon and furthermore it's treatable. You can go



This comic showcases the idea that it's okay not to be okay.

Source: <http://www.time4changementalhealthcharter.com/mental-health-charter.html>

to any adult you trust, and we implore you to do so and to seek the help you need."

And our Westmont senior wants you to know that "depression is more than just being sad. It's more like the lack of feeling altogether and telling someone to get over it doesn't fix anything."

Everyone deals with mental health differently, but no one has to deal with it on their own. Hopefully, through these new programs, students dealing with mental health can feel more comfortable seeking treatment. Until these programs are put in place, these students can still seek help through our guidance counselors or our social worker. Stop by the counseling office for more information on what programs we have for students with mental illness. And remember, you are not alone. 🌈

Westmont Hilltop School District

Unified in a commitment to inspire and to empower resilient, lifelong learners.

This feature story was created by students in yearbook journalism with faculty oversight and is intended for WHSD students, faculty and community members. All efforts will be made to ensure the accuracy of this publication. Please report any mistakes to yearbook advisor Korbin Shearer at kxs@whsd.org