

Succeeding in the Face of Challenges

by Mark Katz, PhD

IN A CULTURE THAT CONTINUES to stigmatize people who struggle with learning, behavioral, and mental health challenges, it takes a special courage to accept these challenges head-on and to work hard to succeed in spite of them. And it takes even more courage to share your journey with others so they might learn from your personal experiences. Several projects are currently underway that provide opportunities for this to occur, three of which we highlight here: *Change the View*, the “Own It” Project, and *What’s Your Story?*

Change the View

Sponsored by Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), *Change the View* draws upon youth voice, creativity, and originality to help legitimize and de-stigmatize mental health

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and other challenges. Participants in this project create original videos in response to specific questions, including:

- How can we help our friends instead of turning our backs on them?
- How do we talk about it?
- How do we show everyone that any problem can be worked out with a little kindness and understanding?

Videos are judged by a panel of CMHO judges, and posted on YouTube. The judges choose yearly winners based upon a range of criteria, including originality, creativity, clarity, and persuasiveness. First prize receives a gift of \$2,000. In many instances, videos are created by youth who themselves struggle with a variety of different mental health challenges. Some also include their friends and family members. All videos communicate a simple, yet powerful message.

One in five youth struggle with mental health challenges. CMHO believes it’s time to end the stigma, and “change the view.” To learn more about the project, visit the CMHO website at kidsmentalhealth.ca or contact CMHO through email (info@cmho.org) or by phone (416-921-2109). Videos of recent award winners are available at youtube.com/user/changetheview2012.

The “Own It” Project

In recognition of young adults who choose to own their ADHD, the “Own It” Project provides an avenue through which they can tell their story so that others might learn from their experiences.

ADHD remains a source of stigma for a number of people struggling with the condition. For others, it’s just the opposite. They have chosen to confront their ADHD-related challenges head-on and to explore how best to successfully navigate around them. Now knowing that there is indeed a light at the end of the tunnel, they’re taking personal journey to a new level, that of reaching out to others who experience similar challenges. The “Own It” Project provides them a platform.

Participants can tell their personal stories through video or in writing. They address three questions:

- How was ADHD getting in your way?
- Was there a moment when you realized you had to own your ADHD?
- Ultimately, what made you decide to take action?

Project organizers require that videos be no less than forty seconds in length and no longer than two minutes. Essays are no less than two hundred and no more than three



hundred words. Participants must be at least eighteen years of age (nineteen in Alabama and Nebraska) and have a medical diagnosis of ADHD.

Learn more about the “Own It” Project at theownitproject.com. In addition to information, the site offers two brief videos: one by Adam Levine, lead singer for Maroon Five, and one by Nicole Funicelli, Hollywood Music Studio owner and singer, each talking about how they learned to own their ADHD. The “Own It” Project is sponsored by Shire, and has been endorsed by both ADDA and CHADD.

What’s Your Story?

The What’s Your Story? video contest empowers youth by giving them a voice to share their stories and helping them to educate their peers on how to be good online citizens. The contest is designed to appeal primarily to teens. Contestants are asked to draw upon their unique insights into the Internet landscape to create a video that tells a personal story related to cyberbullying.

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The stories address one of the following themes:

- *Take Action Against Bullying*: How would you help a friend being bullied online?
- *Keep a Good Rep Online*: What’s the right way to share?
- *Be Cell Smart*: How can someone new to cell phones use it safely?

Stories can range from confessionals, to public service announcements, to funny re-enactments, so long as they address one of these issues. The grand prize for the winning video is \$10,000. Participants must be thirteen or older and residents of the United States or Canada (excluding Quebec). The 2012 grand prize went to a team of students from a high school in Grand Prairie, Texas. You can view their winning video at whatsyourstory.trendmicro.com.

The What’s Your Story? contest is sponsored by Trend Micro Internet Safety for Kids and Families, under the direction of Lynette Owens, with support from a number of other organizations, among them Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, the Office of Privacy Commissioner – Ontario, to name just a few. For more on Trend Micro Internet Safety for Kids and Families, and their ongoing efforts to increase online safety, visit trendmicro.com/internetsafety.

We will share more information on these and related projects during the Innovative Programs session at CHADD’s 2012 conference in San Francisco. ●