

Presence of Mind: Helping Others

Music plays as the series title displays: Presence of Mind, sponsored by Cloud9 and Kaiser Permanente.

Introduction

Greg Miller, games industry host and Internet personality, shares why it's important to speak openly about mental health.

Hello, Greg here to tell you about a cool video I want you to watch. Let me tell you why. Have you ever watched a fellow gamer or other friend struggle with intense emotions or a mental health issue? Have you wondered how to help them? I know I've faced this situation myself and wasn't sure what to do. Thanks to resources and insights like those featured in this video, now I get it. Yes, I should reach out, even if it's a bit awkward. And the information included here will give you some great tips for how to make it a little less awkward.

Now when I see a friend who isn't doing so well, I know what to do. It's so important to me to talk openly about mental health within our community and what I've learned, and what you'll learn in this video, can help us do that every day.

Introducing our narrator

Hello, I'm Caleb, a professional eSports commentator and gaming show co-host. I'll be guiding you through this interactive video so let's get started.

Questions answered in the video

This video focuses on how you might help others who may be experiencing intense emotions or mental health issues. It will help answer the following questions:

- How can I learn to talk openly with my friends about mental health?
- What's the best way to support someone who may be struggling with a mental health issue?
- What resources are available to me and the people I care for?

Why is it important to talk more openly about mental health?

Emily's story

Emily has a story that shows the impact of one person starting a conversation.

Hi, my name is Emily and I'm going to share my story. At a really young age I endured a lot of emotional abuse at home. This completely changed my life, my personality, the way that I acted, the way that I felt, and led to a lot of dark feelings, a lot of self-isolation, and I was really disconnected from the world around me. The joy and creativity and carefree nature that I had as a kid just felt stolen from me.

It wasn't until somebody at school pulled me aside and said "Hey, are you OK?" that I realized for the very first time all at once that no, I was not OK. It was that one question that really propelled me to seek help, to seek resources, to talk with my school counselor and start my journey on mental health and mental wellbeing, and it all started with a simple question, one that I'm very grateful to that individual to this day for asking me. That is my story and thank you for listening.

What do you think?

Why is it important to talk openly about mental health?

Listen to the following 4 choices and mentally identify which are important reasons to talk openly about mental health.

- Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Toxic words and behaviors and negative judgments are not healthy for anyone.
- Mental health conditions are medical conditions that can be treated and managed.
- It's important to challenge stereotypes and avoid negative labels.

If you identified all 4 as important reasons to talk openly about mental health, you are correct!

Quick review of concepts from Video 1

The previous interactive video in this series, Mental Health Matters, covered a few key concepts you may want to review.

- Image of young black man doing weight training. Mental health plus physical health equals total health.
- Mental health is part of total health because the brain and body are connected. Taking care of our mental health supports our total health.
- Image of young white man with a game console in hand. Ways to take care of your mental health.
 - Eat well and exercise.
 - Take time for yourself.
 - Talk about how you feel.
 - Practice ways to manage stress.
 - Get help when you need it.
- Image of young white woman with gaming headset grimacing in frustration. Impact of judgment and toxic words.
- Negative judgments and toxic words from others can have an impact on how we feel about ourselves. If this becomes overwhelming, it can impact our mental health and sense of identity.
- Image of young Hispanic man talking with older woman. Finding safe situations and environments.
- It's important to be able to say or show how we feel openly, without fear of negative consequences. This sense of safety can be found in situations or relationships where we feel accepted and supported.

What's the best way to support a friend who's experiencing a mental health issue?

Engage with kindness and compassion

We gamers spend a lot of time in the gaming environment. We might notice subtle changes in mood and behavior that suggest that a fellow gamer is not OK. When we offer our support, with kindness and compassion, we send a powerful message that they are not alone. This can make it easier for someone who is not OK to ask for help, or to accept help when we offer it.

The engagement process

Let's take a look at a simple and effective process we can use when we think someone might need help. The engagement process has 3 steps: notice, engage, and support.

Step 1: Notice

The first step is to notice, which means becoming aware of a change in someone. Here are some examples you might notice when someone isn't feeling OK emotionally.

- Engaging less with others
- Difficulty focusing on favorite activities, such as gaming
- Mood swings, such as going from chill to really sad when nothing obvious has changed
- Tears or crying

Vienna's story

Let's listen as V-tuber Vienna describes how her friend noticed when something hurtful happened and what her friend did next.

Hi, I'm Vienna. I'm a streamer and a V-tuber for Cloud9 and today I'm going to talk about mental health. One of the biggest things streamers struggle with when it comes to mental health is dealing with hate comments. People can be really awful and if you're not having a great day or you're going through a lot, reading just the worst things people could say about you can just ruin all your progress, and my story is kind of about that.

I was having a rough day one day and I just posted something funny that happened to me on my personal account which I didn't think anyone would see except my friends, and I looked an hour later and I had just hundreds of people that were just making fun of me and saying like the worst things possible, and I was just like what do I do? I didn't want to talk to anyone. I just sat in my bed and was really upset about it.

And one of my friends that reached out to me said "Hey, I saw what happened and if you if don't want to talk about that, that's ok. But you know if you want to do anything, if you want to talk, you want to watch anime, whatever, I'm here. You don't have to answer. But I just want you to know I'm here." And that meant the world to me, because this is the kind of friend who if we don't talk for weeks, I know that our friendship would continue exactly where it left off. They would always be there for you.

And I think that if you know someone that's struggling or going through a lot or has trouble responding to people, just letting them know that you're there for them could make a world of difference. So, that's my story. Thanks so much.

Practice how to notice: What's up with Ravi?

Now, you get to practice noticing. Ravi may be on the quiet side but he's almost always ready to play games with friends. Lately, he's turned down several games and when he does show up, he's even quieter than usual. Sometimes he's super grumpy and tilted.

Listen to the following 4 clues and identify which could be signs that Ravi might need help.

- Difficulty focusing
- Mood swings
- Engaging less with others
- Tears or crying

The clues that Ravi might need help are that he's having mood swings and is engaging less with others.

Practice how to notice: Is Sophia OK?

Let's try another. Sofia is usually a great team player, with lots of energy and an upbeat attitude. Lately, her game play is off and she seems very distracted. She doesn't join the team chats and when asked if she's doing OK, she says she is, but often sounds like she's been crying.

Listen to the following 4 clues and identify which could be signs that Sophia might need help.

- Difficulty focusing
- Mood swings
- Engaging less with others
- Tears or crying

The clues that Sophia might need help are that she's having difficulty focusing, is engaging less with others, and often sounds like she's been crying.

Step 2: Engage

Step 2 tells us what to do when we notice someone is not OK. We engage!

Here are some examples of how you might start a conversation:

- Hey, something seems off. Are you OK?
- You seem kind of down. Would you like to talk?
- Tell me what's going on. I'm happy to listen.

No matter how we start the conversation, our role is to listen patiently, compassionately, and without judgment.

Don's story

Next, Don shares a story about a time when he noticed a friend was really struggling and how he decided to engage and be there for his friend.

Hi, my name is Don and I'm the Vice President of Partnerships at Cloud9. I wanted to share a story from my undergraduate time in college when I walked into one of my roommates' rooms and saw that he was just weeping on the floor on his knees with his hands in his face. He was crying. Super upset.

My initial urge was to close the door and give him some privacy but there was something inside me that wanted to, and that kind of pushed me and pulled me to go and be near him.

And so instead of closing the door and minding my own business I sat down next to him, I put my arm around him and I just sat there with him. Eventually I started crying myself. I didn't know what we were crying about. But we sat there together for quite a while. We just wept together, which was really cool.

I found out later that it was because he had broken up with his girlfriend that he had been in a relationship all through high school and he was super upset. But if I would have listened to the urge to give him privacy, to give him space, to "be more respectful," I wouldn't have had the opportunity to connect with him, and I don't think he would have had the opportunity to have someone come alongside him and really just heal with him, and be there for him.

So even if you feel really uncomfortable or awkward about moving into someone else's pain, if you feel it should be private and that you should give them their privacy, it's often better to just reach into it as much as you can. I mean even if you don't know what to say, just being there with them and giving them the space to speak when they can, when they can find their words, is really great. So, I hope that you not just reach out to friends more often but that you come alongside them and let them know that you're there.

It's OK to reach out

As Don said in his video, it can be awkward to start the conversation when you see someone isn't OK. Everyone has a right to privacy, but it's OK to reach out when it looks like someone might need help.

Here are a couple more ways you might start the conversation:

- You've been really quiet lately. Is everything OK?
- Seems like you're having a tough time, and I'm worried about you. What's going on?

Encouraging someone to open up

Here are some tips for encouraging someone to open up.

- Be relaxed and use a thoughtful tone.
- Listen patiently, compassionately, and without judgment.
- Avoid labeling or trying to diagnose them.
- Understand that you aren't there to fix the problem.
- Accept that the individual may not be ready to talk.

Phrases to avoid

Talking to someone about their emotions can be tough. Some things we think **might** help really **don't** help. In fact, they might make the other person feel like we're not taking their problem seriously.

Here are some examples of statements to avoid:

- Hang in there. It will pass.
- You have no reason to be depressed.
- Everyone gets depressed sometimes.
- It could be worse.
- I know exactly how you feel.

Step 3: Support

Step 3 is to provide support. Sometimes, all a person needs is for us to be present and listen, without judgment. This is what Emily's and Vienna's friends did for them and what Don did for his roommate. Other times, listening's not enough. In these situations, support means connecting the person to resources that can help.

What do you think?

How can you best support someone when it looks like they might need help?

Listen to the following 5 choices and identify which are good ways to support a friend.

- Have a clear understanding of someone's mental health condition before you talk to them.
- Ask if they're OK and would they like to talk.
- Be relaxed and use a thoughtful tone.
- Give them lots of advice.
- Listen patiently and without judgment.

The best ways to support a friend are to ask if they're OK and would they like to talk, using a relaxed and thoughtful tone, and to listen patiently, without judgment.

You don't need to understand if they have a mental health condition before talking to them and you should avoid giving them lots of advice.

Bunny FuFuu's story

As we wrap up, let's listen to some good advice from BunnyFuFuu about how we can all take better care of each other.

Hey guys, Bunny FuFuu here, and I actually want to talk a little about mental health, and I have a story to go along with it. Now I'm not sure if it's like a culture thing or not, but I don't know if you guys know Rush. He's an old teammate of mine and he's from Korea and something he would often do with his friends, I actually asked about this later, where he would just randomly check in with his friends he was like "Hey how are you doing?" I'm just like "Good, are you OK? Is everything OK?"

This was just very not normal for me. A lot of my friends growing up in the States don't do this, but it's something that I've picked up because the conversation that we had after that led into was just stuff where just random things that I wanted to get off my chest, that I was feeling sad about at the time and ended up with him opening up as well.

So I think just small moments like that, and random check-ins with friends or whatnot can really make a world of difference because you don't know what they're going to turn into and it was super heart-warming to get this message from him, even though it was just a random "Hey, how are you?" And I asked him after "Do you do this often? I mean no one's ever like randomly done this to me." He's like "Yeah, it's just something I like to do. Just check in with friends. Make sure everything's OK." And it actually made my day, week probably.

I recommend you guys give it a try as well because you never know who's struggling with mental health or whatever they've got going on in their lives. Something to keep in mind. Thanks for watching.

What resources are available for me and those I care for?

Helping someone find resources

One of the best ways you can support someone is to show where they can find resources for help, such as [Find Your Words dot org](#).

On the main page for [Find Your Words dot org](#), select Support center to start exploring, or help a friend start exploring.

What will you start doing today?

Gaming can play such a satisfying role in our lives and every one of us can contribute to making it a safe and positive experience for all. Before I hand it back to Greg, I encourage you to review the 3 steps for a reminder of how you can reach out to a friend in need.

Step 1: Notice. Be alert for these signs:

- Engaging less with others
- Difficulty focusing on favorite activities, such as gaming
- Mood swings, such as going from chill to really sad when nothing obvious has changed
- Tears or crying

Step 2: Engage

- Be relaxed and use a thoughtful tone.
- Avoid labeling or trying to diagnose them.
- Listen patiently, compassionately, and without judgment.

Step 3: Support

- Sometimes, all a person needs is for us to be present and listen, without judgment.
- Help the individual connect with resources, such as [Find Your Words dot org](#).

Wrapping it up

Greg Miller wraps up the interactive video with a few parting words.

Good stuff, right? I am so committed to promoting an environment in the gaming community where we can talk openly about mental health and I use the knowledge I gained from this video often. I've learned to be better at noticing when someone is struggling. And I've continued to gain confidence in starting those awkward conversations. Finally, it's great to know where to find resources that help me to help others.

If you're as committed as I am to the mental health of our great gaming community, you can start practicing what you've learned now, today. If there's someone you've been concerned about, engage them. If not, just start looking around and noticing what's going on with the people you care about.

Thanks and take care.

Congratulations on completing the interactive video. Get 10% off Cloud9 merch and enter for a chance to win 1 of 5 HyperX accessory bundles when you complete a [short survey](#).