

Dear all girls,

We need your help. We need your help in erasing the stigma surrounding mental health, depression, stress, and anxiety. With your assistance, we can create a world where nobody walks alone. We can create an atmosphere where people feel safe enough and comfortable enough to seek help. Sometimes when we feel our worst, we choose to go through it alone. It is our responsibility to clear the air about mental illness. We need to change the shame because talking to a therapist isn't weird, it's normal. It's natural even to want somebody objective to talk to, to advise you, to be there for you. We need to change the stigma because too many are battling on their own, and because for many, suicide is still an option. With proper education and services, we can help those who can't help themselves and we can help each other. So, we need you to join us in our cause of eradicating the stigma of mental illness and bringing hope for our fellow girls into light.

You are not alone. According to Mental Health America, the "rate of youth with severe depression increased from 5.9% in 2012 to 8.2% in 2015. Even with severe depression, 76% of youth are left with insufficient treatment." Over 1.7 million youth are facing major depression and are not receiving treatment, which is enough to fill every major league baseball stadium on the East Coast twice. According to The Telegraph, "one in 10 girls [are] being referred for specialist mental help." Just know, you are not alone. Mental health issues exists everywhere.

We know that you deal with a lot on a day-to-day basis. We know that sometimes you feel like you can't fight or you can't love yourself, but always remember that you are enough. We're writing this letter to you to remind you that you are strong and more than capable to fight through your battles. We understand that everything hurts, but everything can heal with time. We're also here to tell you that it's okay to feel sad, it's okay to feel emotions because that shows that you are human with the ability to feel things.

You are loved. You are valued. This life you have is worth living. You are and will always be glorious.

You are a strong, smart, and bold. You can absolutely overcome anything that you are going through! Don't think about checking out of the battle, you are strong enough to get through this. You have support from your Girls Inc. staff members and community, and we love you dearly. Your brave, powerful soul is inspiring. This world can be too dark to dream in color. However, you can bring that color back. You are the one-in-a-billion girl who is not sorry for burning too brightly. If you need someone to talk to anonymously, we will leave hotlines below. We love you.

Sincerely,
Girls Inc. Girls Action Network

Mikaela Goens-Bradley (Minneapolis)
Samia Abdalla (Minneapolis)
Ani Draper (Pacific Northwest)
Alitza Gonzalez (Carpinteria)
Metzli Reyes (Orange County)
Safiyah Franklin (Philadelphia)
Evelyn Humphries (Holyoke)
Gianna Rodriguez (Worcester)
Jada Powell (Memphis)
Jennifer Arreaa (Sarasota County)

Resources

- Mental Health Hotline (1-866-324-6922)
- Trevor Project (1-866-488-7386)
- National Suicide Hotline (1-800-273-8255)
- Crisis Text Line (Text 741741)