

Letter 7: YRT1_Y2.F.16

To whom it may concern,

Now that mental health is finally being recognized as an important aspect of one's life besides their physical health, it is crucial for professionals to thoroughly understand youth's perspectives and feelings on the topic. One of the most important messages I would like to bring to light pertains to invalidating feelings by undermining someone's situation. It is already quite difficult to reach out to someone for help, and to have that person who you trusted tell you to 'calm down' or say 'it's not a big deal' is extremely hurtful and discourages youth from ever getting help again. Instead, it is much more helpful when the trusted adult verbally expresses that they acknowledge what you are feeling and shows that they care by brainstorming ways to resolve the problem. The effort coming from the professional is most definitely noticed by the youth and it creates an accepting environment for them to talk freely. Overall, choice of words and how the other person responds, whether it be verbally or physically, plays a huge role in how receptive the youth is. The other message I wanted to bring to light is that mental health problems are still prevalent in those who appear to be 'fine' or 'high-functioning'. I believe that some adult's perception of mental health issues revolves solely around intense situations such as mental institutions and sporadic behaviour. In reality, many kids who appear to be perfectly fine, participate in their community and are getting good grades also manage their own set of problems. It is crucial to step back and think how they feel even if they do not show any physical or emotional symptoms. A lot of youth like these are experts at hiding their true feelings because they know that no one will take them seriously if they suddenly come forth with concerns. All in all, the way adults address and handle youth all contribute to their mental health. Being an ally to these kids is what helps them grow and lead successful lives.