



## Performance Discussion Questions

The **Walk In Our Shoes** theatrical production introduces four characters (Hanna, Ethan, Daniella and Diego), each of whom has a story to tell related to one of four mental health challenges: bipolar disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anorexia nervosa and post traumatic stress disorder. Through the telling of each person's story, students learn that mental health challenges are common and can be experienced by anyone, there are different types of mental health challenges, and people can recover and live normal, successful lives. Students are also introduced to the term "stigma" and learn that stigma comes from negative or incorrect beliefs a person may have about another person, and how these beliefs can affect how that person is treated.

For more information on the theatrical production and the video prepared from the theatrical production for use in classrooms, check out the two webinars for administrators, faculty and other educators on the Walk In Our Shoes website.

The following discussion questions pertain to each of the four character's stories and are to help facilitate discussion after students view each of the story segments.

### **Discussion questions for Hanna's story:**

- How did Hanna feel having two more talented siblings? (Invisible, loser, sad.)
- How did Hanna feel about the pressure from her parents? (Isolated, depressed, wanted to be left alone, as well as hyperactive, out of control.)
- What ended up helping Hanna and her family? (Professional help; a diagnosis that explained her behavior and what Hanna was feeling.)
- Do you agree with Hanna that the only reason people say mean things is because they don't understand? Why or why not?
- How did Hanna and her friend define stigma?
- How do labels hurt?
- Why do labels make it hard to ask for help?



### **Discussion questions for Ethan's story:**

- What does Ethan mean when he says that you have to fall down before you get it right? (Making mistakes is OK and part of how you learn something new.)
- Can you talk about a time when you "fell down" or made a mistake and learned something new?
- We see that Ethan gets labeled as "emo". How does that make Ethan feel? (Sad, left out, unhappy, depressed.)
- Ethan calls getting labeled "emo" a crack in the sidewalk. What does he mean by this? (Something that takes him by surprise, something he can't control.)
- Why do you think the other kids are calling Ethan "emo"?
- How does Hanna turn things around? (She tells the others it is not OK to label people.)
- What does it look like once the other kids take a "walk in Ethan's shoes"? (They try to get to know him instead of calling him names.)

### **Discussion questions for Daniela's story:**

- How was Daniela feeling when the kids in her class started teasing her for being a "new" kid?
- Have any of you had the experience of being the new kid? How did you feel? So you know how it feels to walk in Daniela's shoes.
- When the others called Daniela fat, how did she feel? What did she tell herself? (I can't control where I live or my name, but I can control being "fat".)
- How did this thinking get her in trouble?
- What helped Daniela?
- What does Daniela mean that a "healthy me" emerged?
- How can making unfair assumptions about people hurt others? What unfair assumptions were made about Daniela?

### **Discussion questions for Diego's story:**

- Can you describe the relationship Diego has with his Uncle Esteban? (Friend, trusted advisor.)
- Why was Diego worried about Esteban? (He didn't want him to go overseas where he would be posted to a dangerous war zone and his safety might be in jeopardy.)



- Who else could Diego talk to when Esteban is gone? (Older sibling, aunt, uncle, parent, teacher, school counselor.)
- When Esteban came home the second time, what does he tell Diego is going on with him? (PTSD)
- What happens when someone has PTSD? (They relive a traumatic incident, they keep feeling afraid even after the danger is over.)
- How does Diego convey empathy to Esteban? (He tells Esteban that he cares about him and that "we love you". He asks Esteban to let him know if there is anything he can do to help.)
- As the play ends each character asks us to remember some bigger facts about mental health. Do you remember what any of these facts were? (It's OK to talk about mental health challenges; if you are having a hard time talk to someone you trust; our body and mind are connected; most people experience challenges and it helps to know you are not alone.)