STUDENT SPOTLIGHT : Tuhina Pal



Tuhina Pal

STRUGGLING IN SILENCE

Mental health awareness is such an important topic to me personally, and that passion for mental health advocacy developed throughout my personal struggles. I began struggling more deeply with my mental health following the pandemic (in 2021). I was afraid to speak up and ask for support from my loved ones because I didn't even understand how to explain what I felt and what I was going through on a daily basis. Feeling unbelievably lost and isolated, I struggled in silence. When I returned to school in the fall of 2021, I hit my breaking point. I knew that I had to ask for help, but I was terrified of what that would mean. Knowing that I would have to accept and acknowledge my pain nearly broke me.

Initially, I struggled to gain support from my parents, but eventually, they understood the severity of my struggles, and they were nothing but eager to help. With the support of my family and my teachers, I have now, after three years since speaking up for myself and receiving professional support, learned the importance of asking for help and talking about my struggles. I have witnessed the unspeakable level of pain and suffering that mental health struggles can bring if we don't talk about it. I have battled the internal and external stigma that is attached to struggling with mental health issues. I know what it is like to feel unfathomably alone, even when we are surrounded by so many people that love and cherish our presence. I know what it feels like to give up. I desperately want to help others feel heard in their struggles. I want those who are struggling to know that they deserve to have a bright and fulfilling future. They are enough, they are worthy, and they are not alone. This is why I am devoted to changing the conversation about mental health; I want those who are struggling to know that they are worth more than whatever the voice in their head tells them they are. I want people to speak up about their struggles openly. Getting the proper professional help was monumental in my life, and I want everyone who needs that to be able to receive it.

Seeing students in our school so eager and proactive to raise awareness about mental health by being a part of our Active Minds chapter has been inspiring and eye opening. I believe the work we are doing is helping to decrease the stigma around mental health. I see students excited to come to our meetings and discuss ways of increasing visibility of the cause and open conversations around our school. I see students asking members of how they can join because they want to be part of our impactful mission. It makes me so proud to see posters that our members have hung up around the walls of our school and to hear students discussing events we posted about on our social media. We are successfully encouraging students to not be afraid of speaking about mental health challenges, and we are seeing this change in mindset and outlook in real time. Being a part of something so important in not only my life, but everyone who is a part of this mission makes me so proud.

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While we definitely have a long way to go in destigmatizing mental health, in the couple of years that Active Minds has had a presence in our school, we have seen an incredible positive change, and I cannot wait to see us accomplish more.

KyleCares is making such a tremendous impact and a difference in our community for so many reasons. I have had the honor of working closely with our Active Minds chapter at FHS since it began, and I have been able to witness the connection that most (if not all) members have been able to acknowledge with KyleCares' mission. The KyleCares Conference, specifically, was life changing for me personally. When I was a freshman, I went to the KyleCares Conference '23, and I came home overwhelmed with emotion and pride. I felt heard and understood for the first time since I began struggling with my mental health. I felt proud to know that I am part of a greater and powerful mission that is working hard to make a collective impact on our society. Whether this impact begins from the room we hold our meetings in, our school community, our town, or our nation, it was incredible and beyond powerful to see a group of 500+ students in one room at the KyleCares conference just as passionate about destigmatizing mental health and encouraging open conversations as I was.

They. Didn't. Know.

They didn't know what could not be witnessed.
They. Didn't. Know.
They didn't know, even though she told them.
What she felt then.
How bruised she was.
How alone she felt.
They. Didn't. Know.

She wanted to go somewhere quiet.
She wanted some peace.
Somewhere where she could escape her mind.
Somewhere she didn't hurt.

They didn't know the innocence was gone.
They. Didn't. Know.
They didn't know she was tired to persist.
To keep walking.
To keep talking.
She was exhausted.
They. Didn't. Know

