

Illuminate the Darkness

The Youth Action Board (YAB) at the Children's Hospital Colorado was created in 2013 by the Department of Psychiatry to educate and empower youth to speak on the topic of mental health. The YAB is made up of teens aged 16-17, from seven Denver metro area high schools.

Each year, YAB members create a project in support of social change. This year each board member took photographs that reminded them of the topic of mental health and mental illness. Each teen wrote from the perspective of an element of one photo, and chose an excerpt of their writing to accompany it.



The YAB invites you to spend some time with these photos and words, and to consider your own perspective on mental illness, mental health, and how we can all contribute to this conversation.



Do not romanticize my suffering.
There is nothing beautiful about my sadness.
There is nothing beautiful about me.



Broken objects
Are too often ignored and
Too seldom noticed.



A beacon, a light against the dark, cold, watching.
People below move on, but
I am permanently grounded.



I loom ahead
A tunnel with no light at the end.
I envelop your mind
Until the brightness is gone.
All that is left is the
dark
empty
drainpipe.



It's so blue, but I see green.
It's so clear, but I can't see.
Our paths cross, but nothing happens.



I protect the delicate room
But also prevent the warm light from shining in;
The damage remains concealed by shadows.



One cannot magnify the amount of suffering they face.
It is only seen after they crumble and
Can no longer be saved.



Ripped apart limb by limb, shattering bones, my heart caving in.
I'm the girl sitting next to you acting like I'm fine,
pushing my tears aside.
Each of my thoughts is a battle,
every breath is a war,
I don't think I'm winning anymore.



I am fading
But still
I maintain my bold voice.



I am an array of notes that blend to form
a beautiful symphony.
I am a realm where art prevails.
I am an escape.



I free my leaves
Not to shed my life,
But to be rid of what's dead and
Be reborn.



Just worry about
Your own droplet of light.
The others will follow.



Sanity is a sonnet with a strict meter and rhyme.
Mine is a free verse.

Illuminate the Darkness is intended to elevate the conversation around mental health. If you or someone you know is in need, we encourage you to seek help either through your school Counseling Department or through the following resources:

In an Emergency, you can dial 9-1-1

Metro Crisis Line 1-(888) 885-1222

Metro Crisis Line is Colorado's free, confidential, 24/7 telephone hotline for mental health issues including stress, anxiety, depression, or substance abuse crisis help, information, and referrals.

24 Hour Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-(800) 273-TALK (8255)

Children's Hospital Colorado Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Scheduling: (720) 777-0988

Children's Hospital Colorado Outpatient Psychiatric services provides outpatient behavioral health services to youth and their families.

Mental Health Center of Denver (303) 504-6500

Mobile Crisis Number: (303) 602-7220

Denver's comprehensive and accessible mental health and substance abuse treatment, housing, education and employment services for adults and the leading resource of treatment for children, teens and families.

Arapahoe/ Douglas Mental Health Network (303) 730-8858

Emergency Line: (303) 730-3303

Providing professional, culturally inclusive mental health and substance abuse services, in Arapahoe and Douglas counties.

Aurora Mental Health Center (303) 617-2300

Emergency Line: (303) 617-2300

A private, nonprofit community mental health organization serving people with a wide range of mental health needs in Aurora.

Jefferson Center for Mental Health: 24 hour line (303) 425-0300

Jefferson Center for Mental Health is the not-for-profit community mental health center serving Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Gilpin counties since 1958.