



CAMPUS EVENT SCREENING GUIDE

While we were working together to develop this guide and screening program, Elizabeth Swados, who bravely tells her personal story through the film *My Depression*, passed away after complications from a surgical procedure for esophageal cancer. Her willingness to share the film openly and freely with campuses across the country is a testament to her commitment to help others struggling with emotional health conditions like depression. Her team is more resolved than ever to have the film reach, and hopefully help, as many people as possible as a tribute to Liz's passion, spirit, talent and dedication to making the world a brighter place for anyone feeling lost in the shadows.



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My Depression is a critically-acclaimed half-hour film that debuted on HBO in 2015. The film tells Elizabeth Swados' personal story of her lifelong struggle with depression. Elizabeth -- a successful Broadway composer, writer and director -- uses her talents of music and storytelling to share her story and help others who may be struggling with emotional health conditions like depression.

We know that storytelling is a powerful tool in reaching and helping teens and young adults who are struggling emotionally. Stories can make them feel less alone, give them hope for recovery and encourage them to take the first, or next, step toward help seeking or help giving.

Elizabeth and her team have generously offered *My Depression* to be used at campus-based screening events. This guide will help you design the event that best utilizes your campus's resources to make the strongest impact on students. If you have any questions or are ready to get started planning your screening, email screenings@jedfoundation.org or contact Jillian Niesley at jniesley@jedfoundation.org.

Things to Think About When Planning Your Screening Event:

- Think about how you are going to promote the program to maximize attendance. Connect with student groups, especially film or arts focused groups, to generate interest outside of the mental health clubs. Having the respected HBO Documentaries brand attached to the event can help drive student interest and attendance.
- Hearing someone's story through a film is powerful, but seeing and hearing the story of a peer live can be even more impactful. If you have any students from your campus who can tell their personal story about dealing with an emotional health condition like depression in a powerful and positive way, we encourage you to incorporate them into the event.
- It's important to use the event as an opportunity to explain your campus emotional health resources to students in an approachable, non-clinical way. Keep this in mind when selecting the person from your counseling center team will participate or speak at the event. Pick someone who connects well with students and can talk about issues like depression in "everyday speak."
- *My Depression* is a short film (30-minutes) that serves as a strong stand alone and, with a period of discussion, can provide a robust event. If you are interested, you so you have the opportunity to incorporate other media content into the event. If you have access to any student films that deal with emotional health issues, that can be a great complement to *My Depression*. We also provide information at the end of the guide on other video content available through The Jed Foundation.
- Choosing a time and location for your screening event can be important. You probably have a good idea of what days of the week and times of day work best for your students.
- If you have a student organization that can help host the event, it can give it a more organic and student-driven feel. This may further drive attendance.

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EVENT COMPONENTS:

We suggest 4 main components for your screening event:

- A brief introduction/welcome.
- Screening the film (or films if you have additional media content).
- A panel discussion and/or Q&A.
- Some type of interactive experience that helps attendees feel connected and gives them a positive takeaway from the event.

Brief introduction/welcome:

You want to set the stage for the film and event, but keep the intro brief. If a student organization or student advocate(s) are involved, let them help introduce the film. Some talking points you may want to include:

- Film has always been a powerful way to tell stories that don't get enough attention or exposure. Depression is one of those issues.
- Being a college student isn't always easy. And sometimes we are afraid to speak up and let people know we are having a hard time. But stories like the one told in *My Depression* show how important it is to get help and support. It's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength.
- We hope you enjoy the film and then we will have a short conversation about it together after the screening.

Film screening:

The filmmakers are offering a **complimentary one-week screening** of the film for your campus via a digital streaming link or download. After you complete a screening request form at screenings.jedfoundation.org, we will send you an email with a streaming link and instructions for downloading the film for use during the week long window you selected while completing request form.

If you would like to purchase a DVD for screening, or a digital copy of the film for ongoing use on your campus, please visit the [educational distributor's site](#) or contact The Video Project at info@videoproject.com and mention you are coordinating a screening using The Jed Foundation's event guide.

We suggest you do a test screening of the film prior to your event to make sure everything is functioning properly. You can also allow the film to buffer 10 to 15 minutes prior to your event if using the streaming link. Pull up the film via the link, make it full screen and then push the pause button. While the film is paused, the remainder of the film will buffer making the screening smoother for your attendees.

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Panel discussion and/or Q&A:

It's important to have one or more professionals from your counseling services or health education department participate in the Q&A or panel discussion. If there is a counselor who has more experience talking to groups or is effective at engaging students in a group setting, he or she could open the discussion and outline the resources available at the counseling center. The goal is to make your professional resources and services accessible and welcoming. We want to follow the film's lead and paint a picture of students with mental health conditions as regular people who can live fulfilling lives with the right support and treatment.

You can also involve students who talk about their own experiences/conditions or who are advocates working on mental health promotion or suicide prevention. Student voices are powerful. If you have a student who will share their story, you may want to open your discussion or Q&A with that story. Encourage them to keep it brief and be sure that they are in an emotionally positive place from which to be discussing their challenges.

Some other tips for your Q&A or panel discussion:

- Your panel could be just two people -- someone from the counseling center and a student advocate. We wouldn't recommend more than three or four people for this type of discussion.
- You can open by introducing the panel and then letting attendees ask any questions that came up for them during the film. But you should also have some questions or topics on hand to present or discuss in case attendees do not have questions they want to share publicly. Often, the facilitator needs to "break the ice" and ask the first question and then other questions will follow.
- Some ideas for topics to discuss include: information on depression and how it's different than just feeling sad; ways students adhere to their treatment program while balancing demands of college life; how to help a friend who is struggling or has been diagnosed with a condition; warning signs of distress or suicide; and how counseling/treatment on campus works.
- While it's fine for attendees to discuss what they liked or didn't like about the film, it's important to try and focus the conversation on information and topics that will educate attendees about emotional health conditions, encourage help-seeking and make your campus more supportive for those students with diagnosed conditions.
- Try to keep the discussion to 20-30 minutes if students are engaged (if the only media you use is *My Depression*, this will be a 1-hour program). Wrap things up by reminding students about what they should do if they are worried about themselves or a friend (counseling center, hotlines, walk-in sessions at various campus locations, etc.)

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Interactive Experience:

You are bringing your campus together to discuss important issues that impact both individuals and your community. We suggest ending the evening with some sort of simple experience or activity that makes people feel connected and positive.

This could be an art exhibit in the lobby of the people that people can walk through on the way out of the screening. Or maybe you have an organization or department that deals with stress management that could setup an activation with stress relief tips or massage stations. Another option is to incorporate activities from The Jed Foundation's Love is Louder initiative.

One way that individuals and groups from around the world express their involvement in the Love is Louder movement is by writing that phrase on their hands and then sharing those pictures. This film and the related discussions can churn up strong emotions, and we want people to have a way to channel that emotion into positive action.

You can setup a Love is Louder picture station in or outside the room where you hold your screening event. Since Love is Louder is a very visual movement, you can create a group art project through which student's make commitments to take action for themselves or a friend. You can use this visual reminder of your campus's commitment to one another as a backdrop for your Love is Louder photos. If you have a photographer at the event, upload those photos to a photo album on a website or social networking site that students can access. If you don't have a page where you can upload the photos, contact us at screenings@jedfoundation.org and we will create a gallery for you on www.loveislouder.com where your students can access and share their photos.



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We've created postcards that use the "Love is louder than _____" messaging to encourage your students to speak up for themselves or a friend. The backside of these postcards can be customized with your campus resources and then sent to you as a PDF to have printed on your campus (or you can purchase the printed postcards through us). To get a customized postcard, email us at screenings@jedfoundation.org.



Marketing Tips:

A few, simple marketing tips that can help you promote your event:

- Offering free popcorn and soda (or other beverages) has proven to be an effective draw for some campuses.
- You can find some customizable posters to promote your screening at www.jedfoundation.org/mydepression.
- Consider incorporating the screening into an existing weekly or monthly event or a film series, it's always great to take advantage of an existing audience or group.
- Contact us with any questions or ideas at screenings@jedfoundation.org

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Other Video Content from The Jed Foundation:

The Jed Foundation and MTV's Peabody Award-winning Half of Us campaign has been creating original content for nearly 10 years. Some of these videos may be a great addition to your event. You can see a sampling of that content at www.halfofus.com/videos/#our-stories. Highlights include:

- Video interviews with high-profile artists who have struggled with emotional health conditions like Mary J. Blige, Macklemore and Pete Wentz.
- Short PSAs and video spots that can be shown like trailers before your film screening.

Colleges and universities are allowed to use this content for free at events by accepting the terms and conditions of a limited licensing agreement. You can learn more at <http://www.halfofus.com/video-download-page>.

The film *My Depression* is based on Elizabeth Swados' book by the same name, which is available from [Seven Stories Press/distribution by Penguin Random House](#).