



Reaching millions to help end the stigma around mental health

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed a Facebook campaign to support people suffering from depression on World Health Day. Its flagship video, which aimed to end the stigma around depression and encourage people to reach out and seek help, was shared more than 66,000 times.

THE CHALLENGE

Reaching out to offer help

There still exists a stigma around depression—despite the fact that one in four people around the world will suffer from mental illness in their lifetime. The WHO not only needed to show people that there's no shame in getting help, but assist them in reaching out to the people and organizations that can support them.

“Research has shown the importance of friendships and family in helping to prevent and overcome depression. Our goal on Facebook has been to not only provide information for those who are suffering but to also arm their friends and family with information that they can use to support their loved ones. Facebook has proven to be a uniquely powerful tool for us.”

Name, LastName,
Title,
The World Health
Organization

THE ACTION

Creating shareable content

The WHO developed a Facebook campaign that featured powerful videos and posts about depression, the theme of its annual World Health Day. The content was designed to encourage people to share it with their loved ones, effectively creating a way to reach out to those who might be suffering from depression.

THE IMPACT

Finding help on Facebook

18 million

people reached
across all of the
organization's posts

66,130

shares across the
organization's three
flagship posts

679,408

engaged across all
of the organization's
posts

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed shareable content for a year-long Facebook campaign that aimed to end the stigma around mental health and encourage people suffering from depression to reach out to their loved ones for help.

Starting the conversation to end the stigma. As it does every year, the WHO decided to celebrate its 2016 World Health Day by shining a light on a global health issue. For the first time in 15 years, the organization selected a mental health issue: depression. More than 450 million people around the world suffer from a mental disorder, and it's estimated that one in four people will be affected in their lifetime. Yet, there remains a stigma around mental disorders, preventing a whopping two-third of sufferers from seeking help.

The WHO wanted to inform people around the world about depression, encourage those with depression to seek help, and educate family and friends of people living with depression to reach out and support their loved ones.

Reaching sufferers around the world. The WHO developed a year-long campaign on Facebook that focused on the importance of talking about depression, as a vital component of recovery. In essence, organization aimed to show people suffering from depression where to find support and other resources, and educate people about how to reach out to a loved one who might be depressed.

“We are extremely happy with this Facebook campaign so far. Our mental health content has been shared more than 40,000 times and reached nearly 6.5 million people. This is a clear indication that our strategy of serving both individuals who have mental illness directly as well as and the friends and family members who care most about them, is having a real impact.”

Dante LastName,
Title,
The World Health
Organization

Since depression can affect anyone—regardless of age, sex, nationality or social status—the WHO wanted to reach everyone with its message. It paid particular attention to three groups that are disproportionately affected by depression: adolescents and young adults, women of childbearing age, particularly following childbirth, and adults over the age of 60.

The WHO shared informative posts about the sobering statistics around depression—such as the fact that more men die by suicide than women, or that the number of people suffering from depression and anxiety is increasing—and encouraged people to seek help.

It also shared a flagship video that likened depression to a Black Dog. The animated video beautifully expressed what it’s like living with depression and highlighted some of the different ways that people can cope and overcome the disease. The video was also highly relatable, leading to it being shared thousands of times.

How Facebook helps. Facebook has incorporated tools and processes to make it easier for people to help their friends and family members who post messages that could be indicative of potential suicide or self-harm.

With these new features, people receive suggested language to use when reaching out to a friend who might be at risk. People can also flag friends’ posts that they deem concerning.

When a Facebook post is flagged, a specially trained global team reviews the post and, if necessary, provides the person at risk with different support options, including talking with a friend, contacting a helpline, and other ways to support themselves.

Those facing distress can also come together through Facebook Groups to find communities of support.

Sharing its message. The WHO’s ongoing campaign has already reached millions of people, encouraging them to end the stigma around mental health.

The WHO’s *Let’s Talk Depression* content was also shared by thousands of people on Facebook, effectively spreading the WHO’s message of support even further. People also commented on the various campaign posts, sharing their own stories of overcoming depression and lending their support to those suffering from mental illness.

Facebook is a place where people like to share content as a way of caring for their friends, as strongly evidenced by the WHO’s Let’s Talk Depression campaign. In a survey fielded to 460 people who watched the WHO’s Black Dog video, 60% shared it to help friends struggling with depression and 72% felt everyone could benefit from watching it.