



**Free Your Feels
Peer To Peer (P2P) Program**

The Free Your Feels Peer to Peer (P2P) mentor program helps schools create a safer and more nurturing school environment to help support students' social and emotional needs and general well-being.

This is an invaluable resource for students because they often have an easier time talking to their peers. If red flags appear, then a staff member gets involved when additional support and resources are required. It would be great if we could double or triple the number of psychologists and counselors in our schools, but if we want to reach all our kids who are in crisis, we will always need programs like these.

Purpose

The purpose of the FYF campaign is to shift the school climate and students' comfort level in talking about mental health with their peers. The idea is to help create a positive school culture that breaks the silence around talking about mental health challenges and/or concerns. Peer leaders encourage youth to **SPEAK**, they **LISTEN** to their peers non-judgmentally, **CONNECT** them to adults and spread hope.

How to Establish a FYF Peer to Peer Program

Identify Adult Sponsor

1. Introduce the idea to guidance counselors, social workers, or teachers who are interested in sponsoring – particularly one trained in YMHFA/ (t)YMHFA.
2. Sign a one school year commitment to the FYF P2P Program.
3. Identify and secure space for meetings and determine meeting dates and times.

Identify Student Leaders

1. Student leadership is instrumental in getting a peer-to-peer program off the ground.
2. Interested students participating in the program must set and understand the boundaries of their role.
3. The students serve as not only resources for their peers but also can assist to design FYF school awareness activities around trauma, mental health, and suicide prevention.

Mental Health Supports

1. Train student leaders in (t) YMHFA
2. Train sponsors/ student leaders on empathy, active listening and basic social and emotional skills.
3. Invite local mental health agencies to speak to the students. (Do a lot of role-playing)

Market P2P Program

1. Create posters, flyers, word-of-mouth - to let every student know who you are, what you do, and they are invited to join.



2. Establish referral system for students, teachers, counselors, or walk-ins.
3. Create FYF publicity campaigns, which are presented and displayed throughout the school. The goal is to find "creative ways to convey their knowledge about mental health challenges throughout the school to help reduce stigma and remove barriers to help-seeking."

Plan School Activities

1. FYF Campaign Activations
2. Skits, Assemblies, 5K walks, mental health awareness fair, etc.
3. Educate student body on mental health statistics and information.
4. National Mental Health Day/Week – THINK BIG!

Cost

1. Some peer programs can be implemented at a relatively low-cost and with minimal hassle.
2. Effective student peer to peer programs, while cost effective, do require a deep investment by schools into training both the mentors and the adults who support them.
3. The program is strengthened by deep support inside the school and in the community.

Challenges

1. Creating the infrastructure necessary to sustain them long-term.
2. Are staff members trained?
3. Are they committed to the program?
4. Are the resources that started the program always available?