

PARENTS, TEACHERS & MENTORS

If you are Facilitating OLIVE Films with your students or children



WELCOME!

We're excited that you're reading this guide. OLIVE is a diverse and compelling collection of short films on mental health, supporting a network of filmmakers, artists and young people in an interactive online community. You might be interested in watching OLIVE because:

- You or someone you know might be struggling with mental health issues
- You are interested in learning more about mental health
- You are interested in becoming a mental health advocate
- You really like art and short films
- Some or all of the above

ABOUT OLIVE

OLIVE is a short film collection created by Art With Impact, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting mental wellness by creating space for young people to learn and connect through art and media. One new film is added to the library each month through a global film competition; a panel of jurors scores the films submitted each month to determine the latest winner. Watching OLIVE alone or with others can provide unique and safe spaces to learn, cultivate empathy, and reduce stigma in all aspects of mental health. These films are powerful, and can bring up lots of thoughts and feelings in the people who watch them. This guide will help you engage with the films safely, and provide ideas for how to connect with other individuals and mental health resources. Our hope is that the OLIVE collection can be a tool that inspires you to communicate safely, freely, and fearlessly about mental health.

BEFORE YOU WATCH THE FILMS

We recommend that facilitators (parents, teachers, and mentors) watch the films before viewing them with students/ children to help you, the facilitator, process your own reactions to the films. We encourage you to review the Self-Care Strategies below and identify one or two techniques to practice during and after watching the films. Additionally, keep in mind that some videos are for mature audiences; parental permission may be required or beneficial. It can be helpful to identify your goals with your students / children before beginning the viewing experience with them.

- Review the “key themes” and let your goals inform which films you select and which questions you plan ask the group.
- Consider your own stigma. If you have never had an explicit conversation about mental health with you children / students, this silence is powerful to identify. Your goals in showing your children / students the films can shape how you introduce the films. For example: “I realize we’ve never really talked about mental health. I’ve been thinking a lot about mental health and how it can be hard to talk about. Not talking about mental health sends a strong message and I want to change that. What’s it like for me to say this to you?”
- Deepen the conversation. Know that you may hear difficult - or even scary - things. If you end a conversation prematurely because it’s overwhelming to hear what someone shares, the silence might feel shaming to the student as well as others around them, and might prevent the group members from asking for help. Recognizing that your role is likely not that of a mental health professional, it can be helpful to keep in mind the following:
 - a. If your child / student brings up something painful or alarming (1) THANK THEM. (2) Appreciate the bravery and guts it took to be so honest. Let them know that you are here to support them. (3) Be cautious before choosing to abruptly end the conversation. If something is best suited for a private conversation, let them know that you can talk to them privately soon. Then, make sure this conversation happens. If the student doesn’t stay, make sure to connect with the student elsewhere as soon as possible.

- b. Gauge participants' Intellectual vs. emotional responses. Often difficult material can elicit a strong thinking response ("It's not fair ...") instead of a feeling response ("I feel so sad ...") or the opposite can happen and folks can get just as "stuck" in their feelings. As a facilitator, note where your participants hover and try to support a balance of thoughts and feelings.
 - c. Use conflict to engage in dialogue; validate experiences by exploring different interpretations. Create a safe space for divergent opinions by reminding participants that our individual experiences allow for multiple interpretations. Ask if anyone has a different interpretation, and emphasize that it's OK to see things differently.
 - d. Check in with the room: "How are you feeling? A thumbs up is 'I'm doing alright. I feel supported and capable of handling this content.' A thumbs down means 'I'm really triggered or feeling overwhelmed.' A sideways thumb (horizontal / parallel to the ground) means 'I'm doing kind of OK' or 'I'm not sure.'"
 - e. Sometimes these films can stir up our own thoughts and feelings as facilitators; what is one thing you can do to ground yourself in support? (Review "Self-care Tips" and identify several strategies to use with your group)
- Consider the impact of a watching this in a group. OLIVE films can prompt desires to share, which can be challenging in a group. Establish facilitation ground rules:
 - a. This is a public space; we want to create a space that is comfortable with everyone but we recognize that we cannot control what people say or do after they leave this room. We cannot promise a confidential experience but we can work together to create a respectful experience. Please be mindful when choosing what to share.
 - b. Speak from your own experience. Say "I think ... I feel ... I wonder" instead of generalizations about all people.
 - c. Assume good intentions. If someone says something that offends you, disagree with their words and not them as people. Ask for clarification.
 - d. Remind the students that you are not a mental health professionals, but you can help them find support.

THEMES TO CONSIDER

- **Public Stigma, Cultural Stigma, Self-Stigma:** Negative thoughts and judgments about specific mental illnesses, or mental health issues in general, can unfortunately be found throughout people and cultures. These judgmental messages exist in our thoughts about others (e.g. “Boys shouldn’t cry” or “people with depression are lazy”), within our culture (e.g. “only white women have eating disorders” or “if a Latino man asks for help, he’s weak”) and within ourselves (e.g. “I should be strong enough to take care of myself” or “this isn’t anxiety, I’m just being stupid worrying about things”). The stigma can make reaching out for help scary, and sometimes even unsafe.
- **Public self versus private self:** On social media, it can be easy to project a happy version of ourselves. This can lead to other people thinking or assuming we are fine, as well as increasing the pressure we feel to project inauthentic happiness. The differences between our public self and private self (who we show the world and who we actually experience ourselves to be) can increase feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and despair. Sometimes, all it takes is one person to reach out and engage with us differently to make all the difference.
- **Pressure:** Young adults face an exorbitant amount of pressure to be successful, to be perfect, to excel. When this pressure builds, we need a reliable outlet and a way to cope. If we haven’t yet learned coping skills, the pressure can become overwhelming. Everyday tasks can become difficult because they may become linked to the pressure (“I’m such a failure, so I shouldn’t bother with my homework.”) and can become a reinforcing cycle (“I didn’t do my homework and now I am falling behind in class - I am such a failure”).
- **Community:** Research shows that we are more “connected” than ever and at the same time, more isolated. Digital technology, including social media and text messages, increase dopamine, a chemical in the brain linked to pleasure. In essence, the technology that gives us a false sense of connection, gives our brains a pleasure boost, making it hard to turn off our phones and connect in person. How do we navigate feeling isolated and negotiate better ways to feel support?

- **Thinking & Feeling:** In many cultures, we prioritize thinking and logic over feelings and emotions. How are thoughts and feelings different? Is one easier for you to notice? Why? While you were watching the film, what thoughts came up for you? What feelings came up for you? How do you typically manage big feelings? Do you practice self-care regularly? If yes, what do you do? If no, what prevents you? What strategies can you try doing?
- **Art:** Art can be a powerful tool to explore feelings, sensations, and mental health stories. Art can captivate senses and parts of our brain that logic cannot reach. As you watch the OLIVE films, note how the art contributes to the storytelling. How did the camera angle / lighting / sound shape the film's impact? What point of view / perspective was featured in the film? Why? What imagery stood out to you the most? Why?
- **Reflection:** Some of the OLIVE films feature stories that have a message and a call to action. What did you learn or experience while watching these films? How do these film relate to your own experiences? Your own stigma? Stress? Health? Support systems?

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

- Reflection is a powerful tool - consider:
 - a. What am I experiencing right now (thoughts, feelings, reactions)?
 - b. What did the film do well? Did anything in the film bother me? Why did this bother me?
 - c. What stigma is this video challenging? What's my experience like with this stigma or a similar stigma?
 - d. What is something this film inspires me to do?
- Deep breathing can help calm us when we are triggered or activated.
 - a. Breathe in 4 counts (1,2,3,4) Exhale Slowly for 8 counts (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8)

- b. Mindful Breathing: introduce a cycle of deep breathing and then notice your body: where do you feel the tension? Notice the sensation - what is it's color? It's shape? How comfortable are you with this feeling? Notice if you can sit with the feeling without trying to judge or get rid of the sensation.
- Grounding exercises can help you stay in the present moment: if you're able, from a seated position, place your feet on the floor, place your hands on your thighs; take a deep breathe in and notice the breath flow through your body; notice the contact between the chair and your body, the ground and your feet. Press into these sensations. Notice the sounds in the room. The colors around you.
 - Reach Out: think of someone you feel is supported by; imagine what you would say to that person to let them know you need some extra support today. Now, take out your phone and email or text that person. If that person isn't available, write them a letter.
 - Check out the AWI resources section on the website to see if there are any resources that feel relevant to you.
 - Google local resources and places you can go for support.