

# Different Kinds of Hurt: Isaac's Story

## About the Film and Book

### A letter from the Commissioner

On behalf of the Department of Mental Health, I am delighted you have found Different Kinds of Hurt: Isaac's Story, developed by youth and mental health experts. Isaac's Story is a wonderful jumping-off point for conversations about the power of friendship, the pain of stigma, and the importance of paying attention to and encouraging all youth who are wounded somehow to find their strength, rely on friends, family and helpers, hang on to their dreams, and to live a life with joy and meaning. Please use the film, book, and resource materials and be the difference in a child's life. The best hope of a youth or an adult to recover from mental illness is to be loved and cared for by others. Do not hesitate to contact DMH or any of the resources listed if you know someone who may need help.

Sincerely,

Joan Mikula  
Commissioner  
Department of Mental Health

### The mission

Different Kinds of Hurt: Isaac's Story begins with a simple question: "What if we talked about and treated mental health the same as physical health?" For many people, mental health challenges are a taboo subject, even something to be ashamed of. While parents openly share their kids' medical issues, like broken bones or appendicitis, families are more reluctant to discuss a child whose frequent struggles with

anxiety, sadness, anger, or fear impacts their academics, social and home life, and everyday happiness.

In Isaac's Story, Mia and Isaac openly share



Book



Film

how they needed treatment and help with their different medical issues, drawing on the similarities between their experiences and speaking and listening without judgement. If we start talking about mental health early, before stereotypes and stigmas set in, we can change the conversation at a national—and international—level for the next generation.

Isaac's Story is part of a national campaign aimed at:

- Destigmatizing and reframing how we talk about mental health.
- Making mental health and well-being a part of educational curriculum.
- Assuaging fear and confusion for children and caregivers dealing with mental health challenges.
- Empowering kids with a shared vocabulary to talk about mental health.
- Encouraging empathy, kindness, listening and sharing.

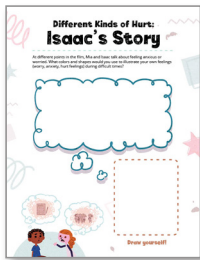
### Why talking to kids about mental health is important:

- One-in-ten children have a diagnosable mental health issue.
- Children with untreated mental health issues are more likely to self-harm, drop out of school, abuse drugs and alcohol, and be incarcerated.
- In the last 10 years, suicide rates among adolescents has doubled.
- For many adults who have mental disorders, symptoms were present—but often not recognized or addressed—in childhood and adolescence.

# How to Use the Film in Classrooms/After School & Community Youth Programs/At Home

## Summary

Different Kinds of Hurt: Isaac's Story, an animated film and graphic novel for elementary and middle school-aged children, shows how an honest conversation about "different kinds of hurting" between two classmates can have a life long effect. Isaac and Mia have been out of school for a while— Mia's fall sent her to the E.R. and she has a cast and crutches, but Isaac looks fine. He explains that he was in a "different kind of hospital," one that helps when thoughts and feelings are hurting. As they compare notes about how they knew they needed help, what the hospital and doctors were like, and their fears and hopes for the future, they realize that physical and mental health aren't all that different; both require sharing your feelings to help the healing.



Coloring Page



Poster

Printable poster and activity page from [www.mass.gov/isaacs-story](http://www.mass.gov/isaacs-story)

## Discussion prompts after watching/reading Isaac's Story

1. What did you like about the story?
2. How are Isaac's and Mia's experiences similar? How are they different?
3. What words would you use to describe how Isaac was feeling before he went to the hospital?
4. How does the movie/book use pictures to show Isaac's feelings?
5. What are Mia and Isaac's dreams/hopes for when they grow up?
6. Why are Isaac and Mia worried that they won't be able to grow up to be a teacher/firefighter?
7. What do you think helped them achieve their goals?
8. Could you relate to parts of the story? Which ones?
9. Can you think of someone you know who had to go someplace for help like Mia or Isaac?
10. Why was Isaac worried about telling his friends about not feeling well?
11. How would you respond to a friend who said they felt anxious or sad? What would you say or do to help them?
12. Who would you tell if you were feeling lonely, sad, or angry? Why is it important to tell someone?

## Talking to kids about mental health

- Communicate in a straightforward manner that's developmentally appropriate for the child.
- Never use derogatory language or slang when describing people with mental illness. It is helpful to draw parallels to those with physical illness.
- Use "person first" language: has depression (or anxiety) vs is depressed (or anxious).
- Be kind and compassionate when talking to or about people with mental health issues and recognize that there are many different experiences that people can have.
- If appropriate, be honest about your own struggles and encourage the child to share their thoughts and feelings.



# The Importance of Mental Health

## Signs to look for mental health issues

Mental health is an important part of overall well-being for children as well as adults. For a young person exhibiting signs of a mental health issue, the earlier treatment is started, the more effective it can be. Mental health issues are treatable and do not have to stand in the way of a person's goals and dreams—mental health issues DO NOT define the person. As Isaac says, "Nothing's gonna get in MY way!"

### Mental health warning signs in children

- Often feels anxious or worried
- Has frequent stomach aches or headaches with no physical explanation
- Has trouble sleeping, including frequent nightmares
- Avoids spending time with friends
- Has trouble doing well in school, or grades decline
- Has low or no energy
- Has spells of intense, inexhaustible activity
- Engages in self-harming
- Engages in risky, destructive behavior
- Has thoughts of suicide

For more...

[www.nami.org/Learn-More/Know-the-Warning-Signs](http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Know-the-Warning-Signs)

### What to do if you suspect a child is struggling with mental health

#### Who to contact:

parents, school psychiatrist, pediatrician, local police, fire, ER

The Crisis Text Line: **741741**

The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health:

[www.ffcmh.org/resources](http://www.ffcmh.org/resources)

Parent/Professional Advocacy League:

[www.ppal.net](http://www.ppal.net)

### Additional resources: books, websites, films, etc.

[www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-resource-guides](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-resource-guides)

[www.namimass.org/resources/compass](http://www.namimass.org/resources/compass)

[www.massaimh.org](http://www.massaimh.org)

[www.mghclaycenter.org](http://www.mghclaycenter.org)

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

[www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)



The Department of Mental Health, as the State Mental Health Authority, assures and provides access to services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages; enabling them to live, work and participate in their communities. [www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-mental-health](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-mental-health)

Walker provides intensive services for children and youth facing complex emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. Walker's multidisciplinary programs extend specialized therapeutic environments beyond their classrooms and residential treatment programs into family homes, public schools and community settings. [www.walkercares.org](http://www.walkercares.org)

Express Yourself immerses young people in the arts, where they find a powerful tool for self-expression, uncover inner strength, and deepen connection with others. [www.exyo.org](http://www.exyo.org)

FableVision Studios is dedicated to helping all learners reach their full potential and to telling "stories that matter, stories that move." FableVision produces award-winning websites, games, activities, animated films, and mobile apps. [www.fablevisionstudios.com](http://www.fablevisionstudios.com)