



California
Children's
Trust

Youth Moves



Dear Friends & Allies,

We are encouraged by the growing movement of youth taking center stage in conversations about mental health reform. As you know, this is also a priority for us at the California Children's Trust. We've shared a lot about our amazing [Youth Advisory Board](#) members, but today we're launching something new: a regular Youth Moves digest.

Youth Moves is a way for the youngest members of our coalition to:

- Share what moves them to reimagine the youth mental health system,
- Show us all the way to move forward in making change happen,
- And, help the non-youth among us move out of the way and allow the next generation to set their own agendas for reform.

This is the first installment in what will become a regular series of reflections and recommendations from our Youth Advisory Board and other youth activists. We hope you enjoy it!


I'll Never Stop.

- by Aria Rani Sindledecker, CCT Youth Advisory Board Member

Stigma is an invisible stain of disdain about something someone is experiencing that others don't understand. With mental health challenges, many stigmatize them because they are not well-informed or they fear how it might affect them. 1 in 4 people suffer from a mental health challenge. The stigma keeps them in hiding. To those affected, the consequences of letting others in can be social isolation. Many keep quiet, often resorting to self-harm or other unhealthy methods of management. I fight for a stigma-free nation because I don't believe anyone should have to suffer in silence. By increasing awareness and education, I believe my generation can eradicate stigma around mental health challenges.


How do I fight for a stigma-free nation?

I am President of my high school chapter of Bring Change to Mind, an anti-stigma organization trying to raise youth up to increase awareness. I have created [three documentary shorts around mental health](#), focusing on topics such as peer-to-peer support, digital citizenship, stigma and mental health awareness and education. I speak at events, such as a BC2M Scientific Advisory Council meeting and the opening of the UCSF Pritzker Psychiatry building. I push for schools to allow for more peer-to-peer counseling and support. I work with the UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Stanford Center for Health and Wellbeing to offer the youth voice on curriculum and youth-supportive projects.



"We are in the middle of a sea-change with respect to public attitudes and responses toward mental illness. It's young people, like Rani Sindledecker, who are leading the charge for this essential change. The road ahead is long, but the continued push for such fundamental human rights is at hand!"

- **Stephen P. Hinshaw, Ph.D.**, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, UC Berkeley; Co-Chair, Scientific Advisory Council, Bring Change to Mind.



As the President of my BC2M Club, I recently proposed that my club host a Scream Day for the school.

It would be an opportunity for the student body to gather together and scream for one minute before finals. I initiated the same event in middle school with an anti-stigma club I founded there and it was a great success.


We spent days advertising to the school, and the club was hyped. We were ready.

The day of the event, I grabbed my megaphone, wearing my Bring Change to Mind “The Future is Stigma-Free” t-shirt. We began to parade down the halls towards the grass, and within two minutes, there was already a group of 10 students yelling at us “NO!” when we called for everyone to come out to the field. Over 100 students watched from afar, afraid about what others might think if they joined the event. I began a quick minute-long talk about the club and mental health, and immediately, I received boos from the same group of 10 students. As I counted down, they only booed louder.

The plan was to scream for a minute just like in middle school. Due to the stigma and boos, it only lasted 5 seconds.

Chances are, some of those students who booed us that day have mental health challenges of their own, and a lot of those side-lined students would have benefitted from a good scream. Something has got to change or this type of toxicity will continue to spread.

My generation is the future and we have the ability to push forward and fight against that stigma in any way possible: educating ourselves, our friends, and peers about mental health challenges, forming clubs, speaking out in public, creating posters on our school campuses, and hundreds of other actions. That includes adults to encourage youth and help them create a platform that starts them on their journeys of advocacy.



“As an adult on campus, it is our role to support ALL students having a platform to make change. Stigma is so present on all campuses, especially towards the underclasses, and when advisors/administration support their movements, we can make that positive change that students are craving vs. more ridicule and shame.”

- **Tami Kittle**, MVHS Bring Change to Mind Advisor

Together, we can form a movement to build a better world for the students that arrive after us. I hope the rest of my generation can educate unknowing teens and join the movement regardless of what others think. We should be working together to end the stigma forever, so those in need can step forward without fear and share their stories, too.



About the author

Aria Rani Sindledecker is a freshman at Mountain View High School where she is an advocate and activist for mental health. She is the President of a high school chapter of Bring Change to Mind, a prolific public speaker, and a budding filmmaker. Her goal is to be a doctor to help change and save lives. You can see her movies at her website: www.ariarani.com

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We are a coalition-supported initiative to reinvent how California finances, defines, administers and delivers children's mental health supports and services. Equity + Justice are at the center of our beliefs, our actions, and our strategy for change.

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