

My name is Jillian Amodio, I am a mental health advocate, mother, and founder of Moms for Mental Health. Mental health is no less important than physical health. If we do not expect our children to attend school when they are physically unwell, we should give the same consideration to their emotional wellbeing.

Guilt, shame, and fear of what will be missed have no space in how one assesses whether or not a mental health day should be taken. The only question that needs to be asked is “does my mind and body need the day off to ensure that I am able to stay healthy and well?”

Human beings are not machines, there will be days when we simply need to rest and recover, physically, mentally, emotionally, or otherwise. If we push ourselves to ignore the signs our minds and bodies are giving us, telling us that we need a break, we choose to disrespect the validity of our own needs and wellbeing.

If we encourage our youth to tend to their mental health and wellbeing, we will breed a generation of adults who value themselves and their contributions enough to avoid the pitfalls of burnout and chronic fatigue. We raise a generation of individuals who recognize that mental health is a valid component of self care and wellbeing.

By allowing youth excused absences for mental health days, we take one step further toward dismantling the stigma and shame associated with mental health and we remind our youth that they are not defined by their productivity, or their attendance record, they are defined by how they treat themselves and others, with kindness, compassion, and humanity.

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