

**THE MENTAL
HEALTH
COALITION**

PRESS KIT

What is The Mental Health Coalition

We are a coalition of the most passionate and influential organizations, brands, and individuals who have joined forces to end the stigma surrounding mental health and to change the way people talk about & care for, mental illness.

MHC Mission

To catalyze like-minded communities to work together to destigmatize mental health and empower access to vital resources and necessary support for all.

Why we started

We have all felt like a square peg in a round hole

The common feeling that we don't fit in, like we don't belong, or when we just feel different to everyone else. It's a feeling that manifests itself in varying degrees of severity, affecting hundreds of millions of people globally. In fact, **1 in 4** people will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. That means 4 in 4 people are significantly impacted directly, or indirectly through someone they know. When we all accept each other's differences, **everyone fits.**

MHC Members

MHC has the leading mental health organizations as part of our collective, each serving different communities and populations but sharing the common goal of wanting to change culture, to change the existing narrative and to empower individuals.

How Are You, Really?

MHC works exclusively with the How Are You, Really platform, a safe space to share uplifting stories that embraces all mental health experiences. Through storytelling we are able to teach and inspire others and open-up conversations around mental health.

The Mental Health Coalition's Resource Library

is made available by our alliance of the leading mental health organizations. We encourage you to browse this database to learn about mental health, help a loved one, learn coping skills and seek support.

**We all have mental health,
and it's more important now than ever
that we take care of ourselves.**

Roadmaps to Mental Health

MHC's Roadmaps are jargon-free guides that speak to the general population in a way that normalizes, demystifies, and destigmatizes mental health. These roadmaps will serve to: **Decode, Educate, Equip and Empower.**

PRESS RELEASE

THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION BRINGS TOGETHER LEADING MENTAL HEALTH EXPERTS WITH FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM TO DESTIGMATIZE MENTAL HEALTH AND CONNECT PEOPLE TO RESOURCES DURING PANDEMIC

NEW YORK (February 10, 2021) – The Mental Health Coalition (MHC), founded by designer and social activist Kenneth Cole and launched in May of 2020, announces an innovative collaboration with FACEBOOK. Together with MHC’s 27 coalition members, they are introducing a series of creative experiences designed to engage people on FACEBOOK and Instagram in conversations around emotional wellness.

Social media has been a main form of social connection for many in the wake of COVID-19. Physical isolation has made it difficult, and often impossible, for face-to-face interaction; social platforms such as FACEBOOK and Instagram provide communities and resources that individuals need most during these challenging times. That’s why FACEBOOK and MHC have joined forces to provide expanded access to mental health support resources for all communities.

This first of its kind movement aims to destigmatize mental health, providing a simplified platform for people to understand, express and find the support they need to maintain long-term mental wellness. The MHC initiative will initially feature four main components, including: “121” IGTV Series, a chat series featuring advocates talking to their “1” about how they get through challenging times; “Reality Check Filters,” which allow you to visually express how you’re really feeling; “Mood Meter” Instagram account from Dr. Marc Brackett, Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, which helps you express and manage your emotions; and “Fine Tune Your Feed,” an Instagram campaign which teaches people how to control and customize their online experience.

“Emotions matter. Having the language to describe our emotions and learning helpful strategies to regulate them can enhance our health and well-being. I’m excited to share the Instagram version of the Mood Meter to support more people in developing their emotional intelligence.” Marc Brackett, Ph.D., author of *Permission To Feel*.

MHC, with support from FACEBOOK, created this series of tools to help educate and empower young people and generations to come to speak openly and authentically about their feelings and get the support they need. When teens and young adults have access to greater social connectivity and support, it was shown that they were less likely to experience mental health problems, “while those with low quality social support had six times the risk of developing depression (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009).”

As part of FACEBOOK’s long-term investment to support people’s mental health, they have launched Emotional Health, a global centralized mental health resource center, providing locally relevant mental health resources and information based on input from mental health expert partners. The MHC campaign efforts will direct people to FACEBOOK’s Emotional Health resource center, which features all of MHC’s expert partners and access to their resources. MHC has also published Instagram Guides to help young people talk about mental health and look after themselves during COVID.

“Young people are turning to Instagram and FACEBOOK to find and offer support through tough times, which is why this collaboration with MHC and its partners is so important,” says Adam Mosseri, Head of Instagram. “More broadly, we hope these new programs will help to destigmatize conversations around mental health.

MHC’s mission is to catalyze like-minded communities to work together to destigmatize mental health and empower access to vital resources and necessary support for all.



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“During these challenging and unprecedented times, it is important that we come together around the common goal of changing the mental health narrative in a way that will empower individuals living with mental health conditions,” explains Founder and Chairman of The Mental Health Coalition, Kenneth Cole. “It is our goal to build an unprecedented community of support and cohesion, during a time of immense chaos and unprecedented need.

MHC and their Coalition of the leading mental health organization are supporting the initiative including:

- Active Minds
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
- Brain & Behavior Research Foundation
- Bring Change to Mind
- Child Mind Institute
- Crisis Text Line
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
- Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
- Fountain House
- Headstrong Project
- Mental Health America
- Mindful Philanthropy
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- National Council for Behavioral Health
- National Latino Behavioral Health Association
- One Mind
- Silence the Shame
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)
- The Jed Foundation
- The Steve Fund
- The Trevor Project
- Trans Lifeline
- UCLA Depression Grand Challenge
- Vibrant Emotional Health
- Well Being Trust
- YourMomCares

Key experts who advise MHC that are participating in the initiative include: Dr. Alfiere M. Breland-Noble, Ph.D, Founder, AAKOMA Project, Dr. Christine Moutier, MD, Chief Medical Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Dr. Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, Founding President and Medical Director of the Child Mind Institute, Dr. Ashwin Vasan, MD, Ph.D., President and Chief Executive Officer Fountain House, Dr. Benjamin F. Miller, PsyD, Chief Strategy Officer for Well Being Trust, Dr. Marc Brackett, Ph.D., Director, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

The creative partners that helped collaborate on this effort include FACEBOOK’s Creative Shop, Pentagram, House of V and Hornet.

About The Mental Health Coalition

The Mental Health Coalition (www.thementalhealthcoalition.org), is a coalition of the nation’s leading mental health organizations, brands, and individuals who have joined forces to end the debilitating stigma surrounding mental health and to change the way people talk about, and care for, mental illness. Our mission is to catalyze like-minded communities to work together to destigmatize mental health and empower access to vital resources and necessary support for all.

The Mental Health Coalition was formed with the understanding that the mental health crisis is fueled by a pervasive and devastating stigma, preventing millions of individuals from being able to seek the critical treatment they need. We will not relent until mental health is no longer associated with stigma, shame or judgement and all people feel empowered to openly discuss and address their individual mental health needs.



PRESS RELEASE

KENNETH COLE AND AN ALLIANCE OF THE LEADING MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS JOIN FORCES WITH CELEBRITIES AND ADVOCATES TO LAUNCH AN UNPRECEDENTED COALITION AT A CRITICAL MOMENT IN TIME

THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION INTRODUCES AN INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING PLATFORM TO START CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GOAL OF DE-STIGMATIZING ALL MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

New York, NY (May 15, 2020) – Social activist and iconic fashion designer Kenneth Cole, today announced the launch of The Mental Health Coalition (MHC), the first collaborative effort of this scale which convenes and unites the leading US mental health organizations, creative and media platforms, passionate advocates, as well as celebrities working collectively to destigmatize mental health conditions and address the pervasive public health crisis. The Coalition launches with an online platform and digital resource guide, www.thementalhealthcoalition.org and an interactive storytelling platform www.howareyoureally.org. Before the coronavirus pandemic, mental illness was already one of the world's most pressing public health concerns, affecting hundreds of millions of people. According to the WHO, 1 in 4 people globally will be affected by a mental health condition; however, we know that 4 out of 4 are in fact significantly impacted by them.

With millions now forced into quarantine, the magnitude of this compounds significantly. Studies have shown that physical distancing and stress related to the coronavirus crisis are having an increasing impact on mental health, amplifying the urgency for this initiative.

It is critical, now more than ever, that we come together to promote acceptance, inspire hope and destigmatize mental health conditions. The Mental Health Coalition platform will be a place where individuals seeking help or guidance can access resources from our partners and better understand ways to discuss mental health.

“This is a critical moment in time. The collective consciousness from the pandemic has created an unprecedented urgency to address the crisis now,” states Founder and Chairman of The Mental Health Coalition, Kenneth Cole. I am proud to bring together a community of the most impactful mental health service providers in the country, leading academics, creative, media, and business leaders with the common goal of changing the mental health narrative in a way that will empower rather than diminish those individuals living with Mental Health conditions. We are aligned with the goal of ending the related devastating stigma. I believe that together we can end the stigma, but only together.”

The visual identity of www.thementalhealthcoalition.org was created by Paula Scher at the internationally acclaimed design firm Pentagram and features a “square peg in a round hole” to represent that there is no “normal” when it comes to mental health and that everybody fits. The coalition is introducing this icon in the hopes that it will become the global symbol for mental health. The icon also appears in the branding Scher created for “How Are You, Really?”.

The new proprietary www.howareyoureally.org, will use digital storytelling to create and share stories crafted with a focus on language, lived experiences and advice for mental health, self-care and coping strategies. The effort will leverage the voices of celebrities, influencers and advocates, and popular culture to discuss mental health in an open, authentic and provocative way. The platform is conceived and coordinated by Catie Cole, Co-Founder, CTO & Content Director of The Mental Health Coalition. Research has shown that authentic storytelling can reduce stigma and barriers to help-seeking for people who are struggling or



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living with mental health conditions. The “How Are You, Really?” initiative creates safe spaces for anyone to be vulnerable, authentic, empathetic and hopeful by sharing their truth and experiencing other people’s stories. This interactive process facilitates understanding and empowers individuals to speak up and access resources and support. We believe that participants will be a part of a life-changing, coordinated effort that will encourage and support an open and honest expression that will ultimately destigmatize mental health conditions.

The initiative prompts the most universally and commonly asked question and also the question rarely answered, ‘How Are You, Really?’. This initiative challenges people to answer this as honestly as they are able, allowing themselves to be vulnerable, empathic, and/or anywhere in between. By individuals sharing their truth about how they really feel, there is much scientific and anecdotal evidence that it will be healing for them and at the same time will support and inspire many others who are living with a mental health condition. We believe that participants will be a part of a life-changing, coordinated effort that will encourage and support an open and honest expression ultimately destigmatize mental health conditions.

The challenge will be launched by posting your video and then challenging others to authentically answer that same question “How are you, really?,” and sharing their stories at www.howareyoureally.org and on Instagram and Twitter.

In addition, iHeartMedia, the number one audio company in the United States, will air a series of PSAs across its 850+ radio stations beginning today through the end of the month that encourages participation in the challenge. The series of radio spots will feature on-air personalities including Ryan Seacrest, Steve Harvey, Bobby Bones and Elvis Duran.

Participants supporting the challenge include Arielle Kebbel, Cheyenne Jackson, Chris Cuomo, Deepak Chopra, Elizabeth Chambers, Hunter McGrady, Kesha, Mayim Bialik, Oliver Platt, Michael Strahan, Stanley Tucci, Whoopi Goldberg and many more.

The leading mental health organizations joining this important endeavor include:

Active Minds
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Brain & Behavior Research Foundation
Bring Change to Mind
Child Mind Institute
Crisis Text Line
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
Fountain House
Headstrong Project
Mental Health America
Mindful Philanthropy
National Alliance on Mental Illness
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National Latino Behavioral Health Association

One Mind
Silence the Shame
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)
The Jed Foundation
The Steve Fund
The Trevor Project
Trans Lifeline
UCLA Depression Grand Challenge
Vibrant Emotional Health
Well Being Trust
YourMomCares

Creative partners that helped to bring The Mental Health Coalition to life include Ad Council, iHeartMedia, Kenneth Cole Productions, Lift, Oberland, Pentagonam, Prinkshop and more.



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About The Mental Health Coalition

The Mental Health Coalition (www.thementalhealthcoalition.org), is comprised of an unprecedented group of the most passionate & influential NGOs, advocates, celebrities and media organizations that have joined forces to address the devastating stigma surrounding mental health. This will be the first collaborative effort of this scale committed to changing the way people talk about and care for mental health. To actualize the mission, the coalition is launching a storytelling initiative as they believe storytelling to be a powerful tool that encourages open dialogue around mental health.

The creative platform (www.howareyoureally.org) formally launches on May 15, 2020 timed to Mental Health Awareness Month.

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The Mental Health Coalition believes that most people on occasion, feel like a “square peg in a round hole”. Our members have united around a symbolic representation of such with “The Square Peg”, the new global symbol for mental health. It is also symbolic of the belief that regardless, when it comes to mental health, “we all fit”.

LINK TO LOGO:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9hiwddi9ypbntde/AADreFkoT5nMRaeS9-6dBoXda?dl=0>



BIOGRAPHY



Kenneth Cole is an American designer, social activist, and visionary who believes business and philanthropy are interdependent. His global company, Kenneth Cole Productions, creates modern, versatile, and functional footwear, clothing, and accessories that make daily dressing effortless for Men, Women, and Kids. The brand spans over 28 product categories with 27 licensed partners. For over 35 years, Kenneth Cole has leveraged his passion and unique brand platform to make a meaningful impact on people's wardrobes, as well as in underserved communities.

Kenneth joined amfAR's board of directors in 1987, and on World AIDS Day in 2004, he assumed chairmanship. Under his leadership of 14 years, amfAR was instrumental in significant breakthroughs in AIDS research, treatment, and prevention for the betterment of millions globally.

In 2016, Kenneth accepted an appointment as a UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador with the goal of helping to end AIDS as a public health crisis by 2030.

In 2003, Kenneth joined the board of trustees of the Sundance Institute and has supported advocated for the need for independent story telling.

After the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Kenneth opened a Health Center in Cité Soleil, serving the most underserved population in the northern hemisphere, in an effort to enable access to basic healthcare services to over 1.5 million Haitians in need.

In 2020, in the midst of the COVID 19 crisis, Kenneth launched an initiative to address what was arguably an even larger pandemic: Mental Health. The Mental Health Coalition (MHC), a coalition of the nation's leading mental health organizations, brands, and individuals who have joined forces to end the debilitating stigma surrounding mental health and to change the way people talk about, and care for, mental illness.

The Coalition's mission is to build a like-minded community who will work together to destigmatize all mental health conditions, and enable equitable access to vital resources and support for all. The Mental Health Coalition was formed with the understanding that the mental health crisis is fueled by a pervasive and devastating stigma, preventing millions of individuals from being able to seek the critical treatment they need. MHC is committed to not relent until mental health is no longer associated with stigma, shame, or judgement and all people feel empowered to openly discuss and address their individual mental health needs.



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Kenneth Cole wants to fight mental health stigma — and he's enlisted Kendall Jenner and a host of experts to help Kenneth Cole.

By Derek Hawkins
May 15, 2020 at 8:32 a.m. EDT

During the height of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, New York fashion mogul Kenneth Cole worried that the stigma surrounding the disease could kill more people than the virus itself. Discussing HIV was still a taboo in many places, and infected people everywhere faced discrimination and violence, leading some to avoid getting tested at all.

So Cole, then in his 30s, decided to use his budding influence as a businessman and designer to encourage people to talk openly about it. He took out full-page ads in magazines. He rallied celebrities, supermodels and scientists for awareness campaigns. He joined the board of the AIDS research organization amfAR, where he served until 2018.

Now, after more than three decades of work on that crisis, Cole is bringing the same blueprint to mental health.

On Friday, Cole launched the Mental Health Coalition, a collection of three dozen advocacy groups, celebrities and business leaders whose primary goal is to remove the stigma around mental health and help people access the services they need.

The effort is beginning at a perilous time for mental health in the United States, with the coronavirus pandemic giving rise to widespread psychological trauma and straining the nation's already fragmented and underfunded mental health system. Large portions of Americans have reported that the crisis has harmed them psychologically, and hotlines for people in emotional distress have experienced spikes in calls and texts. Researchers worry that the effects of isolation, job loss, illness and death could linger long after the virus subsides.

Cole, who conceived the coalition before the virus hit, said the realities of the pandemic underscored the need to change the narrative about mental health "to one that's non-clinical and non-stigmatized."

"You can't do something like that unless it's done collectively," he told *The Washington Post* via Zoom. "You need one cohesive path."

The coronavirus pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis

The coalition kicked off Friday morning with an Instagram campaign spearheaded by Kendall Jenner that calls on people to share videos of themselves speaking honestly about their mental health challenges and how they deal with them.

Some of the videos from the initiative, called "How are you, really?", will be featured on a standalone page after careful vetting from mental health experts to make sure they aren't triggering for anyone who visits. The first features a quarantined Jenner opening up about her coping strategies on the days when she feels anxious.

Kendall Jenner opens up on mental health, quarantine anxiety

Kendall Jenner spoke about mental health and shared her struggles with feeling anxious and alone while social isolating. (Kendall Jenner)

"During this quarantine, I have realized that now, more than ever, mental health is so important," she told *The Post* in a statement. "I wanted to instill some hope in everyone out there and let them know that they are not alone."

One of the key players in the coalition is the Crisis Text Line, a fast-growing mental health service that became the country's first organization to offer round-the-clock support via text when it launched in 2013. Nancy Lublin, the chief executive, said she was surprised when she got a call from Cole in the fall asking if she would join.

"I was like, wait, am I being punked?" she said.

As they talked, she was impressed that Cole seemed well-versed in mental health issues and wasn't coming with any additional agenda. She remembers telling him: "If you can make it cool to share feelings, do that, because that's what you know how to do. That's your swimming lane. Take that lane."



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Cole is the first to admit he has no special expertise in mental health.

“We started convening all these well-informed people, and I’m not any of those well-informed people,” he said. “I’m probably the least informed of the circumstances that surround mental health, and it’s not something I’ve committed my life to. But I am good at committing well-intended resources and inspired by the work they can do.”

While Cole’s past advocacy efforts have won him plenty of partners and admirers, they haven’t been without controversy. His 2005 “I Have AIDS” T-shirt campaign was too blunt for some people. And after a decades-long tenure with amfAR, he stepped down as chairman in 2018 after board members raised concerns about some of the organization’s charitable transactions.

Supporters say Cole’s boldness is an asset, and say his long track record of public service campaigns makes him well-equipped to take on mental health.

Zach Iscol, founder of the Headstrong Project, which provides mental health treatment for military veterans, signed on with the Mental Health Coalition after he and Cole spoke about the challenges his organization was facing.

The biggest barrier to getting veterans treatment was convincing them to seek help in the first place, Iscol said. The coalition can help people take that step, he said.

“It’s not just a hashtag. It’s not just reach out and see how somebody’s doing,” he said. “There are resources here as well.”

Cole said his fascination with the science behind mental health is part of what drives him. He was particularly shaken by research on the psychological effects of quarantine during the SARS outbreak that showed certain groups of people, including front-line workers, experienced post-traumatic stress and depression after being confined for long periods.

“Just imagine the impact that’s going to happen here. That’s going to last so much longer and penetrate so much deeper into our communities after we come through this process,” he said. But there’s also “very clear science and research that shows how you can move forward.”

In the long term, Cole wants the Mental Health Coalition to steer resources and funding to mental health programs, many of which have been left on the brink of financial collapse because of the pandemic. And when the time is right, he said, he’s prepared to hand over the reins of the organization to someone else, likely a mental health expert.

“If I can shine a light on the work that they do,” he said, “there’s so much more that we can accomplish collectively.”

Forbes

Icons: Fashion With The Future In Mind

Brendan Doherty
Contributor
Investing

Jul 7, 2020, 10:00am EDT

I write about impact investing and the humans who power it.

Kenneth Cole is renowned for turning his original shoe designing passion into an empire of activism since the early 1980's. From destigmatizing HIV/AIDS to advocating for the LGBTQ+ community and gun reform, Cole has pushed the envelope and forced consumers to think past stigmas and toward community. Now, Cole and a band of intentional influencers (like Kendall Jenner, Deepak Chopra, Whoopi Goldberg, Michael Strahan) have introduced his next ambitious project for society: the Mental Health Coalition. It begins with a simple question, #HowAreYouReally?

Brendan Doherty: Welcome back to Icons of Impact with Kenneth Cole, a man of many hats: businessman, fashion designer, philanthropist, relentless activist — throughout your career you've addressed many core social issues. In today's world, it's very fashionable to design a business that has "impact" or to talk about it as part of your brand. We see that with the Black Lives Matter movement right now, with many brands called out as coming too late. Yet you've had your business tackle social challenges since the start, even when doing so may have been risky to the business. Tell me what's behind that?

Kenneth Cole: Thank you, brother. Appreciate the introduction. So much of what I've done over the years is I've looked to connect with people in meaningful ways, and that often means pushing societal boundaries. Fashion is essentially about connecting people — not just with what's on their body but also what's on their mind. It's not just what they stand in — it's what they stand for. By meeting people there, it's more meaningful and so much more sustainable. I've also always had a passion for what's happening in the world. It makes what I do so much more meaningful for myself, my associates, but also for our clients.

Cole: I started talking about HIV/AIDS in the 80s when nobody would or could, and the stigma was so devastating. And if you spoke about it, you were presumed to be at-risk — and all the at-risk communities were stigmatized. The 80s saw this renewal of activism for initiatives like Hands Across America, Live Aid, World Aid — all about hunger in Africa. Yet there was a dark cloud looming over us at home and no one talked about it. Even the President of the United States didn't mention HIV publicly until 40,000 people had already died. So I did a campaign on HIV infections and I stayed involved for 30 years; I became Chairman of amfAR in 2004. I believe we made a meaningful impact on millions of people's lives and focused on scientific research in addition to addressing the stigma.

Doherty: One of the things I've noticed about your campaigns is that even though they're about weighty issues, you add in some humor or cheekiness. For example, the one on sensible gun reform was about the right to bare feet. How does humor help make these issues accessible?

Cole: I think it makes it easier for people to relate and put their guard down. Sometimes comedians and late night television hosts are the greatest source of news and have an easier time connecting to people. I believe that we have to take what's happening in the world seriously, but not much else. I don't take what I do that seriously — I don't think everyone in the world needs another pair of shoes, or not what we sell anyway. Plus, people have lots of choices thanks to the internet, so if I can just be considered that's incredible.

Doherty: That humility is very attuned to the customer, and that's at least one of the reasons why your brand works. I want to switch gears - you recently announced the Mental Health Coalition. Why this initiative and why now?

Cole: We were talking about mental health within our company. It's systematically the largest form of dilution in the workplace and it leads to a lack of productivity. So from a business standpoint, it gets one's attention. And then one looks at the humanity and I came to learn that one in four people in the world today live with mental health conditions. I could make the argument that it's actually 4 out of 4, because even if it isn't you, it's somebody you love. My thought is similar to what I used to say about HIV — even if you're not infected, you're still affected. The stigma around mental health today is as bad as it was for HIV 20 years ago.



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The challenge is that it means ultimately changing culture. I spoke to several professional psychiatrists and physicians and I asked for definitions of Depression, and every person gave me different answers. It seemed so disabling to have no clear definition. I'm not a psychiatrist or public health person, but I'm in the branding business. I figured that I needed to get people to circle the wagons somehow. So we systematically spoke to every major mental health organization in this country— from suicide prevention to crisis text line to Mental Health America to the Check-In Foundation to Child Mind Institute. So now we've formed this coalition with the goal of destigmatizing mental health conditions.

Doherty: So the first campaign you launched was the #HowAreYouReally challenge?

Cole: After we built the Coalition, I spoke to people at Pentagram, and they offered to do the campaign for the #HowAreYouReally Challenge pro bono.

Doherty: The timing is fantastic, given that the mental health piece of COVID can be so hidden.

Cole: Well, it's something we've been contemplating for a while. My daughter Amanda pushed and inspired the notion of mental health, and then my daughter Katie took the initiative to build our platform. It is a storytelling platform built to address the single most asked question in every language around the world, and the one most rarely ever answered fully: how are you, or in this case, how are you really? It's very powerful. So we formed this platform with a lot of celebrities and influencers with the plan to launch in November. Then, along comes COVID. I read a study after SARS that noted that a third of people who were quarantined developed symptoms of PTSD, while another third developed symptoms of depression; these symptoms were lasting. That quarantine wasn't anywhere as extensive as this one, so I am absolutely convinced that we're going to be dealing with not just the physical virus but the mental health implications. So, we accelerated the initiative. We hope that people will engage with it over time and get more comfortable talking about their mental health because you need both physical and mental health to be well.

Doherty: What do you think is the biggest piece that helps pierce that stigmatization of this issue, based on your experience with the HIV crisis?

Cole: Making it personal, relevant, and relatable to everybody. We engaged the influencer community as well as the folks on Capitol Hill. We persevered. You just have to continue to put yourself out there and that's what we're looking to do with the Coalition. We've been embraced by all these organizations with extraordinary resources which allows individuals out there to address their circumstances in an easier way.

Doherty: How do you frame leadership in these large scale moments of change?

Cole: I think it's "do as I do not as I say" - my story was the first one on the website. It was hard for me to put myself out there, but I was a very attentive observer of people's issues. I just urge leaders to do that.

Doherty: How does vulnerability factor for you day-to-day?

Cole: I think allowing yourself to be vulnerable is an extraordinary strength of character; it's very powerful to see things from a different perspective. I think we're going to come through this moment stronger. Right now, everybody's focused on this "new normal," but I'm trying to anticipate the next normal because that's what we'll need to embrace.

Doherty: You've been courageous in quite a few of these movements over your career, sometimes risking becoming a pariah within your own community. I think it's very powerful that you continue to live that legacy, that you passed it to Amanda and Katie as well. Thank you for standing in that position.

Cole: It's a privilege to do it, to have a voice and ability to connect with people and affect not just their wardrobes but also their lives. A big part of what I do has been inspired by my wife, Maria. You know, the pervasive problem of homelessness came to the fore in the 70s and 80s with the withdrawal of the social safety net during Reagan-Bush years. I joined an organization started by our now governor, my brother-in-law, Andrew Cuomo, called Help USA. My wife Maria took it over about 20-something years ago. They provide services in temporary housing for homeless populations across the country. So we did a campaign because this was a population nobody embraced — they didn't vote, so politicians ignored them — they didn't consume, so businesses ignored them. The campaign focused on how many people would love to be in your shoes, so we asked that people bring in a pair of shoes that they didn't wear in exchange for a discount on a new pair. We found a way to bring customers to the stores at

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a time when they weren't ordinarily out in stores. And at the same time, address the needs in the community. It's about marrying these worlds.

Doherty: That's the sweet spot. Entrepreneurs who do campaigns that serve others, solve an issue in your backyard — and from a business perspective, it's also resilient, sustainable, and built for longevity. Then the initiative works with economic forces. You're a master practitioner of balancing those things. I'd love to send folks in need over to the Mental Health Coalition.

Cole: Great, we'd love for everyone to engage with the content, the storytelling, tell your story, tag us, and see where it goes from there.

VOGUE

Kenneth Cole on Launching the Mental Health Coalition to Provide Support During the Coronavirus Pandemic

BY LAUREN VALENTI

May 20, 2020

"How are you?" It's one of the most commonly asked question in the world, and yet it's so rarely answered candidly. Working to change this is fashion designer and social activist Kenneth Cole, who recently announced the launch of the Mental Health Coalition, a new initiative bringing together leading U.S. mental health organizations, platforms, and advocates to work more collectively and collaboratively to shatter stigmas around mental health. "It's a public health crisis," emphasizes Cole, citing the fact that one in four people globally will be affected by a mental health condition, according to the World Health Organization, and that now, amid a global pandemic with many experiencing grief, anxiety, and depression, the magnitude could become that much more substantial. "The impact the physical virus is going to have on our communities is devastating in and of itself, but I think the emotional implications are going to be even more severe and long-lasting," he says.

The crux of the Mental Health Coalition is connection and understanding through storytelling. As a digital platform, it's designed to be a place where individuals can share their personal experiences and coping strategies for mental health in a safe and interactive way. In tandem with its launch, the Mental Health Coalition has created a social media challenge, which asks participants to post a video answering the question "How are you, really?"—and then invite others to answer the same question. The challenge has already prompted participation from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, Whoopi Goldberg, Deepak Chopra, Kesha, Kendall Jenner, Justin and Hailey Bieber, and more. Here, Cole expands on how the Mental Health Coalition came to be, and how he hopes the organization can help to rebrand and destigmatize mental health at this critical time.

To start, what have you been reflecting on in quarantine? How is this time shifting your values and ideals? In quarantine, I've been reflecting and contextualizing everything. I've been spending a lot of time contemplating the post-coronavirus world. How's it going to work? How are people going to consume? How will people transact? What role will we be able to play? How do we make a meaningful impact in people's wardrobes, as well as in their communities? You know, fashion is very adept. As an industry we're very good at reacting to change because that, in effect, is what we do. Fashion is built on a pedestal of change and while you need to have structure, at the same time you need to be able to respond quickly to the prevailing winds as they shift. Now, they're shifting harder than we've ever seen before. So we're trying to make sense of it all. This is today's new normal, but what's more relevant is the next normal. Will we be ready for it?

What initially inspired you to launch the Mental Health Coalition? Why is working to destigmatize mental health so important to you personally? In the fashion business, I've always been focused on not just on what people are wearing, but what's on their minds, and not just for what we stand in, but what we stand for. So it's always been important for me, and also the brand. I spent the last 30 years working on awareness of HIV, running amfAR for 14 years. I realized the impact we were able to make in so



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many people's lives. So when about a year and a half ago, I was asked if I would be willing to work on an initiative to destigmatize mental health, under the notion that it's as bad today as HIV was 20 years ago, I said yes. One in 200 live with HIV; one in four live with a mental health condition—although I believe it's really four out of four, because if it's not you, you're impacted by somebody you love in your family or community who is. It was in the works before the pandemic and we weren't expecting to launch this until November. We accelerated everything quickly when we realized how relevant it, in fact, became. As bad as mental health issues are in and of themselves, the stigma is also debilitating.

You've got a huge universe of individuals who live under this very nebulous criteria and it defines them, and diminishes them. But if they could be empowered with a new vocabulary, they could be enabled as opposed to diminished. So that's when the idea comes: Can you rebrand mental health? In effect, that's what this very ambitious concept is. I spent several months asking every big mental health service provider in this country for their support. So now we have this coalition—this brain trust of resources. It pulls together communities so that they can find opportunities and synergies to create something bigger than they'd be able to individually. I'm not a public health person. I'm not a doctor. I'm not a scientist. I'm not a politician. But I'm good at convening people, and I'm curious, and I think if you bring basic branding and business principles to public health, they are very compatible. They've been desperately needed. And so, at the end of the day, these guys are doing all the work and it's their extraordinary resources and networks that ultimately are what's going to make this as good as it's going to be.

What were your primary goals in creating the Mental Health Coalition platform? Why was storytelling such an important element? Several months ago, it was actually my daughter whose idea was to do a storytelling platform, which ended up being embraced by everybody because everything today is about storytelling. It's the world we live in, and there's all the science that supports and validates it as a tool. So we built this platform that could aggregate content in a way that empowers people to tell their stories in a way that's safe and on their own terms. They can make it private or public, and if it was the latter, other people could engage with it. It starts around the fundamental question of "How are you doing, really?" It's very provocative, and the single most asked question in every language and every culture every day of the week. It's also the least answered question, so we set up the platform on Instagram and Twitter and we went out and started asking people and challenging them to call on other people to answer the same question. There's so much science that supports the validity and therapeutic value of somebody just answering that question knowing that they're not going to be judged for whatever it is they put forth.

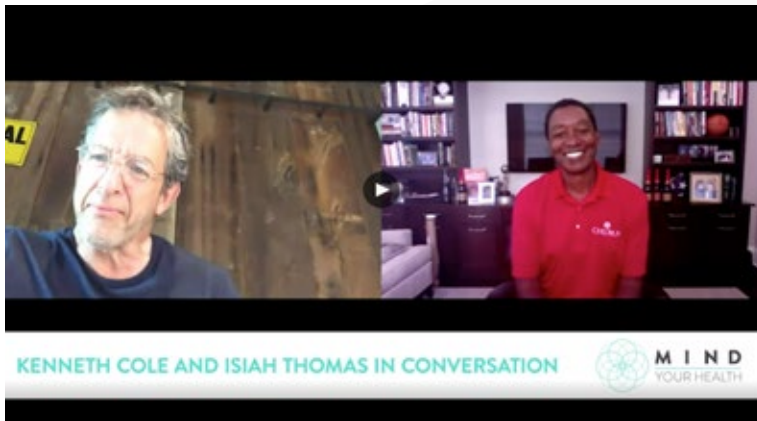
Celebrities have incredible reach, but some argue that they can't relate to the struggles of the average person in this time. What do you say to that? Mental health issues affect everybody. In this world of celebrities and influencers, you're able to connect with large amounts of audiences and engage people in ways you might not be able to otherwise. It's an everybody crisis, and if they're able to convince you that their pain is real, it's compelling because on Instagram, we typically only have these idealized worlds that we've created for ourselves.

What has been your favorite part about the "How are you doing, really?" challenge? For me, the cross-generational impact here is fascinating. Truth be told, it was one of my daughters who really got me thinking about mental health. This is something that was on her mind—this pain that she was living with and in many ways, struggling with alone. I wanted to learn more and see how I could help her. I put myself out there to do that. Then, it was another daughter who came and worked with us to build this. I was brought into it, and when I set out to tell my story, I realized how easy it was to find my story, whereas before I wouldn't have thought it was going to come that naturally. What I've seen is so many kids bringing their parents into this program. My niece challenged her father, Governor Cuomo, so there's really a lot of generational exchange. In years past, we handled mental health issues very differently, and I think that's something we're learning from our kids. The need to bring it out in the open and make it comfortable to speak about it in ways we never have before. That's the only path to normalizing it. I do think we can do this together, but only if we do this together.

92Y summit Mind Your Health: Mental Health Summit

A summit on mental health and wellness in the COVID-19 era featuring top psychologists, doctors, authors, and experts on the latest ideas and advances for coping and even thriving in the pandemic. Discusses dealing with the loneliness of quarantine, how to talk to children about the virus, adjusting to a new pace of work, and much more.

<https://www.92y.org/event/mind-your-health> (starts at 3:30:25)



Never Alone Summit

Expert advice, straight talk, personal stories and ideas, along with practices and tools you can use today to elevate your mood, rebalance your thinking, boost your resiliency and even find a little bit of magic.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_D6oT-8VGuA (starts at 4:54:30)



Social Innovation Summit

Bringing together top executives and thought leaders from around the globe to discuss opportunities for leveraging technology & innovation to affect social change. Participants will discuss philanthropic trends, analyze innovative approaches for problem solving and build lasting partnerships that enable them and their organizations to discover new methods of engaging with social challenges.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU56VV0O4hs&list=PLAeY_wVCZGZGPexGCaBIGmq_lbRsqhS2N&index=29



WebMd Coronavirus in Conversation

Video series Coronavirus in Context is hosted by WebMD Chief Medical Officer, John Whyte, and highlights conversations with the public figures, celebrities, institutions, and medical experts who are shaping the conversation during the coronavirus pandemic while offering hope to many.

<https://www.webmd.com/coronavirus-in-context/video/kenneth-cole>



Mental Health America Virtual Annual Conference

Kenneth Cole in conversation with Paul Gionfriddo, CEO & President of Mental Health America about COVID-19, Mental Health, and the Need for Equity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lc39g5cG_E&list=PLwNiluZWtHzCNGt_WajrmXkbABHYc6AIT&index=4



BUSINESS OF FASHION LIVE - Kenneth Cole on Why Mental Health is The Other Big Pandemic

Kenneth in conversation with Business of Fashion's, Founder, CEO, and Editor in Chief, Imran Amed about the importance of destigmatizing mental health conditions and supporting the emotional well-being in all communities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0XGJbQgWQ0>

