

THE SILENCE INSIDE



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INTRODUCTION

About the Film

The Silence Inside is a 11-minute short film told through the perspective of teens. It explores the role of isolation, depression, and anxiety in leading some youth to experiment with substances. Through interviews with peers, parents, and experts, the film shows the ripple effects of addiction — but also the hope that comes from reaching out, talking, and choosing life.

Why It Matters

- Youth are struggling with record levels of anxiety and depression.
- Substance use often starts as a way to numb pain, not to “get high.”
- Addiction doesn’t just affect the person using — it impacts families, friends, and entire communities.

This guide is designed to help educators, parents, and community leaders facilitate thoughtful, age-appropriate conversations after watching the film.



Trigger Warning

The film addresses depression, anxiety, addiction, and loss (including parental grief after an overdose). Viewers may be emotionally impacted. Plan for debrief time and have crisis resources available.

Ideas for FILM SHOWINGS

Where to Show it:

- Homeroom / Advisory / Health class
- School assembly or staff meeting (short intro + Q&A)
- Youth group, club, or sports team meeting
- PTA, neighborhood meeting, or community forum

Time Needed:

- Film: 11 minutes
- Pre-screening setup & intro: 5–10 minutes
- Post-screening discussion: 10–20 minutes (adjustable)
- Total recommended block: 25–40 minutes

Room Setup:

- Comfortable seating in a circle or semi-circle for discussion
- Projector/screen or smart TV with clear audio
- Tissue box, water, quiet corner for anyone who needs to step out

Materials to prepare:

- Printed discussion questions (teens / parents / staff)
- Local resource list & crisis contacts (handout)
- Consent/notification form for parents (if required)
- Spare notebooks for students (optional)

Note: We recommend showing the film with two adult facilitators present and allowing time for open discussion.

For Educators & FACILITATORS

Who Should Facilitate:

- Two trained adults: school counselor, social worker, mental health professional, or staff trained in trauma-informed facilitation.

Facilitator Checklist:

- Watch the entire film first.
- Prepare local crisis numbers and school mental health contacts.
- Communicate content & trigger warnings to participants and parents.
- Arrange a private space and staff coverage for follow-ups.
- Explain to viewers that they can step out anytime.
- (Recommended) Mental health staff/counselors available during and following the screening.

During Screening:

- Remind viewers they can step out anytime.
- Monitor for visible distress.



Suggested Intro

SCRIPTS

We understand it can be challenging to introduce a film, so we wanted to help you out and provide one for the following audiences.

For Teens:

- “We’re going to watch a short film called *The Silence Inside*. It’s about real feelings like depression, feeling alone, and anxiety and how some teens turn to substances to cope. It may bring up tough feelings — that’s normal. If anything hits you hard, you can step out or talk with a trusted adult after.”

For Newsletter/Permission:

- “We will screen *The Silence Inside* during [date/time]. The film covers mental health, substance use, and parental grief after overdose. Please contact [name] if you prefer your child not attend or if you’d like to preview the film.”

For Parents/Community:

- “This film is intended to spark honest conversations about teen mental health and substance risk. Please watch with the expectation of discussing it afterwards, and note the guide’s tips for talking with youth.”

Pre-Screening

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Set Group Norms:

- On a chart, co-create 4-6 group agreements
- Listen without interruption
- Respect privacy
- Use "I" statements
- If someone is upset, offer support and tell an adult

Quick Anonymous Check:

- Give index cards and ask students to write one word that describes their mood. Collect anonymously to gauge room tone.

Pair & Share: "One Thing?"

- Pair students. Prompt: "Name one thing that makes your week hard." (No need to explain.)
- Each person has one minute to share. Switch.

Grounding Exercise:

- Lead a simple 4-4-4 box breathing: inhale 4 seconds / hold 4 / exhale 4. Repeat 3 times.
- Or do a 30-second grounding: name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you can taste.

Facilitator Tip: Encourage listening, not problem-solving. Remind pairs to respect privacy and suggest speaking with an adult if something serious comes up.

Introducing

THE FILM

The Silence Inside is an 11-minute film created with the voices and perspectives of real teens. Guided by high school narrators — the film moves through moments that many young people recognize: the crowded hallway that still feels isolating, the late-night scrolling that deepens loneliness, and the quiet bedroom where difficult thoughts become louder. Rather than lecture or warn, the film speaks honestly about feeling unseen, why some teens consider using substances to cope, and how small decisions can lead to much larger consequences.

Throughout the film, youth narrators voice the recurring thoughts many teens carry quietly, paired with concise interviews from a physician, a young adult in recovery, and parents who have endured profound loss. Their stories are personal, honest, and unfiltered, offering understanding rather than instruction. Together, these voices create a conversation that feels real — and one that encourages thoughtful reflection.

The second half of the film shifts toward what supports healing: reaching out to someone trustworthy, accessing mental health resources, finding grounding through friendships, hobbies, or creative outlets. The film centers on the importance of connection, affirming to young people that they are precious, their voices matter, and they are not alone in what they're carrying.

At just over 10 minutes, the film is well suited for classroom settings, youth groups, and community discussions. It is most impactful when followed by an open conversation with a trusted adult or facilitator. Watch it — then talk about it. No one should have to navigate these feelings alone.

Post Screening

DISCUSSION Q'S?

For Teens (Small group / whole class)

- What line or moment felt most real to you? Why?
- When the teen narrator says no one asks why they might want to use, what does that mean to you?
- What are some signs that someone you know might be struggling?
- Who are the adults you would feel comfortable talking to? If none, what would help you trust someone?

For Parents & Caregivers

- What surprised you about the teen perspective in the film?
- How do you normally talk about stress or mental health at home?
- What are practical steps you can take this week to open lines of communication?
- What barriers prevent your child from talking to you?

For School Staff

- What systems do we have in place for identifying and supporting isolated or at risk teens?
- Where are gaps (training, referral pathways, counseling capacity)?
- What actionable next steps can our staff commit to in the next 90-180 days?

Additional Discussion

QUESTIONS

Here are some additional questions Teens may ask:

1. Will my parents get angry if I tell them I'm struggling?

a. Suggested response: Some parents might have a strong reaction at first — that's usually fear. You can start with a trusted adult who's calm, or tell your parents you need to talk and ask for a moment when you can both be calm. If you don't feel safe telling them, talk to a counselor or another adult you trust.

2. How do I help a friend who's using without pushing them away?

a. Suggested response: Listen first. Say things like, "I'm worried about you" or "I'm here if you want help." Offer to go with them to talk to a counselor. Avoid lecturing or shaming — it usually makes people shut down.

3. What if my friend is using and I'm scared to tell an adult?

a. Suggested response: You're not alone — a lot of people feel stuck. Try talking to a trusted adult who won't overreact: a coach, counselor, teacher, or relative. If you're worried about getting your friend in trouble, explain that you want help, not punishment. If your friend might overdose, call 911 right away, the Good Samaritan Law provides protection from arrest for you and your friend.

4. Could I get addicted from trying something once?

a. Suggested Response: Yes—especially with opioids and fentanyl. Some drugs can cause dependence or a dangerous reaction even the first time. That's part of what makes this so risky. There is also always the risk of the pill being laced with fentanyl and too often that's one pill you can't come back from.

5. What is naloxone (Narcan) and should I have it?

a. Suggested Response: Naloxone (Narcan) can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. In many places adults can get it for free or at a pharmacy. If you're around people who use opioids, it's a good safety tool for adults to have. If you're a teen worried about friends, tell an adult you trust and ask them to get naloxone.

6. What to do if someone overdoses, or if my friend(s) take something and don't respond?

a. Suggested Response: Call 911 right away. If Narcan is available and someone feels comfortable, use it. Try to keep them awake and breathing while waiting for help. If you're unsure, get an adult and call emergency services — every minute counts.

Crisis & Local RESOURCES

Suggested Local Resource List

- School Counselor:

- Local Behavioral Health Liaison:

- Local Youth Programs: YAP,
CASA-Trinity AIR Clubhouse, Etc.

- CASA-Trinity - Prevention Staff

Email: -----

Number:-----



National Resources:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Call or text 988 anytime.
- SAMHSA Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for treatment referrals.

- The Trevor Project – 24/7 crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth: 1-866-488-7386.
- Crisis Text Line – [741741](https://www.crisistextline.org/)

Final Notes

FOR FACILITATORS

Films like *The Silence Inside* aren't made just to warn teens about the dangers of substance use — they're created to start conversations that many young people are too afraid to begin on their own. When a teen sees their emotions, their struggles, and their questions reflected honestly on screen, it can break through the silence they've been holding onto. It tells them: "You're not the only one who feels this way. You're not broken. And you don't have to face this alone."

Your role in sharing this film, discussing it, and creating space for honest reflection is incredibly important. These conversations don't just offer support — they can interrupt a dangerous path, validate someone who's hurting, and, in some cases, change a life.



***What we hide in silence only grows. What we share begins to heal.
Silence feeds the hurt. Talking gives it a way out.***

Talking With a Teen

ABOUT OPIOIDS

Focus the Conversation

On Safety:

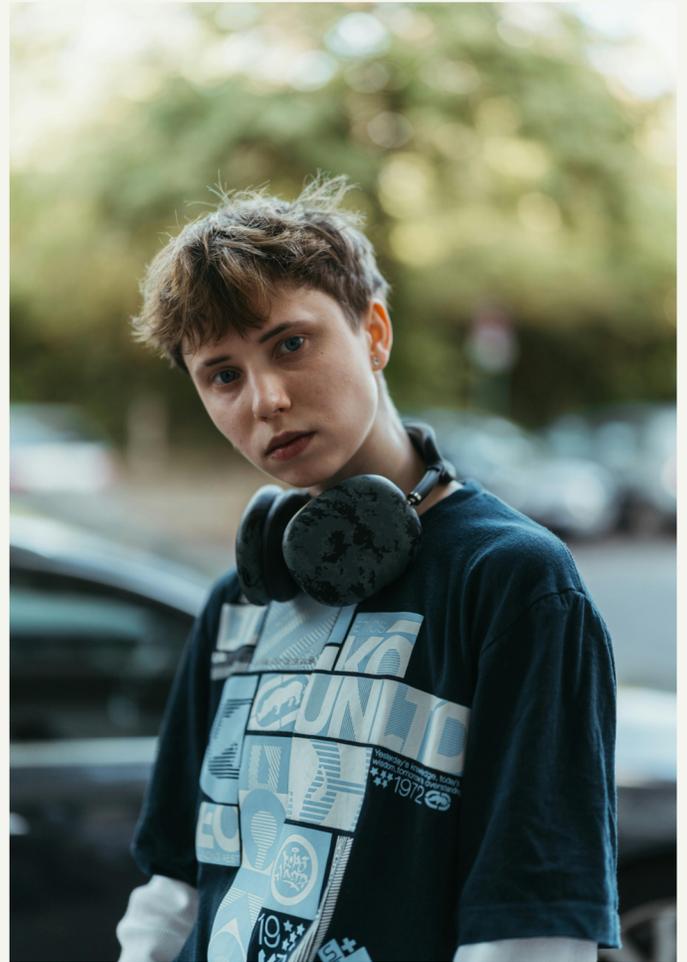
- Open Communication: Regular and open conversations are crucial to educate kids about the risks.
- Non-Judgmental Listening: Listen to them without judgment to foster trust and understanding.
- Monitor Social Media: Keep an eye on their social media use, as drugs can be offered by acquaintances or strangers met online.

Get the Facts:

- Fentanyl is being added to counterfeit pills and powders and being sold under a false name.
- Fentanyl is added to increase profits because it's cheaper and stronger.
- A potentially lethal dose of fentanyl is the size of 2 grains of salt.

National Supports:

- SAMHSA National Helpline
 - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
 - Free, confidential treatment referral
- The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ youth)
 - 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988 (24/7)



IMPORTANT:

If it's not from their doctor or pharmacy, don't risk it. A "friend" or drug dealer may not know if the product they are selling contains fentanyl, and there's no way they can guarantee that it doesn't contain fentanyl.

Talking With a Teen

WHO'S STRUGGLING

Signs a Teen May Be Struggling:

- Withdraws from friends, clubs, or activities
- Change in sleep or appetite
- Grades dropping, skipping school
- Irritability, anger, or emotional numbness
- Talks about feeling hopeless, overwhelmed, or "done"
- Changes in friend groups or increased secrecy
- Using substances to "cope," "relax," or "forget"

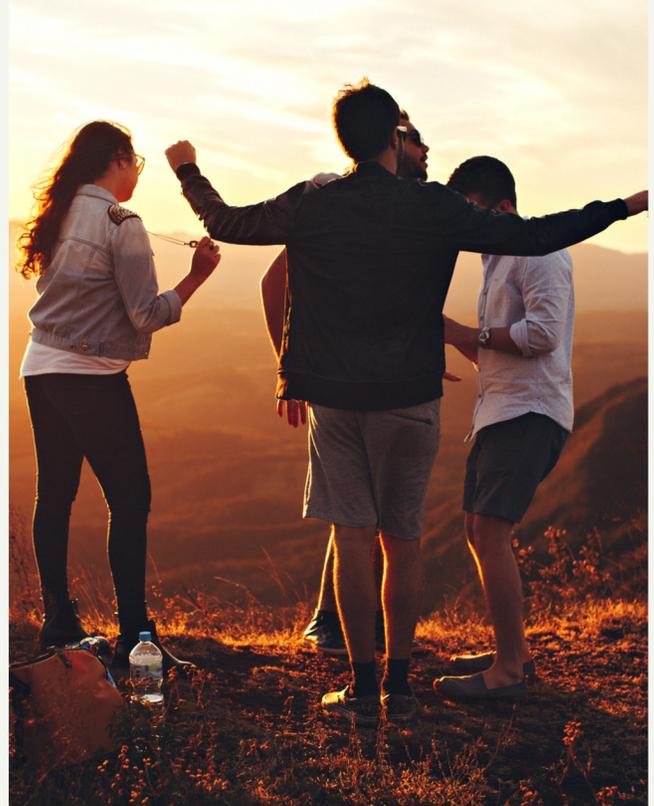
How to Start the Conversation:

Use soft, calm, non-judgmental language:

- "I've noticed you seem stressed lately. I care about you."
- "You don't have to explain everything — I'm here to listen."
- "Would you feel okay talking with me for a minute?"
- "You don't have to deal with this alone."
- "It's completely okay if you need time before talking — I'm not going anywhere."
- "You can share as much or as little as you want. Whatever you say stays between us unless you're in danger."

Avoid saying:

- "Just get over it."
- "You're overreacting."
- "You're being dramatic."
- "Why would you do that?"



If They Open Up to You:

- Stay calm — even if the answer scares you
- Listen more than you talk
- Acknowledge their feelings: "That sounds really hard"
- Let them know you're proud they talked

What to Say Instead of Advice:

- "Thank you for trusting me."
- "I'm glad you told me."
- "Let's figure out the next step together."

Youth

SAFETY PLAN

This plan helps you stay safe when you feel overwhelmed, hopeless, or tempted to use substances.

What are my warning signs:

What are the first signs that I'm starting to struggle? (Thoughts, feelings, behaviors, etc.)

My Coping Strategies (Things I Can Do on My Own)

Healthy things that help me calm down, feel grounded, or distract myself.

Examples: go for a walk, music, journaling, shower, breathing, video games (in moderation)

People I Can Reach Out to for Support:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Trusted Adults I Can Talk To:

Adult: _____ Location/Phone: _____

Adult: _____ Location/Phone: _____

My Reasons to Stay Safe? *(People, dreams, goals, hobbies — what I don't want to lose.)*

Emergency - Call or text 988 (24/7 crisis line), Call 911 if it's an emergency

Coping SKILLS

A guide for when you feel stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, or tempted to use substances.

Calm Your Body:

These skills help slow your heart rate and ease anxiety.

- Take 10 slow breaths (in for 4 seconds, out for 6).
- Splash cold water on your face.
- Take a warm shower or bath.
- Stretch your legs, arms, and shoulders.
- Hold an ice cube in your hand until it melts.
- Try the "5-4-3-2-1" grounding trick (name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, etc.).

Calm Your Mind:

These help when thoughts are racing or negative.

- Write down your thoughts for 2 minutes — don't edit, just dump it.
- Say: "This feeling won't last forever."
- Listen to music that fits your mood or lifts it.
- Take a 10-minute break from your phone/social media.
- Ask yourself: "What do I need right now?"
- Replace one negative thought with a true one ("I'm overwhelmed" → "I've gotten through things before.")

Connect With Someone:

You don't have to do this alone.

- Text or call a friend you trust.
- Sit with someone — even if you don't want to talk.
- Tell a trusted adult: "I just need someone to listen."
- Go where people are — a café, common room, or library.

Move Your Body:

Movement releases stress chemicals and boosts mood.

- Go for a walk
- Do jumping jacks or push-ups
- Kick a soccer ball
- Dance in your room
- Stretch for 5 minutes
- Clean or organize something small

Anonymous

STUDENT SURVEY

Your voice matters & we would love for you to share it.

1. What part of the film hit you the hardest?

2. Did the film feel realistic to what teens experience? (Please circle one)

- a. **Yes**
- b. **No**
- c. **Kinda**

3. After watching, do you feel more aware of:

- a. How depression, anxiety, loneliness affect your overall mental health? Yes No
- b. Why teens might try substances? Yes No
- c. How addiction impacts families? Yes No
- d. How to find help Yes No
- e. What resources are available to help Yes No

4. If you were struggling, is there an adult you could talk to?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

5. What else should we know about what teens are going through?

6. If you need help, or just want to chat about how you are feeling check this box and a counselor will reach out privately:

- a. I'd like someone to talk to