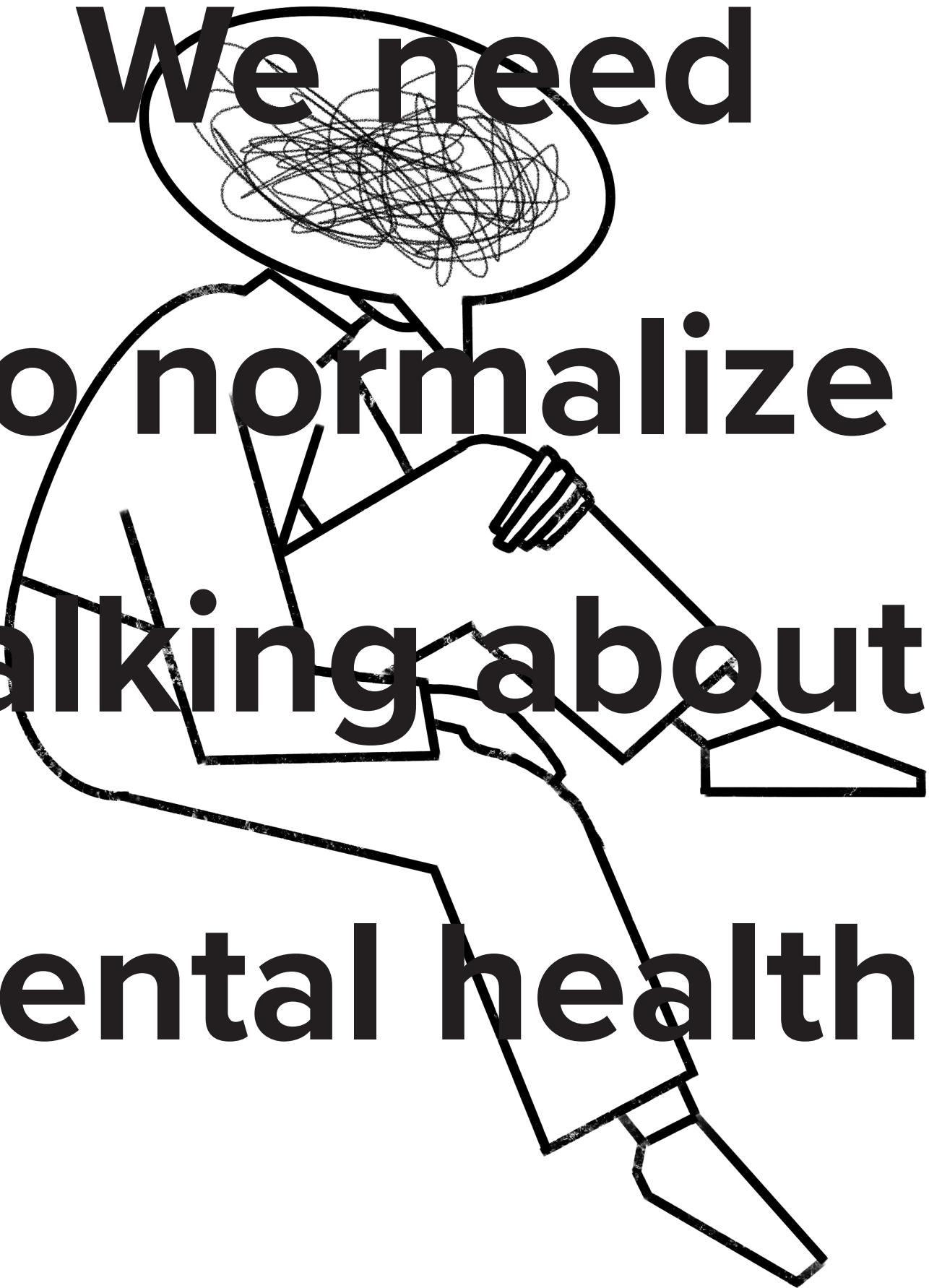


**We need  
to normalize  
talking about  
mental health.**



**Opinion**  
**By Morgan Day**

**A**fter leaving Bethel this past spring, we all had to adjust to life in a global pandemic. Some took the opportunity to find a new hobby, others a new show on Netflix or a new obsession with TikTok. I'd be lying if I said I didn't start watching *Outer Banks* and whipping my coffee. What we did with this time was unique to us, but there is one thing that we all experienced: social isolation. With this, many also experienced a great decline in mental health.

We live in a world in which the stigma that surrounds mental illness causes people to be looked down upon and criticized. As a result of isolation experienced during the stay-at-home order, people are becoming more aware of mental health issues both through conversations online and through personal experience. Yet there are still a lot of misconceptions about mental illnesses. We need to eradicate the stigma and start normalizing conversations about mental health.

If I tell you that I broke my arm, the problem is easily understood. So is the solution. Go to the doctor, wear a cast, and receive a prescription medication to help manage the pain. Why isn't treatment for mental illnesses viewed the same way? Yes, the treatment looks different because the problem is different, but that doesn't make it any less real.

Andrew Soloman, a writer and lecturer of psychology, says, "People still think that it's shameful if they have a mental illness. They think it shows personal weakness. They think it shows failure." This shameful thinking only grows the problem. Instead of avoiding the topic and viewing it as something to be embarrassed about, we need to start talking about it.

We need to do better. We need to educate ourselves. Mental illness can be the result of trauma, major life events, or a chemical imbalance in the brain. It is not "just a rough patch." And receiving treatment for it is not something to be ashamed of.

It can be easy to feel alone, especially during the upcoming holiday season in a time of social isolation. Reach out to people. Check in on others. Utilize the resources available on campus and online. We are in this together.

Bethel has counseling services available to students.

SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education) has resources for education and support.

For immediate help, you can use the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741 or call the hotline at 1-800-273-8255. **C**