

## ***TIPS for a Successful “Chalk The Walk, Let’s Talk: Westchester” Event***

### **Event Chalking Tips:**

#### **Creative Tips**

- Start drawing—other people are more likely to draw if they see other people drawing.
- Writing a message and decorating around it is a great way to avoid the “what should I draw?” syndrome.
- 18”x24” size allows for easy photos with a cell phone.
- High contrast images are best. Build up and thicken lettering and or linear areas in the drawing.
- If it’s raining during your planned event, use chalk on rolls of paper. Rolls of brown craft paper are available on Amazon or at your local art/craft store. Alternatively, 18”x24” sized construction paper (brown, black, dark gray) is a good choice. Having paper available on a table is also a good choice for people with mobility issues.
- For chalk art created on paper surfaces, spray lightly with a fixative to preserve - Aquanet hairspray works great! Have masking or packing tape available to hold your paper in place.
- Handwipes and other cleaning supplies for both hands and surfaces are recommended.

#### **Event Vibe:**

- Play music with supportive, encouraging/empowering messages (appropriate for audience)—Use our [Resilience/Mental Health playlist](#) suitable for all ages with bluetooth/portable speakers)
- Offer mental health resource/merchandise giveaways
  - See links for 988 and other mental health promotional resources
    - 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Print materials from SAMHSA (Free): <https://orders.gpo.gov/SAMHSA988/Pubs.aspx>
    - <https://seizetheawkward.org/share> - Free. To order print items, email Maria Idoni at [midoni@afsp.org](mailto:midoni@afsp.org).
    - [NAMI How to Help a Friend](#) (free printable)
    - [NAMI Getting the Right Start](#) (free printable)
    - [NAMI Your Language Matters](#) (free printable)
    - [Inspirational/Motivational Bookmarks](#) - Nominally priced on Amazon
    - [Mental Health Awareness Bookmarks](#) - Nominally priced on Amazon
    - [Suicide Awareness Bookmarks](#) - Nominally priced on Amazon

- Share links/QR codes to Westchester County Suicide Prevention Coalition: <https://www.westchestercountysuicideprevention.org/> and 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: <https://988lifeline.org/>
- *Encourage authentic conversations about mental health* and the importance of checking in with each other to see how someone is REALLY doing. Refer to the “Event Audience” section below for more specific language and resources.

#### *Location-specific vibe tips:*

- **For libraries/book stores** - display collections to support mental health, socio-emotional learning and wellness themes in tandem with your CTW event.

### **Event Marketing:**

- **Promote your event** in your community:
  - Capture chalk art pics and share on social media with hashtag **#chalkthewalkwestchester2026** (*be mindful of privacy and avoid frontal images of children*)
    - Share through your organization’s marketing channels
  - Share to Chalk the Walk 2026 page at <https://www.westchestercountysuicideprevention.org/>
  - *Share by 5/6 to be considered for display at NAMI Walks Westchester event on Saturday, 5/16/26.*
- Invite mental health and other wellness support organizations/professionals to participate.
- Combine the Chalk the Walk event with other scheduled activities or meetings at home, among friends, colleagues or in the community including professional development, wellness activities, scouting, faith-based, civic, school clubs and recreational events/meetings.
- Get tween and teens who need community service hours involved, and have them recruit friends!

### **Event Location:**

- Plan for weather contingencies and set a rain date or alternate indoor location.
- **Consider safety & logistics**
  - Choose a location that is safe for participants that does not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian traffic/emergency access.
  - Get permission from property owners/site managers/organization leadership as needed. Some businesses do not own the sidewalks in front of their storefronts. You may want to reach out to the town if this is the case.

- Coordinate with support services such as maintenance and security staff, local law enforcement, as needed to ensure needed equipment and traffic/access restrictions are in place for the event with time buffers for set-up/breakdown.
  - For public spaces, use communications channels to notify client/patrons of interruptions to business/organization access.

## **Let's Talk: Tips for conversations about mental health**

**The goal of "Let's Talk" is to give people calm, direct language for difficult moments that already exist.**

### **Tone Guidance:**

- Calm, steady tone. Calm tones help others calm down. Think about how you might respond to a frightened child or pet.
- Be direct without being dramatic. "Your face looks so sad, how are you really doing?"
- Focus on connection, rather than risk assessment language.

### **Core Principles for Helpers:**

- Speaking plainly often feels scary-but it usually creates more calm and connection.
- People who are struggling are already scared and feeling alone.
- Language lets fear be shared — which creates connection. Connection reduces fear.
- Use Language that lowers fear and makes conversations about difficulties possible.
- Listen non-judgmentally.
- Validate what they're feeling.
- Support a person's humanity. There is really nothing that is outside the realm of human experience.

### **Sample Plain Language Phrases**

- "How can I be of support to you?"
- "How are you REALLY doing?"
- "Your feelings matter."
- "Tell me more."
- "I'm here for you."
- "That sounds difficult, you don't have to carry it alone."
- "It's okay to talk to me about having a hard time."
- "I'm not going to judge you."
- "Talk about anything you need to talk about."

- “It’s understandable that you would feel this way.”
- “A lot of people would feel that way.”
- “Struggling does not mean something is wrong with you.”
- “This is something you are going through; not who you are.”

### **Resources (Bookmark these!)**

<https://seizetheawkward.org/conversation/learn-the-signs>

<https://seizetheawkward.org/get-help>

<https://namiwestchester.org/your-journey/kids-teens-and-young-adults/teen-young-adult-mental-health-resources/>

- [How to Help a Friend](#) (printable)
- [Getting the Right Start](#) (printable)
- [Your Language Matters](#) (printable)

<https://www.nami.org/kids-teens-and-young-adults/kids-and-parents/how-to-talk-to-your-child-about-their-mental-health/>

<https://jedfoundation.org/> - Supporting mental health and suicide prevention for teens and young adults.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/category/talking-about-suicide/>

- Support and crisis intervention for LGBTQ+ youth and young people

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline- Call or text 988: <https://988lifeline.org/>

<https://www.westchestercountysuicideprevention.org/westchester-resources>