



# Mental Health and the **Conversation** **Problem**



# A Window of Opportunity

We're standing at the precipice of a sea-change in social consciousness surrounding mental wellbeing here in the U.S. With more than \$8 billion in FY2022 Federal funds<sup>1</sup> flooding our system to support mental health, including the recent rollout of the suicide and crisis hotline 988, what historically has been an extremely stigmatized and taboo subject is now commanding a presence in our cultural dialogue.

This is a good thing, given that more than 50 million Americans (one in five people) are experiencing some sort of mental illness right this very second – up 14% in the last 10 years<sup>2</sup> – and with current suicide rates up 35% since 1999<sup>2</sup>, we need to be having this conversation.

The nuanced and tricky subject of mental health isn't easy to navigate online, yet online is where the conversation is happening.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.2020mom.org/blog/2022/3/16/congress-and-president-biden-pass-final-fy-2022-funding-package>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a smartphone. The phone's screen displays the text 'Mental Health Matters' in a bold, sans-serif font. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person in a dark jacket. The overall tone is professional and focused on mental health awareness.

**Gen Z spends  
9+ hours per day  
on screens**





**#mentalhealth**

*has accumulated 40.5 billion views  
to-date on TikTok*



# Gen Z is looking for answers

The conversation is fueled in no small part by TikTok, where #mentalhealth has accumulated 40.5 billion views to date. #Anxiety clocks in at a whopping 16 billion views, followed by #adhd at 13.2 billion and #autism at 10.6 billion. More, there's no way to confirm if the content is even tagged accurately at all.

The upside to this trend is that we're seeing our Gen-Zers (who spend 9+ hours per day on screens) coalesce around a sense of community and inclusiveness on a topic that, per the American Psychological Association, 90% of their generation struggles with<sup>3</sup>. The openness and candor around personal struggles with mental health are giving way to reduced stigma and more everyday conversations about mental wellbeing.

<sup>3</sup><https://healthmatch.io/blog/the-gen-z-mental-health-wave-what-is-causing-the-surge>

## TikTok Views

- #mentalhealth  
**40.5 billion**
- #anxiety  
**16 billion**
- #adhd  
**13.2 billion**
- #autism  
**10.6 billion**



**90% of Gen Z** experienced  
psychological or physical symptoms  
as a result of stress in the last year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>American Psychological Association - <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2018/stress-gen-z.pdf>





## Mental health diagnoses need to be administered by professionals

The downside here is the risk inherent in the content that this *very impressionable* group is finding. A dizzying volume of free advice and peer-to-peer stories of lived experiences...yet not nearly enough of it coming from trusted, reliable sources informed by experts who are trained to address matters of mental health.

Moreover, there is really no way to discern the difference between what is trustworthy content and what's not – TikTok and beyond. And with one-third of Americans turning to the internet to self-diagnose their ailments, this is alarming. Mental health diagnoses and treatment plans need to be administered by professionals, not the well-intentioned (and uneducated) armchair "experts" at home.





## How We Disrupt This...

How do we disrupt this proliferation of often well-intentioned but ultimately bad information? There's no way to temper the churn of potentially dangerous content surrounding mental health on social media. But, we can show up with more of the right stuff. When people – especially our kids – are seeking to find self-diagnostic or self-help information online, the content informed by trusted, expert sources needs to be just as engaging, relatable, approachable, believable, and omnipresent as the amateurs'.

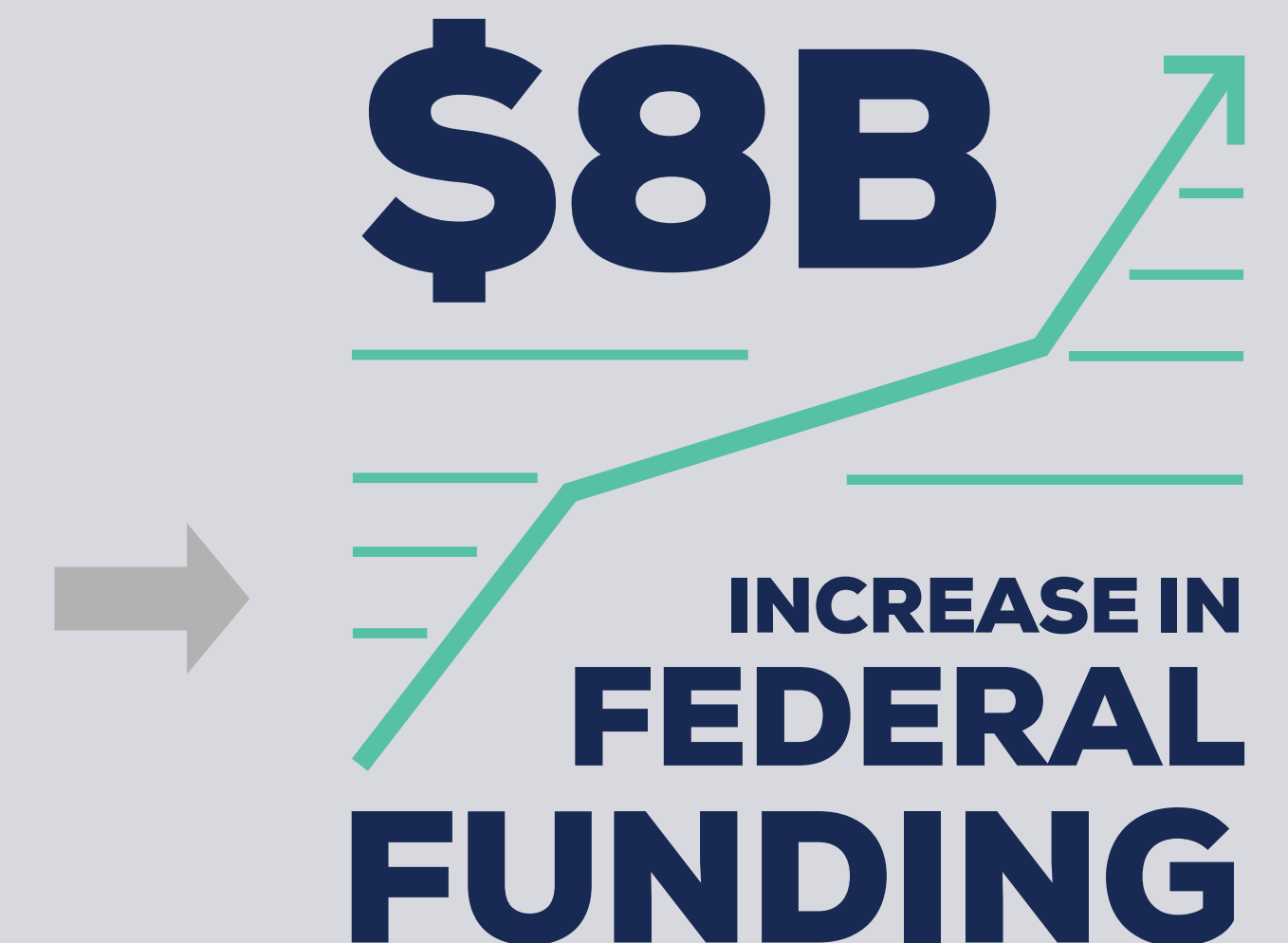
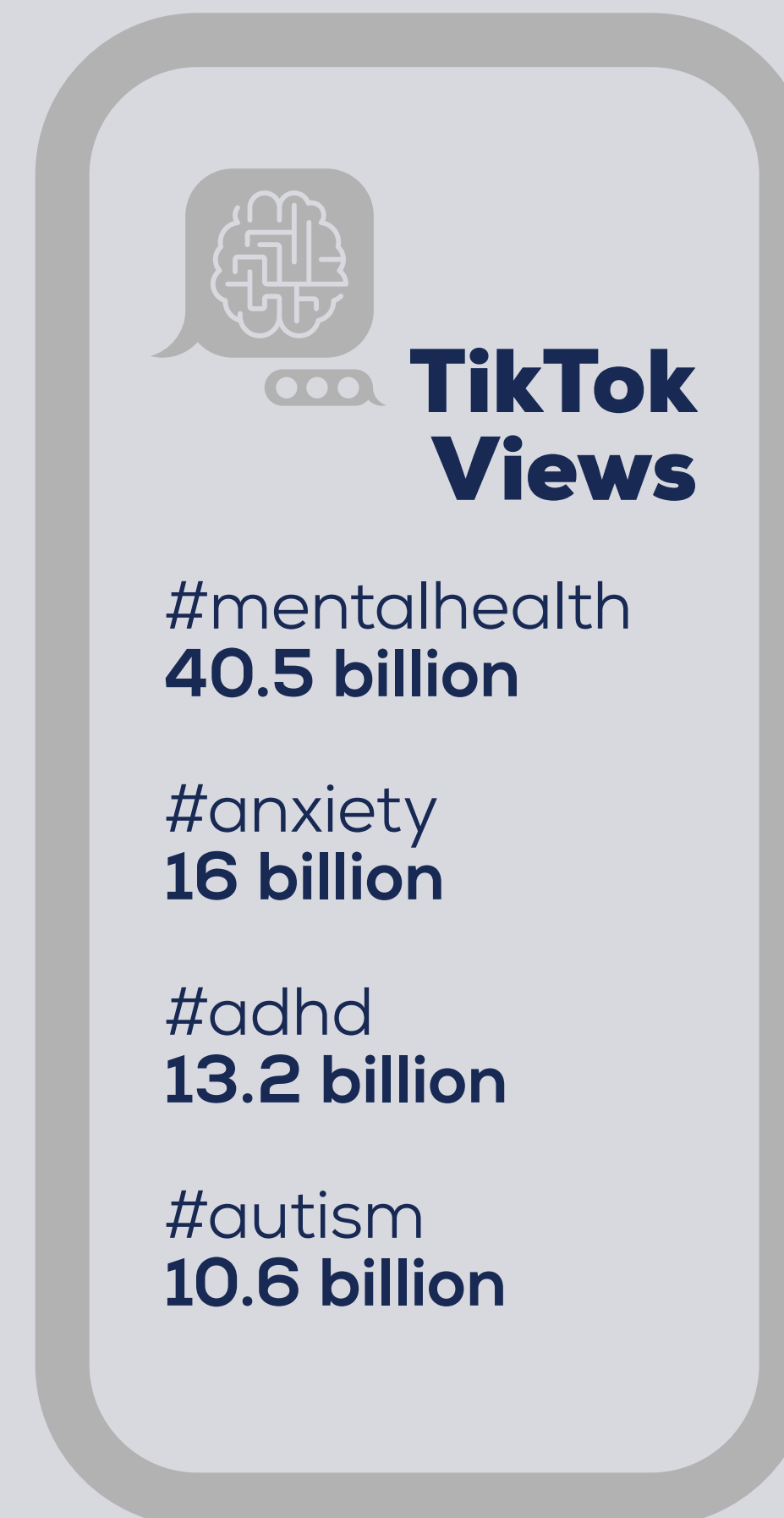
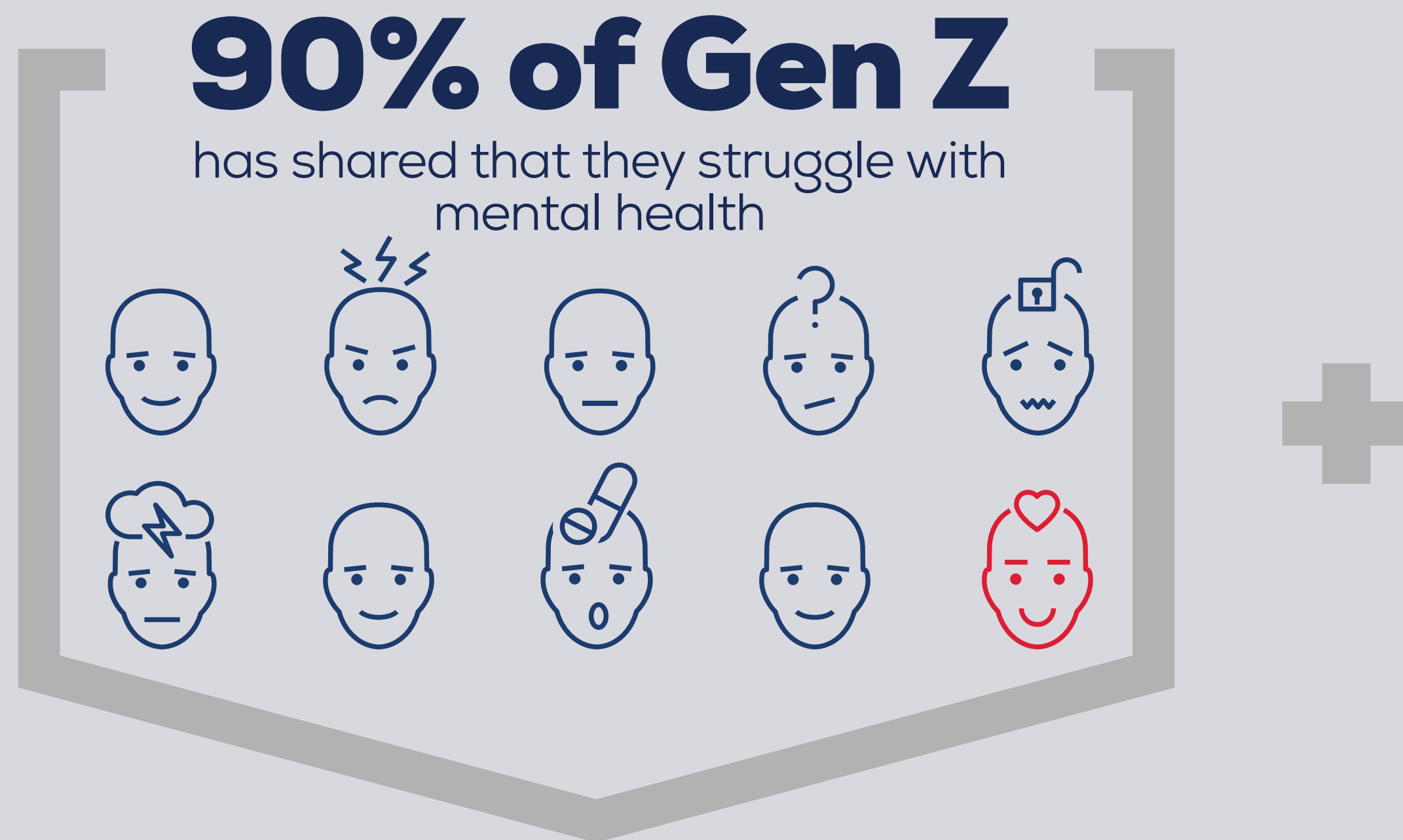
About \$8 billion in Federal funding has been earmarked to support mental health right now. Our healthcare systems, nonprofits, education systems, etc. have a window of opportunity to harness these funds and meaningfully lean into this issue.

Gen Z is counting on us.

**Show up with  
more of the  
right stuff.**



**Gen Z** is *highly engaged* with consuming & creating mental health content:



However, of the 15% that experienced a major depressive episode in the last year,

**60% NEVER RECEIVED**   
ANY MENTAL HEALTH **TREATMENT**

With this increase in funding, there is a window of opportunity to harness these funds and create change.



