Pulling it All Together

1. Anxiety and depression are very common; as many as 50% of youth are impacted by mental illness.

2. Depression and anxiety are caused by genetics and by our experiences.

3. Depression and anxiety are illnesses; they are not signs of weakness or character flaws.

4. Have hope! Depression and anxiety are treatable! (It may take some work though.)

5. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the best treatment for depression and anxiety.

6. CBT can work quickly: 50 – 80% of teens get better in 10 – 20 sessions.

7. The main idea behind CBT is that some situations trigger depressive or anxious thoughts, which make us feel badly, which makes us react in ways that keep the cycle going downward, like this:

8. Since you often can’t change situations themselves, try to:
   - Notice when your thoughts aren’t helpful or aren’t reasonable, and focus on better thoughts called “coping thoughts.”
   - Notice how you’re feeling (sad, disappointed, angry) and rate your feeling on a scale of 1-10.
   - Use relaxation strategies (deep breathing, guided meditation, muscle relaxation) to feel better, then rate your feeling again on the 1-10 scale.
   - If you’re feeling sad, bored, and tired, don’t go back to bed; get active! Even 15 minutes a day can make a huge difference in symptoms of depression.
   - If you’re avoiding something because it makes you nervous, practice facing your fears.
   - When faced with a hard situation or upsetting challenge, always ask yourself: what is my real goal in this situation? What behavior would help me get closer to my goal?

9. CBT skills take practice — don’t lose hope if these skills don’t work at first. Keep trying!

10. You are not alone. Identify sources of help and support and use them.