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Opening The Conversation On Mental Health

Canadians should no longer fear the stigma of mental health as Bell Canada reaches out with their Let's Talk campaign. Bell Let's Talk launched in 2011 and is a multi-year charitable program dedicated to mental health in Canada. Mental illness indirectly affects all Canadians at some time through a family member, friend or colleague. According to Canadian Mental Health Association, 20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime. Common mental illnesses include schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, depression, and suicide. Mental health is a very frightening and a serious issue especially when only 1 out of 5 children who need mental health services receives them. It's time to talk about mental health.

The award winning Let's Talk campaign is aimed to engage Canadians in a conversation about improving mental health across the country. The primary focus is on fighting stigma, supporting research, improving treatment and ensuring psychological health and safety in the workplace. The core 5 ways to be a part of the program include avoiding using harmful language like "physco", or "nut", educating yourself, being kind, actively listening and asking questions, and most importantly – talking about it.

The campaign introduced the hash tag "BellLetsTalk", where for every tweet using it, Bell donates 5¢ more to the program. It has gathered national attention as celebrities, government officials, sports teams, and citizens all over the country have done their part in opening the conversation about mental health. Canadians helped raise a record amount, \$5,472,585.90 to be precise. Using social media, specifically twitter, the campaign flourished as the platform for brining awareness was in itself a world-wide communication tool. The 3,016,621 tweets and retweets on Bell Let's Talk Day 2014 were 93% more than the 1,562,485 sent in 2013. Obviously, this campaign is working.

When it comes to mental health, the toughest hurdle is talking about it. Bell's Let's Talk came as a break through for opening the conversation on mental health throughout the country, and worldwide. The only question left – are you talking about mental health?

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