

Is Elmo's Callout A Cry for America to Address Growing Mental Health Concerns?

By Charlotte Marsoun

Elmo is a beloved childhood character whose presence is known to a majority of children across the globe. His high-pitched vocals and flailing red arms pacified screaming children, providing the peace and quiet most parents beg for. His ability to ease tantrums leaves us with a question: Can Elmo ease the tantrums of adult Americans and address the growing concerns of mental health? Is Elmo America's newest therapist?

Elmo recently took to Twitter to ask his followers a simple yet perplexing question: "Elmo is just checking in! How is everybody doing?" Audiences responded at large with an array of responses regarding struggle, sadness, and more to their favorite childhood character. Yet, when it comes to Elmo's response on complex matters of mental health, how will the beloved childhood character truly react? Something along the lines of "Elmo says you should seek psychiatric help," may not elicit responses worthy of action. Therapists uphold certain standards of seriousness to protect and properly serve their clients. A yelling red puppet may not be able to adequately address serious mental health concerns or provide the correct care people are seeking through therapy. Although he may be a great distraction for screaming children, he cannot properly address concepts of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders in the way that trained professionals can.

Elmo's nostalgic charm provides people with a sense of comfort in reminiscing on their childhoods, but the need for qualified professionals and access to resources has never been more prevalent than today. Now, more than ever, people are seeking therapy and actively destigmatizing the process. A recent survey by the Thriving Center of Psychology showed that 39% of respondents are planning to go to therapy in 2024, and 93% of millennials and Gen Z'ers are hoping to improve their mental health in 2024. These statistics represent the growing need and appreciation for therapy and addressing issues of mental health. Matters of mental health have become much more serious in a post-pandemic society and should not be remedied with just a nostalgic character of peoples' pasts. Throwing a PBS character from the 80s into the mix may be counterproductive in expressing the seriousness of counseling. Instead of running to Elmo's Twitter page, consider contacting a trained professional who can provide proper, effective support for your specific needs and mental health concerns.

