

Protected: Seventh Graders Adam and Romy Lead the Conversation on Mental Health at East Side Middle School

BY NAMI-NYC [HTTPS://NAMINYCMETRO.ORG/YOUTH-LEADERSHIP-SERIES/](https://naminycmetro.org/youth-leadership-series/)
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NAMI-NYC's *Ending the Silence* program aims to help middle and high school students recognize warning signs of mental illness, reduce stigma, and encourage students to seek help if needed.

"Ending the Silence has been valuable to our community for reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and giving our students the comfort they need to talk to adults about their mental health concerns. It has also given our students the mental health language they've needed to put sometimes confusing and overwhelming emotions into words," shared **David Getz**, Principal of East Side Middle School (MS114).

NAMI-NYC's Ending the Silence program had a significant impact on seventh graders and best friends, **Adam** and **Romy**. "I loved Ending the Silence! It helped us further our knowledge on mental health and understand the steps that we can take to get help, like talk to our school psychologist," said Adam. Adam is an avid athlete, who has just made the middle school volleyball team and enjoys being involved in school activities. His dad, Andy, describes his son as helpful, polite, and the "mayor" of East Side Middle. Romy is sensitive and empathetic, aware of her family member's struggle with an eating disorder.



Through Ending the Silence, Adam and Romy's middle school class also heard from a young adult presenter, which made the presentation more relevant and meaningful. "Ending the Silence was very helpful. It's so useful to have someone younger talk about their struggles with us," shared Romy.

Romy and Adam with Bailey

Adam and Romy not only proactively invited NAMI-NYC to bring Ending the Silence to their school, but they care about raising mental health awareness at school year-round. "It was hard to make friends in middle school. Adam and I really wanted to help people struggling with their anxiety after COVID, so we started hanging out with Bailey," said Romy.

The school psychologist, **Laurie Posner**, began bringing her comfort dog Bailey to the school on Tuesdays and Fridays. Adam and Romy thought creating "Bailey Club" would help their peers feel calmer and more relaxed. Kids had a chance to get away from any anxiety they were feeling during the school day. Adam and Romy have been instrumental to the club's success, making sure their classmates each have a turn getting to spend time with Bailey. "Bailey Club" has been running for the past two years and is wildly popular.

According to the NYC Department of Education, approximately one in five students who could benefit from additional mental health support does not get them. Half of all mental-health and substance use conditions start before age 14.

Learn more or [request an Ending the Silence presentation](#) at your school.