

## Start a Conversation

### Discussion Guide for Chris Stapleton's *Fire Away*



#### Chris Stapleton

Grammy Award winner Chris Stapleton used his impressive talent and powerful music to create a video about the painful topic of suicide. *Fire Away* has the potential to engage our nation in a conversation that is greatly needed. This guide is intended to help parents, teachers and community leaders in your efforts to facilitate this conversation.

We would like to thank Chris and Morgane Stapleton for their compassion, courage and willingness to step up to create this important story – and the entire Stapleton team for their support of our mission. We would also like to thank actors Ben Foster and Margarita Levieva for their inspired and compelling performances. Finally, we would like to thank Tim Mattia whose direction brought Chris' vision into focus. By lending their talent and their voices, these fine artists are helping us change the culture of mental health.

#### The Campaign to Change Direction

America is at a crossroads when it comes to how our society addresses mental health. We know that one in five of our citizens has a diagnosable mental health condition, and that more Americans are expected to die this year by suicide than in car accidents.

While many of us are comfortable acknowledging publicly our physical suffering, for which we almost always seek help, many more of us privately experience mental suffering, for which we almost never reach out.

The Campaign to Change Direction, a global initiative to change the culture of mental health, encourages everyone to care for their mental wellbeing just as they do their physical wellbeing. Led by Give an Hour, a national nonprofit organization providing free mental health services to the military and veteran community, Change Direction addresses common barriers to understanding mental health and raises awareness about Five Signs that may indicate someone is suffering emotionally and needs help.

Learn more about the Campaign at [www.changedirection.org](http://www.changedirection.org)



## Five Signs of Emotional Suffering



### **Personality changes.**

You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.



### **Uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.**

You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable, anxious or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.



### **Withdrawal or isolation from other people.**

Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.



### **May neglect self-care and engage in risky behavior.**

You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illegal substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.



### **Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by circumstances.**

Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

## Five Discussion Topics

1. How are the Five Signs portrayed in the music video?
2. Have you or someone you care about struggled emotionally? Have you ever lost someone you know to suicide – have you ever contemplated harming yourself?
3. Why do you think it is difficult for people to acknowledge emotional pain? Why is it difficult for us to reach out for help?
4. What can we do to make it easier for everyone to talk about our emotional health, wellness, and illness?
5. When you see someone suffering emotionally, what can you do to help them? What are things that you do to take care of yourself emotionally?

## Five Ways to Find Help

1. Check out our Help page at [www.giveanhour.org](http://www.giveanhour.org)
2. You can locate mental health support and care through community mental health centers – hospitals and emergency rooms also have information about resources in your community.
3. Contact your school and ask about available support – counseling and peer support groups are often available.
4. Contact your faith-based organization and ask for recommendations in your community for mental health support.
5. Many communities now have a [211 directory](#) – a free and confidential service available 24/7 that connects you to local resources.

## Five Ways to Change the Culture of Mental Health

1. Make a Pledge to learn and share the Five Signs at [changedirection.org](http://changedirection.org)
2. Make mental health and wellness a priority by taking care of yourself and those you love.
3. Connect, reach out, inspire hope, and offer help when you see someone is in emotional pain. Show compassion and caring and a willingness to find a solution when the person may not have the will or drive to do it alone. It may take more than one offer, and you may need to reach out to others who share your concern about the person who is suffering.
4. Give your time to organizations and efforts in your community that are working to Change Direction. Contribute financially to national and local efforts that are making a difference.
5. One size doesn't fit all. If you have an idea or a notion about how you can help or fill a need in your classroom, school or community, reach out to your networks and make it happen.

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