

Missed Messages: A Mental Health-related Simulator

**Trigger warnings: Depression, anxiety, self-injury, suicide*

About Missed Messages: Missed Messages is a visual simulation made by Angela He that stars you, a stranger, and a roommate. This story's ending is decided based on your actions and is meant to spark insightful and meaningful conversation about mental health.

WARNING: This story has heavy themes surrounding depression and suicide, including verbal mentions and some graphic content. There are four possible endings.

The following goals are met with this program:

Goal 1: Social Responsibility

- Students will engage in interactions outside of their comfort zone.
- Students will foster respect for self, others, and the community.

Goal 2: Life Skills

- Students will practice steps for positive decision making.
- Students will develop an ethical mindset to approach difficult situations.

Goal 3: Interpersonal Intelligence

- Students will display effective interpersonal communication skills such as effective conflict resolution strategies, verbal and nonverbal reactions in social situations and how they differ amongst individuals.

Goal 4: Intrapersonal Intelligence

- Students will identify ways to support their emotional wellness.

Implementation: Resident Counselor Wing and Hall Programming w/ assistance of Mental Health Counselors

Goal Assessment: Direct observations and Resident Feedback

**This is meant to be done with small groups, max of 9 students per session. As a result, it's advised that this program is done twice a month to get an entire wing done in a couple of months. Suicide Awareness Week is from September 5 to September 11 and this is a critical program to that week, so try to do it in the beginning of the academic year.*

Necessary tools:

- Emailing / survey taking beforehand
- Zoom

- Missed Messages game (This is available on the [Steam store \(Internet downloadable\)](#), on [Crazygames.com](#), [gameslol.net](#), or [itchl.io \(Internet downloadable\)](#)
 - It is suggested that you download the game to avoid any internet connectivity issues / lagging.

Preparation

- It is recommended that the RC plays through the game before the program (and achieves more than one ending) so they have an idea of how the game goes.
- The RC gets in touch with a mental health counselor and sets up a time/date to do the program. It is recommended that this is done two weeks in advance.
- Students are broken up into groups of 9. The RC sends out a survey asking the students in each group at least a week prior to their session if they'll be interested in the program.

[SAMPLE SURVEY](#)

RC SAMPLE EMAIL

Hello all,

I would like to provide an opportunity for us to come together and talk about mental health, specifically around topics that include depression and suicidal thoughts. This is a topic that unfortunately continues to be taboo to talk about, but with conversation leads to awareness and more openness to talking about it. September was Suicide Awareness Month and I stumbled across Missed Messages by Angela He, described as "a story about life, death, and memes." Upon playing through it, I found that it would spark important and meaningful conversation about mental health if students went through the choices together, coming to a personalized ending of the game.

To have a headcount of people, I would like you to visit this link and reply yes or no to your interest in attending this program. Further information is included in the Google form's description. Choices will be based on majority vote and each group of 9 people will have at least two playthroughs through the game. Emails will also be sent to your parents to ensure transparency and approval of your attendance.

Best,

[insert RC's name here]

- The mental health counselor (Kevin, Keisha, or Suzi) will send parents an email giving them warning and possible intervention for withholding permission for their student to attend the program.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear Parent,

Your student's RC is hosting an **optional** wing event for a small group of students on Friday, November 6th, at 4p online. Your student will have a Google form sent to her/them this week to sign up, if interested. We are notifying you of this event because it pertains to mental health and has some potentially graphic and descriptive information in the game that may create a variety of feelings with your student. The game, Missed Messages, is a "choose your own adventure" simulation game that follows a student living on campus around her school and social situations. Some of the outcomes can range from seeking help, discussing depression, anxiety, self-injury, and/or suicide.

If you would like to view the game, the link is provided here for you to download, watch a short video, or read comments. A school counselor will be present at the event, as well as for the debriefing after the event. We are always available after the event concludes, if students need to talk.

https://store.steampowered.com/app/812810/missed_messages/

Again, this is an optional event, but if you would like to restrict your student from attending this event, please reply to this email and let Kevin know by Wednesday, November 4th. We will check our email on Thursday morning to work with the RC staff to make sure that your student does **not** receive a link to attend the event.

Thank you, and please let us know if you need anything else from the counseling staff.

- Students must **explicitly give their response of yes or no** to take attendance for the program. Parents have until the day of the program to restrict their student.

***Historically, out of the group of 9 students, 3-4 students end up participating. This is ok, since it encourages students in attendance to talk with a smaller group.**

Program Day:

- The RC sends a Zoom invite to the students and the mental health counselor. The RC makes sure to let the students know that they will be supported throughout the program.
 - Note: it is important that the RC doesn't let the students know what happens throughout the game, as the first walkthrough is supposed to be fresh.
 - It is recommended that throughout the game, all cameras are turned off in order to prevent lag. When engaged in discussion, however, cameras are encouraged.
- The RC screen-shares the game. (Don't forget to share the computer audio!) The students share in the chat what they would like to do in the game from the start. (Would they like to open the door? Do work on the laptop? Click on the mirror? Etc.)
 - It is imperative that the RC and mental health counselor do not try to sway the students at any point in their decision making in the game, aside from some minor thoughts if necessary.
- After the first walkthrough, the students, RC and mental health counselor will debrief and talk about what happened during the game. (Most likely, they will end up with their roommate being dead.)
- This conversation will essentially be the spark of the program. The RC and mental health counselor asks questions to the students pertinent to the experience of the game.
 - Some questions may include: What are some signs you saw beforehand? Is this something that you can see happening in real life? How did this make you feel? What would you do differently? Would you consider her death your fault? Let's talk about the feeling of guilt or shame, etc.
- The students will then do a second walkthrough with the RC and mental health counselor. After the second walkthrough, everyone will talk about what went differently and why.

End of Program:

The RC and mental health counselor will check in with the students, make sure that they're doing alright, ask what they thought of the program, and let them know that IMSA's mental health resources are always available if needed.