



# **Blanketed By Blame, Empowered By Support:**

## Maya's Story to Address Mental Health Issues

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Dramatization by the Asian American Legal Defense Fund (AALDEF) and Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS)

Adapted with permission from an exercise developed by the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence

Based on original work by the Duluth Project and Ellen Pence

A collaboration for the National Asian American Education Advocates (NAAEA) Summit, Workshop on Youth Mental Health by:

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### **THE SCENE:**

- A young woman sits in a chair in front of the audience, she plays Maya.
- Be prepared with 11 blankets or shawls - the blankets produce a more dramatic effect. The last blanket (for the 11<sup>th</sup> character) is recommended to be black for dramatic effect.
- 11 characters stand in a circle, each holding a blanket, facing outward, with their backs to Maya.
- The Narrator stands outside the circle, to the side, and reads the script of Maya's Story.
- The Narrator pauses after each statement from Maya's Story.
- At that point, one character steps forward and places a blanket over Maya.
- When the reversal begins, after each statement, a character removes a blanket from Maya and then faces into the circle towards Maya.
- The exercise is followed by audience discussion.

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*The purpose of this exercise is to help participants visualize the structures that can cause harm and how they can be different – contributing to making change in their work.*

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

**Maya** (seated in the middle)

**Narrator** (stands to the side, outside the circle)

#### **Blanketing**

(Cast of characters in order)

1. **Best Friend**
2. **Her Mother**
3. **Her Older Brother**
4. **Community Leader (male)**
5. **Her Father**
6. **Teacher**
7. **Clergy (female)**
8. **Her Older Sister**
9. **Her Grandmother**
10. **Police**
11. **A New Friend**

#### **Uncovering:**

(Cast of characters in order)

11. **A New Friend**
10. **Police**
9. **Her Grandmother**
8. **Her Older Sister**
7. **Clergy (female)**
6. **Teacher**
5. **Her Father**
4. **Community Leader (male)**
3. **Her Older Brother**
2. **Her Mother**
1. **Best Friend**

You will need thirteen people.

## **SCRIPT:**

(The entire script is read by the Narrator only.)

Maya is sixteen years old. She is an Asian American 2nd generation from a middle-class family. She's the youngest of three children. Her brother is a student at a prestigious law school and her sister was the valedictorian of their high school. Maya, who is usually great in school, has been losing interest. She's been having a hard time concentrating. She sleeps most of the day. She hasn't been eating much. Maya knows something is wrong and wants to talk to someone about it. She's even considering seeing a therapist.  
(Pause)

Maya has taken many steps, surrounded by friends, family, and community.

## **BLANKETING**

### **1. Best Friend**

Maya turns to her best friend for support. She's sure her best friend will understand her. They've been friends since kindergarten.

"Are you telling me you want to see a therapist because you feel depressed? Depression is a normal part of life. You're just feeling blue at the moment. It will pass. Only crazy people see a therapist."

(Pause, wait for one person to step forward and cover Maya with a blanket.)

### **2. Her Mother**

Maya feels discouraged and hopes her mother will have some words of wisdom. Maya calls her mother just to talk, even though she knows Mom is always so busy with work.

"Maya, I've noticed you haven't been going to jazz class any more. Why am I paying so much money and you don't even go! Stop moping around. Don't disgrace this family by trying to blame your own laziness on some emotional problems. You don't need a therapist. You need to work harder!"

### **3. Her Older Brother**

Her older brother is home for Spring Break. He picks her up from a local store. Maya had been caught shoplifting. She is lucky that the storeowner gave her a break. She's afraid what her brother might say and what he thinks of her. She's not even sure why she stole the lipstick from the local store. She starts sharing to her brother about what she's been going through.

"Depression only happens when something bad happens in your life, like divorce, the death of a loved one, or something. What's wrong with you? You should be lucky to have the life you do – can't you see you're embarrassing our family? You're lucky I'm not going to tell dad about what happened."

4. **Community Leader (male)**

The Community Leader knows about Maya's story. The Community Leader talks to her, hoping to change her habits.

"Maya, we've struggled for so long to achieve some recognition in this city. Why ruin that by bringing up all these 'personal' problems. Kids like you just make our community look bad."

5. **Her Father**

Maya's Father is away on business. But he gets a call from Maya's teacher about her grades falling.

"I've noticed your grades have been dropping. What's going on Maya? You know, when I was young, during the war, we had no time for weakness. Maya, I can see that you've been losing focus. You need to tell yourself to get out of this ditch. If you can't, you're weak. You can will it. You can get out of it."

6. **Teacher**

Maya turns to her teacher for advice about how she has been feeling and what she has been doing. She knows she has to do well in school but...

"Maya you were our best student. What happened? You're not the same Maya that I have known. I hope everything is okay. I know you would talk to me if you had problems. Get back on board and stay focused. If you just focus and work hard, everything will work out great! You'll see."

7. **Clergy (female)**

Because her pastor is a woman, Maya thinks she'll understand. So she confides in her.

"It's normal for teenagers to feel depressed. Depression is part of getting older. Talking about depression only makes it worse. Maya, it's in God's hands. Find love within God. If you pray harder, things will work out."

8. **Her Older Sister**

Maya has always been close to her older sister. She looks to her now for solace and comfort.

"Yeah, you have been real moody lately. You know I think it's just PMS. You haven't been eating right lately either. You've probably been cranky and tired because you don't eat enough."

## 9. Her Grandmother

She calls her grandmother who used to take care of her when she was little. Grandma will understand what she's going through, she thinks.

"Child, everyone has bad days. Teens don't suffer from *real* depression. What you are going through is normal. Just wait it out, Maya. Depression at your age? Your problems can't be anything serious. Wait 'til you get to the real world, then you'll know what real problems are. You were always the sentimental one out of your brother and sister. You know, mood is very seasonal. After the Spring passes, you'll be okay."

## 10. Police

The Police storm into Maya's friend's house. They were caught doing drugs.

"I'm tired of these Asian kids. Either they're straight A students or wasted drugees."

## 11. A New Friend

Maya's new friend notices Maya wearing long sleeves on a scorching summer's day. Her new friend pulls up Maya's sleeve and sees exactly what she suspected. *(Pause)*  
Cuts.

"You too? Look at mine. This is my first cut *(she points to her arm)*. I did this two years ago. I doubt you have problems as big as mine. I know your family. You guys are the Brady Bunch. What do you got to gripe about? You know, I feel like crap today. You wanna go out and have some fun?"

**Narrator asks Maya:** "Maya, how do you feel? What do you do?"

*(The person under the blankets replies non-verbally by attempting to move but cannot get up because of the weight of the blankets.)*

## **EMPOWERING**

(Cast of characters in reverse order from Blanketing)

(The Narrator pauses after reading each of the next statements. Then each character steps forward and removes a blanket, and faces into the circle.)

**Narrator asks audience:** “What if Maya heard this instead?”

### **11. A New Friend**

“Maya, I totally understand what you’re going through. I’ve been there. But I learned that cutting yourself is not the answer. There is a teen hotline that really helped me through it. Here’s the number. Let’s call together.”

### **10. Police**

“I’ve seen many kids like you in this situation. When I was young, I went to this after-school program. The guy who helped me out still works there. Why don’t you come by the police station next week and I can take you there.”

### **9. Her Grandmother**

“Child, you are my beautiful granddaughter. I’m sorry you’ve been feeling this way. But I’m glad you came to me. It takes a lot of strength to come to someone for help. Sit down and talk. I will listen.”

### **8. Her Older Sister**

“As your older sister, yeah, I noticed you haven’t been the same. I went through some hard times too. It may be something more. Maybe you’re right. A specialist may help.”

### **7. Clergy (female)**

“I am your pastor, come here whenever you need to talk. I’m here for you and only want what’s best for you. We also have a young girls group so you can talk to other girls who are going through a similar experience as yours. ”

### **6. Teacher**

“As your teacher, I can see you’re not just rebelling or defying school. I can see it’s something more. I know what you can accomplish. But I know you just may need that extra help. It’s good that you want to talk to someone. I’m willing to help you find the resources.”

### **5. Her Father**

“Sweetheart, I know you’re sixteen but you’re still my little girl. I hate to see my daughter in pain. If you want to see a therapist, I totally support you.”

4. **Community Leader (male)**

“As one of the community leaders here, I’ve noticed so many young kids feel this way. But most people don’t recognize that Asian youth struggle with depression. Maya, I hope I can give you the support you need right now. We’re working on building more teen support groups and programs. I would love for you to come next week.”

3. **Her Older Brother**

“You know you can always talk to me. I’m your older brother. Even though I haven’t been home often I want to be there for you. I’m just a phone call away. I can find out for you some youth programs who have counselors you can talk to.”

2. **Her Mother**

“You are my daughter. I love you very much. I’m so proud that you came to talk to me. We can go see a therapist together. How does that sound?”

1. **Best Friend**

“What can I do to help? I’m here for you. You’re not alone. “

*Maya gets up and stands encircled by her supporters.*

## **AUDIENCE DISCUSSION:**

Invite audience to discuss and comment on their reactions.

Be sure to ask the actors, especially Maya, how they felt.