UNDERSTOOD.ORG STUDY REVEALS THAT PARENTS' MISCONCEPTIONS AND STIGMAS HINDER SUPPORT FOR NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN

Launches “Be the Reason” Campaign Urging Parents to Trade Skepticism for Support

NEW YORK, May 19, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Understood.org — a resource for the 70 million people with learning and thinking differences like ADHD and dyslexia — today released a study about the misconceptions and stigmas that come with children's learning and thinking differences (LTDs), and how these factor into parents' support, or lack thereof. The Understood.org Neurodiversity and Stigma Study found that 90% of parents believe there are children with LTDs, yet more than half (55%) of those with neurodivergent children say they are afraid to tell others about their child's LTD because of the associated biases. Facing stigmas and biases alone can greatly affect children's mental health, as 69% of parents of kids with LTDs say that the stigma associated negatively impacts their child's mental health and well-being — but parents who get involved can be the reason a child thrives.

To combat the stigmas around LTDs and urge parents to support their children who face them, Understood.org today introduces its "Be the Reason" campaign. It launches with a "Be the Reason" film, featured on understood.org/BeTheReason and in ads across digital platforms. The film centers on a child's perspective of living with an LTD when her differences go ignored. Additionally, a #YouCanBeTheReason social media challenge, led by social media influencers The Holderness Family, also kicks off today on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. This challenge asks parents to share how they've been the reason their child thrives.

"Our extensive research highlights the realities of the stigmas that accompany learning and thinking differences,
and the work that we need to do to help parents recognize and support their child's neurodivergence," says Nathan Friedman, Understood.org's co-president and chief marketing officer. "'Be the Reason' shows the impact, through their child's eyes, in an effort to convince the 6 million skeptical parents to become supporters, and to engage with their kids so they have the opportunity to thrive."

The #YouCanBeTheReason social challenge features a song by Penn Holderness of The Holderness Family about his personal experiences of growing up with ADHD and how his family's help made a difference.

Holderness says, "As a kid growing up with ADHD, I know firsthand how impactful your family's understanding and support can be when it comes to navigating the stigmas and challenges associated with it. Understood.org's 'Be the Reason' social challenge is meaningful to me because it can increase awareness and share how important it is for families to help kids navigate the challenges that come with learning differences. It's also a pretty fun way for parents to show how #YouCanBeTheReason by supporting your kids in big and small ways."

The "Be the Reason" film, starring Miya Kofo and featuring a neurodiverse cast, will live on understood.org/BeTheReason, along with other campaign resources such as a parent activity kit from Understood, stories from children whose parents have "been the reason" for them, and other fun and informative activities for parents and kids. The activity kit includes actionable tips, activities, and conversation starters for parents to use to engage with their child around challenges they may be facing.

Other key findings from Understood.org's research:

- **Parents may think that they know more about LTDs than they actually do.**
  - 74% of parents of neurotypical children said they were somewhat or very in-the-know about LTDs, but only 38% personally knew someone with an LTD (Understood.org and MarketCast Impact Study).

- **Stigmas heavily influence their beliefs.** About one-third of parents believe that the school system contributes to a child's neurodivergence.
- **This hinders parental support.** Three-quarters of parents of kids with LTDs believe others will judge their kids unfairly if their LTD is acknowledged, which can impact kids' mental health.
  - 71% of parents of kids with LTDs say their kids have experienced more anxiety about attending class compared to year one of the pandemic.

- **Parent support is key.** For parents of kids with LTDs who are involved and engaged around their kids' challenges, 80% report their child's...
"Critical first steps for parents are to initiate a conversation with their child about the challenges they're facing, ask how they're feeling, and learn where they can help so the child knows they have support," says Dr. Andrew Kahn, Understood.org expert of psychology and learning. "Then parents can begin the next steps of communicating with teachers or health care providers about their child's needs and sharing their observations of any trends that can guide their individualized care. But that initial engagement and understanding are key."

Unless otherwise noted, the research cited above is from Understood.org's Neurodiversity and Stigma Study, which surveyed 1,500 parents of both neurotypical children and those with LTDs across the U.S. (April 2022). In addition to this latest study, Understood.org worked with MarketCast, a leader in youth and young adult research, in 2021 to conduct Understood.org and MarketCast's Impact Study (2021). This multiwave study surveyed ~1,000 U.S. parents of neurotypical kids, kids with LTDs whose parents did not know Understood.org, and kids with learning differences whose parents used Understood.org once or more in the last six months. Both studies are nationally representative. Full data can be found in the Understood Media Center.

For more information on the "Be the Reason" campaign and to access the parent activity kit, visit understood.org/BeTheReason. To engage in the social media challenge, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram users are encouraged to share their story with the hashtag #YouCanBeTheReason.

About Understood.org

1 in 5 Americans have learning and thinking differences, such as ADHD and dyslexia. They are often misunderstood, undiagnosed, and dismissed, and their differences are viewed as a weakness. This leaves many on a journey that is stacked against them and costs society billions of dollars. Understood.org is a resource for those who learn and think differently. Each year, we help more than 20 million people discover their potential, learn how to take control, find community, and stay on a positive path along each stage of life’s journey. When others join this journey, and people are broadly embraced, everyone thrives. Understood.org is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation based in New York. For more information, to donate, or to become a partner, visit u.org/media and follow us on Twitter @UnderstoodOrg.
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