

**GET
INVOLVED**

Someday Melissa Screening Toolkit



Use this guide to plan a screening of the film *Someday Melissa*. Includes tips for event planning, screening responsibly, outreach and budgeting.



Someday Melissa SCREENING TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Judy Avrin, Executive Producer of *Someday Melissa* and Melissa's mother, created the documentary in collaboration with Danna Markson, LCSW and director Jeffrey Cobelli, to spread the word about the importance of early awareness of eating disorders symptoms and the significance of early treatment. After the tragic loss of her daughter to an eating disorder, Judy's goal was to provide valuable information and resources, as well as share stories of hope and recovery with the community of families, teachers and health care providers who have been touched by, or are concerned with, the issue of bulimia and other eating disorders. NEDA is proud to provide this film (available for purchase in the online NEDA Store) and planning guide as an awareness and educational tool to reach those in your community who may be in a position to recognize the warning signs that someone is struggling and needs help.

"Eating disorders are considered shameful. Parents don't want to admit their child may have one and early symptoms are easily ignored. Inspired by Melissa's journal writings, I have created a film designed to raise awareness of this insidious disease and to address parental denial."

–Judy Avrin

This organizer's toolkit is a resource manual packed with instructions and tips to help streamline the event planning process. We are thrilled to have this opportunity to partner with you in creating a successful event. We appreciate that you will be sharing *Someday Melissa* with your community and look forward to spreading the message together!

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STEP 1: CREATE AN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Whether you are organizing a small event with 20 – 35 guests for a discussion of the issues raised in *Someday Melissa* or a larger event held in an auditorium with multiple guest speakers, one of the most effective strategies for building a successful event is to divide responsibilities among a small group of people working together as an organizing committee. Members of your organizing committee should assist you with the planning, logistics and audience building for your film screening event.

The film is a compelling and, at times, intense look into one girl's journey through an eating disorder. **With this in mind, we strongly encourage your organizing committee to include in the program at least one mental health professional with expertise in eating disorders.** A therapist, psychiatrist, nutritionist and/or medical professional can help create a presentation and offer a Question and Answer Panel discussion after the screening. It can also simply mean having mental health professionals on site after the film to answer questions and to address concerns. In addition to providing information about NEDA's programs to support families affected, it would also be helpful to have local mental health professionals on site to offer information about local resources.

Members can come from your own organization's leadership membership or a conglomeration of community groups all interested in eating disorder education. If this is a campus screening, consider approaching student leaders of local affiliates of national organizations on campus such as those concerned with health and safety, women's issues and religious organizations. Campus faculty and staff members may also be a great resource to you in thinking through what kind of program would be most effective on your campus and in helping to facilitate a wider dialog with the community outside of campus.

Committee members should divide up tasks for maximum efficiency, such as one member taking responsibility for recruiting and instructing speakers, another for reserving a room and AV equipment, etc. Other tasks may include providing refreshments, creating and posting flyers, sending invitations and announcements to email lists or social networking sites, taking photographs at the event to share with your organization's members and to provide feedback to the filmmakers, and handling press outreach/media relations.

Early in the event planning process, the organizing committee should select a date and time for the event. The most important consideration when choosing is determining when it will be most feasible to draw and build a crowd. The more time given to planning, the more successful the event.

Try to obtain a city calendar to gauge when your screening may be in conflict with another event already scheduled. If you are scheduling your event around a speaker, you may have to be more flexible in choosing dates and times, as you will be working around his or her schedule.

STEP 2: LOCATION

Choosing the right location for your event depends upon whom you'd like to attend and the particular environment you want to create. If you are promoting the event to the wider public, think about a place that best accommodates your anticipated audience demographic and size. If you want to encourage your local public officials or other community leaders to attend, or health professionals, select a location that would be appropriate for them.

Other factors to consider when selecting a space include ease of parking, access to public transportation, and the distance your guests must travel to get there. Also remember that the central component of the evening is the screening, so find a location with proper screening capabilities: DVD projector, screen, audio board for microphone and speakers, etc. or know that you will have to furnish these.

- Reserve a room in your local library, community center or home owners' association
- Incorporate the screening into the regularly scheduled meeting of a local club or organization
- Use space available at your church, mosque, synagogue or temple, if appropriate to the target audience
- Find out if your local independent movie theater would be willing to host a screening
- Ask a local restaurant or other business to allow you to use their space

STEP 3: BUDGETING FOR YOUR EVENT

Hosting a film screening event does not have to be an expensive undertaking. Many community buildings such as libraries or city halls offer meeting space and equipment for low or no cost. Depending on the nature of your program, standard budget items typically include costs for reproducing flyers, any food and beverages you might serve, advertising costs and audio-visual expenses. If your speakers are not local, you may also be asked to reimburse speakers for travel or parking costs.

Obtaining funding for your film screening event does not have to be burdensome. Here are a few suggestions for securing funding to cover expenses for your event:

- offer to co- sponsor with a local company that might provide services in exchange for sponsorship such as printing, catering, media sponsorship, venue or equipment rentals;
- appeal to a national organization, alumni chapter or local physician or treatment center to help subsidize the event;
- inquire about funding from your venue's sources. For example, most campuses have special cash reserves, such as a "Dean's discretionary fund" or student government reserves for students organizing "special projects" that benefit the overall campus community.

If you are asking for funding from another source, you may need to provide them with an overall budget for the event to show what money is needed and where it will be spent.

STEP 4: DEVELOP YOUR PROGRAM FOR THE SCREENING

Start thinking about the program for your event, including the following elements:

- The film screening itself will run 60 minutes in length. What is the optimal length of your program?
- How many panelists would you like to have speaking at your event?
- Are you planning to have a moderated discussion with your guest panelists or provide only a Q&A? For a moderated discussion, draft your questions and discussion topics for the panelists in advance.
- How long will you allow for an audience question and answer period?
- Will you serve refreshments at the beginning or the conclusion of your program?

Here is a sample program:

SAMPLE PROGRAM

1. Screening and discussion approximately 2 hours
2. 20 minutes before start of event -Guests arrive, sign in, enjoy refreshments
3. 5-10 minutes Event host welcomes guests, makes introductions, explains the plan for the evening
4. 60 minutes Film Presentation of *Someday Melissa*
5. 10-20 minutes Comments from the host
6. 20-25 minutes Panel discussion or Q&A
7. 5 minutes Closing Comments, Acknowledgements
8. Networking and Refreshments, photo taking, feedback gathering.

TIPS TO MINIMIZE EATING DISORDER TRIGGERS WHEN SCREENING THE FILM

A trigger is an event either in someone's mind, like a thought, or externally, like a situation, that prompts the person to think or behave in a particular way. People with eating disorders, whether in recovery or not, may be triggered by internal or external stimuli to use eating disorder symptoms. The more practice the person has challenging the stimuli and using positive coping skills, the greater the chance that the person will fight urges and use their skills instead.

Some attendees in the audience at your screening may be susceptible to triggers. Preventing triggers is an impossible task, but we hope you will make efforts to minimize them.

We therefore suggest the following guidelines for your presentation and accompanying materials:

- **BE SURE TO AVOID "TALKING NUMBERS."**

Speaking about weight or measurements can be very triggering because each person has their own ideal body weight and it is not appropriate to compare one person to another. Speak generically about weight by saying something like "she was underweight" or "he was above his ideal body weight" or "her weight was within healthy limits." Do not mention specific weights or measurements.

Remember not to talk about calorie intake. Many people with eating disorders measure their success and self-worth by how many calories they take in. If someone with an eating disorder hears a particular calorie number, they might then measure themselves against this number. This can be very triggering.

- **EMPHASIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROPER TREATMENT.**

The majority of those who overcome eating disorders do so with the ongoing help of a team of trained professionals potentially including medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychotherapists and nutritionists.

Explain that the incidence of recovery is significantly greater if an eating disorder is detected within the first year of onset.

Be prepared to share local resources with the attendees at your screening. Check to make sure that these therapists and resources are eating disorder specialists with significant experience and expertise in this area. Not every therapist understands or is qualified to work with eating disorders.

Direct your attendees to the large variety of online resources available. Visit www.NationalEatingDisorders.org for more information.



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- **WHILE THE FILM IS ABOUT EATING DISORDERS AND LOSS, IT IS ALSO ABOUT HOPE.**

Although Melissa lost her life to an eating disorder, most eating disorder sufferers survive. With treatment and support, people go on to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Messages of hope are best shared by personal stories of recovery. If possible, find someone who is willing to tell their story and, in particular, share the journey of their recovery. Prior to the screening, go over NEDA's Guide for Sharing Your Story Responsibly with panelists who are speaking about their personal experience.

Keep in mind that while the film is often painful and difficult to watch, it is also very compelling and one of the main goals of showing it is to inspire thought and action.



STEP 5: GETTING THE WORD OUT

The first step in getting the word out about your screening is to send the details of your screening to be featured on the National Eating Disorders Association website, www.NationalEatingDisorders.org, and the NEDAwareness Week microsite, www.NEDAwareness.org. Complete the *Someday Melissa* event submission form provided on the *Someday Melissa* page of the NEDA website, and we'll take care of the rest!

ELECTRONIC OUTREACH

Email, social networking and blogs are some effective ways to reach people in your community. This type of approach works best when combined with the other forms of publicity you'll be using. In all electronic outreach, be sure to include a link to www.NationalEatingDisorders.org so people can view the trailer or, better yet, embed the trailer from our website into your own site and emails.

From the YouTube video movie trailer on www.NationalEatingDisorders.org/somedaymelissa, hit the share button in the top right corner of the video. You can then choose to link to this video by either copying the URL or by clicking "Embed" and copying the HTML code to paste onto your site or in an email newsletter.

LOCAL OUTREACH

Before you make plans about which media to approach for promoting your event, spend some time thinking about who is most likely to understand and appreciate your event, and consider what they listen to, read and watch on TV. Knowing your core audience helps you decide where to focus your efforts. It might mean promoting through religious organizations, parent groups, health clinics and alternative weekly papers that concentrate on community initiatives versus the daily newspaper focused on headline and celebrity news. AM radio stations are often more focused on community news than the FM rock music stations and many local TV stations have morning or noon shows focused on community news. Contact the producers or hosts of these shows to make a guest appearance. Be sure to invite local reporters to the event itself as well as for follow up stories.

ADVERTISING AND COMMUNITY CALENDARS

If your organization is short on cash, advertising may consist of posting flyers in local businesses your target audience frequents or leaving postcards in doctors' offices, at community centers and in schools. Also be sure to add this event to free community calendars such as Eventful, Patch, and Zvents but plan at least 3 weeks ahead of time to make sure it will be live.

A sample press release will be provided upon request.

SCREENING CHECKLIST

Once you have defined your target audience and objectives, begin planning the event:

1. PRELIMINARY PLANNING – AT LEAST 6 WEEKS PRIOR

- Book the venue and date for your screening. Check with them about equipment they have or you will have to furnish. You'll either need a DVD player and a large TV or a DVD player, projector, screen and sound system.
- Contact NEDA with details of your screening through the *Someday Melissa* page of the NEDA website.
- Recruit organizational members or partners to broaden your reach and identify roles for each. Examples include publicity, panelist coordination and reception planning. Create a list of any partner organizations who can provide information at your event and that may be interested in getting involved with this issue.
- Make arrangements with any speakers you will have, especially if they must travel to the event.

2. LOGISTICAL PLANNING – 3-4 WEEKS PRIOR

- Secure catering or decide on refreshments.
- Draft agenda with partners.
- Create an email blast to publicize your event electronically to your list. We suggest sending another announcement 2 week prior.
- Contact community calendars about your event.

3. MEDIA OUTREACH – 10 DAYS PRIOR

- Send out press releases to media outlets.
- Make calls to local television and radio programs.
- Create and distribute flyers, postcards, posters, etc. to publicize your screening. Refresh these as needed.

4. FINAL PLANNING – SEVERAL DAYS PRIOR

- Confirm that you have the right equipment to screen the DVD.

- Follow up with press who expressed an interest in covering the story.
- Finalize agenda.
- Make copies of handouts, including literature from eating disorder organizations such as National Eating Disorders Association brochures, fact sheets, etc.
- Send final round of email blasts with any additional information that might give incentive to those who are undecided.

IMPORTANT: test screen your DVD of the film in advance of the event to make sure there aren't any glitches. If there are problems, notify us as soon as possible. Be sure that the screen will be high enough so that everyone can see.

5. AT THE EVENT

- As people arrive, ask them to sign up to receive updates and additional information from your organization. Provide a clipboard for this purpose and remember to collect it after the evening is finished.
- Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned speaking time.
- Encourage participants to spread the word about eating disorders awareness and let them know that more information and resources can be found on the National Eating Disorders Association website: www.myneda.org.



SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY SCREENINGS

Many of our most successful screenings have been on campuses across the country. Following are tips and strategies for hosting a successful screening at your college or university, targeting audiences in the mental health and medical fields.

If you are a student group organizing the screening, it is strongly recommended that you reach out to your campus student health services/counseling or psychological services to have a mental health professional participate in the discussion or panel following the film and provide information about eating disorder resources on campus. You may also want them to be on the organizing committee.

Faculty and staff members from health services may also be a great resource to you in thinking through what kind of program would be most effective on your campus. The most successful campus events involve including multiple departments or organizations as co-sponsors in order to promote the screening for maximum impact.

Departments and groups to consider:

- Social Work
- Psychology
- Public health
- Nursing
- Women and Gender Studies
- Health & Exercise Science
- Nutrition
- Peer Counselors

Consider approaching student leaders of local affiliates of national organizations on campus. A few examples of these groups are:

- Project H.E.A.L.
- Mental health awareness groups such as Active Minds or NAMI
- To Write Love on Her Arms (TWOLHA)

Consult with your school's event calendar to make sure that the screening date/time doesn't conflict with other events that are likely to attract a large audience. You may want to choose several potential dates and times as back-up. Consider the time of day when you have the best opportunity to attract attendees; a screening at 9am or 9pm may not bring out many people. If you are scheduling your event around a speaker or speakers, you may have to be more flexible in choosing dates and times, as you will be working around his or her schedule.

Procedures for booking a location on campus for your screening often varies by school. If your group is a recognized student life/student organization, your school's Student Life or Campus Programming offices may be able to assist you with selecting and booking a location.



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Departmental email lists can be a great way to promote the event. Departments and programs to research are:

- health services/counseling center
- resident life
- nutrition
- physiology
- social work
- psychology, women's and gender studies
- cinema/film studies
- continuing and professional education
- public health
- life sciences
- cognitive science
- education
- exercise science
- communications
- media studies
- sociology

It is advised that one of your committee members create a PDF flyer to email with the events details in the body of the email to the respective directors or chairs of these departments. It would also be a good idea to send this flyer to all of your campus media outlets, newspapers, radio stations, website, etc., and also to send it to any local news media outlets, news stations, or community newspapers in your area.