

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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NOVEMBER 13TH - 15TH, 2022  
HEALDSBURG, CA

2022

# ACTIVATE

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF  
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING

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BY MINDFUL PHILANTHROPY

**mindful**  
PHILANTHROPY



## INTRODUCTION

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From November 13th - 15th, 2022, Mindful Philanthropy hosted the inaugural *Activate* summit in Healdsburg, California, where over 55 funders, business leaders, and subject matter experts gathered to set a new vision for how philanthropy can lead change for mental health and well-being in our nation. The three-day summit aimed to unpack the complex challenges in the mental health landscape, provide strategic and innovative philanthropic solutions to address those challenges, and to inspire attendees to be catalysts for change. The program featured a range of speakers who showcased the latest national data, highlighted examples of effective programs, profiled bright spots

from philanthropy, and shared personal stories of their funding journeys. Topics covered varied, from innovation and novel therapies to the youth mental health crisis to community-initiated care and learnings from around the world. Guided reflection times also helped participants connect with their personal motivations for funding and explore collaborations to achieve greater impact in the field. Attendees report increasing their knowledge of mental health issues, expanding their professional networks, and leaving inspired to fund in this space. As one funder put it, "*Activate* was one of the most impressive, well-conceived and executed philanthropy convenings I've been to in years."



# DAY 1

November 13th



EXPLORING THE MENTAL  
HEALTH CHALLENGES OUR  
NATION FACES

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## OPENING REMARKS

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**Alyson Neimann**, Executive Director of Mindful Philanthropy, remarked that though the challenges to the nation's well-being are vast, *Activate* was an opportunity to convene and work collaboratively towards a shared vision for the country's mental health. Alyson invited attendees to be disruptors, innovators, and catalysts for change in this growing movement to fund collaborative solutions to address this nation's growing mental health crisis.

### INTERSECTING ISSUES IN MENTAL HEALTH

Distinguished public health leader **Dr. Nadine Burke Harris** kicked off plenary sessions by highlighting how mental health intersects with many of the issues that funders care about. Sharing her learnings as California's First Surgeon General and pediatrician, Dr. Burke Harris reflected on the need for funders to invest in solutions that counteract the factors that science links to poor health outcomes. In particular, she emphasized the need to support families' mental health in our nation's recovery from COVID-19, embed mental health in every system (urban planning, education, etc.), and increase investment in prevention. She also highlighted philanthropy's ability to "empower champions" in their research and advocacy work, fund capacity building, and help demonstrate effective solutions for government to scale. Dr. Burke Harris urged funders to leverage the unique role of philanthropy to take action for our nation's mental health: "Now is the time to make game-changing investments."

### REDEFINING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Educator and social innovator **Ross Szabo** led an interactive workshop to expand our view of mental health and how we tell our stories. Ross spoke about his personal journey of being diagnosed with bipolar disorder at age sixteen, and how the lack of mental health awareness and resources impacted his ability to move forward. His experience helped shape his definition of mental health as "not having a problem, but how you address the challenges." He emphasized the critical need to teach mental health literacy in schools to redefine and normalize mental health, give youth a vocabulary to talk about it, help them develop coping mechanisms and understand how to help others. When Ross asked attendees to reflect on why they connect to this work, themes that were mentioned included lived experience, personal connections to mental health, and building a better world for the next generation.

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## HOW WE GOT HERE AND HOW PHILANTHROPY MOVES US FORWARD

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In this discussion moderated by Mindful Philanthropy's [Kristen Ward](#), panelists made the case for why philanthropy should take action now in mental health. Panelists agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased stigma and increased awareness of the mental health crisis, which has created an opportune time for philanthropy to catalyze meaningful change in the sector. [Paul Heller](#) explained that while philanthropic investments tend to be localized and personal, in order to have a greater impact, funders should explore funding opportunities at a broader level. He emphasized that funders "can remain committed to core issues and think bigger and beyond." [Stephanie Bell-Rose](#) discussed the importance of and how rewarding it is to cultivate partnerships and work collaboratively toward impact in the mental health space. [Rick Kellar](#) acknowledged that there is risk in collaboration, but funders should "collaborate for knowledge – and invest for impact – with a willingness for risk in both," with the understanding that even failure can generate useful learnings. [Kathy Pike](#) highlighted the role of philanthropy in supporting innovation and advocacy, and also spoke of the importance of funding at threshold in the sector.

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### FUNDER STORY: SHARI AND GAREN STAGLIN

[Shari](#) and [Garen Staglin](#) discussed their journey as parents navigating the experience of serious mental illness, from initial signs and symptoms to finding quality care for their son. This lived experience led them to focus their funding on promoting continuous exploration of brain health and building

the foundational knowledge that guides our mental health system. The Staglins shared that the biggest learning from their funding journey is that, in order to achieve greater impact, collaboration and prioritizing scale are key. They also spoke about the importance of funders shifting their perspectives to think more broadly and creatively about how to make a scaled impact. Garen urged the audience to "collaborate, take risks, and scale!"

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**“IT IS NO LONGER TRUE THAT ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING. IF WE DON’T FUND AT THRESHOLD, WE WILL BE DEMONSTRATING TO THE NAYSAYERS THAT WE CAN’T DO ANYTHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH. WE WILL INADVERTENTLY BE REINFORCING THIS MYTH - NOT BECAUSE IT IS TRUE, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE NOT DEMANDING THAT THINGS GET FUNDED APPROPRIATELY.” - KATHY PIKE, PHD**

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**PROMPTING INNOVATIVE THINKING:  
WHAT CAN MENTAL HEALTH LEARN FROM OTHER SECTORS?**

Using case studies of innovation in other sectors, former Chief Innovation Officer of USAID **Maura O’Neill** explored how funders can be innovators and disruptors. For example, over 2 billion people have mobile phones but no bank account or access to financial services. Instead of innovation driven from the financial services industry, a \$3 million challenge grant from outside the financial sector helped Vodafone (M-PESA) to improve access to online banking in Kenya. Today, 25% of Kenya’s GDP flows through M-PESA, and the platform is Africa’s

most successful mobile money service, serving over 51 million customers across seven countries in Africa. To avoid narrow-minded thinking, Maura gave funders three pieces of advice: 1) Be outrageously curious learners, 2) Question the status quo, and 3) Be obsessive about diversity and dissent. She concluded by asking attendees to reflect on this question: “What life-saving mental health and well-being innovations are locked in people’s heads and labs that you could catalyze?”

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# DAY 2

November 14th



PHILANTHROPIC SOLUTIONS  
FOR WELL-BEING





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## THE STATE OF WELL-BEING IN AMERICA

Gallup's [Justin Lall](#) gave an overview of the latest data on our country's well-being, including insights into past and present trends. For example, only 55% of Americans indicated they were thriving in overall well-being leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a significant nine point collapse as of April 2020. Justin proposed a shift from using traditional metrics like GDP to assess overall well-being to a model that incorporates more subjective well-being measurements. He presented a new set of well-being criteria that includes five interrelated elements for life evaluation, including: career, social, financial, community, and physical health. He shared compelling data that employees, for example, who are thriving in these five elements have less absenteeism, are more likely to be engaged employees, and incur substantially lower health-related costs for their employers. To improve well-being in the U.S., Justin provided three takeaways: 1) Include subjective well-being measurements in strategies and programs; 2) Think globally, act locally; and 3) Invest in data-driven strategies to improve overall well-being.

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## PHILANTHROPIC SOLUTIONS TO THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

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This session began with a brief video featuring youth advocates from around the country who shared their perspectives on what mental health challenges face youth today and what they need to be well, including a healthy sense of identity, spaces to talk about difficult topics, and adults who are willing to listen. To view the full video, please visit [this link](#).

**Pam Haering** then moderated a panel discussion on the role of philanthropy in supporting the well-being of our youngest generations. Youth advocate **William McClain** opened by reflecting on how our culture has not supported progress in youth mental health and emphasized the need to include youth voices in the creation of a system that works for them. **Dr. Nadine Burke Harris** spoke about philanthropy's unique ability to seed effective interventions, support capacity building, and work collaboratively with the government to scale solutions. **Isabelle Hau** also

highlighted the importance of funding advocacy efforts and supporting research or development of new approaches for youth mental health. Both Isabelle and Dr. Burke Harris also pointed to the need to act at the intersection of mental health and learning to increase academic outcomes and workforce readiness, as well as the need to support parents and families through two-generation approaches. **Alex Briscoe** highlighted Medi-Cal's family therapy benefit as a bright spot and scalable solution for increasing access to mental health services. He also encouraged funders to "learn how the money flows" in the healthcare system if they want to make a change. Finally, in supporting solutions for low-income families, Alex emphasized the need to "reimagine the people we are trying to serve, not as the problem, but as the solution."



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## FUNDER STORY: DR. LISA MENNET

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**Lisa Mennet** outlined key considerations in approaching infant and early childhood mental health, as well as how she's applied her learnings as both a funder and a clinician to lead the Perigee Fund. She explained the science behind the need for infants to develop healthy connections with their caregivers for normal social and emotional development. When parents experience adversity - such as poverty, trauma, and racism - their children experience lasting effects, from in utero all the way into adulthood. Yet, maternal mental health and the social emotional development of infants in a relational context are drastically underfunded. Lisa founded the Perigee Fund to get in at the ground level and help build these fields. She emphasized the critical role philanthropy has in supporting advocacy efforts in lifting up these underfunded issue areas. She also urged funders to make investments through an equity lens, since the disproportionate burden of these issues falls on communities of color. And lastly, as "healing looks different in different communities," she advised funders to "be humble and be creative."

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## COMMUNITY-INITIATED CARE & LEARNINGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Dr. Vikram Patel** introduced the importance of activating all people in supporting the mental health of communities. He presented findings that psychosocial interventions are the most effective treatment for many mental health conditions, tend to have better long-term outcomes, and can enhance the effectiveness of pharmacotherapy. Yet we are not scaling these interventions that work. Dr. Patel introduced the opportunity to reimagine mental health care as

a community-delivered care model, which is evidence-based, person-centered, leverages community resources, addresses stigma, and benefits the provider. This requires building the frontline workforce of community health workers and peer support specialists, as well as deploying technology. Philanthropy can help by funding and scaling evidence-based research interventions to improve access to mental health services at the community level.

**"THE SINGLE MOST CONSISTENT AND EXCITING BODY OF SCIENCE TO COME FROM THE FIELD OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE LAST DECADE HAS BEEN THE CLEAR DEMONSTRATION THAT YOU CAN DELIVER PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN ANY COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORLD. AT THE HEART OF THIS DEMONSTRATION IS LEVERAGING RESOURCES THAT EVERY COMMUNITY HAS - PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER." - VIKRAM PATEL, MBBS, PHD**

### FOSTERING CONNECTION THROUGH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

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Moderated by **Dr. Patel**, this panel explored how philanthropy can support mental health solutions that are developed by and for the communities they serve. **Michael McAfee** summarized how the institutions and systems that exist today are not designed to deliver the outcomes they were intended to achieve, especially for marginalized communities. “This should be our magnificent obsession,” he said, “to figure out how to design a nation that will produce the outcomes we want.” **Miriam Volat** emphasized that support of community-based governance leads to improved outcomes, and philanthropy needs to incorporate and respect the knowledge of the communities being served in the investment strategies. **Dr. Ruth**

**Shim** added that at the federal, local, and philanthropic levels, the only way to effectively engage is to have the decision-makers reflect the people you are attempting to serve. **Joe Pyle** highlighted the importance of being a broker to connect community to government or to large scale philanthropy, and poignantly stated: “We are the dollars that can be disruptive and curious. Philanthropists have to be fearless.” Michael also emphasized the “power of a whisper,” or the opportunity for philanthropy to engage in advocacy efforts by encouraging institutional leadership to take a stance on these issues. Using the attitude of “nothing about us without us,” funders should effectively resource communities to be part of the solution.

### HUMAN-CENTERED TECHNOLOGY

Pivotal Ventures’ **Kelsey Noonan** discussed what we know - as well as what we don’t - about the relationship between technology and youth mental health, and opportunities to leverage technology to help our young people. Research shows that youth use tech products differently across age and demographic groups. It is important to build safety nets in these environments, but the traditional measure of screen-time is a poor indicator of technology use, as it doesn’t measure the intent, quality of experience, or the social nature of digital interactions. Adolescence is marked by factors such as increased sensitivity to social feedback and heightened attention to appearances, which makes teens especially vulnerable to certain aspects of technology, such as negative social interactions with peers or the “attention economy” by which platforms benefit when users spend more time on them. Today’s challenge is how to build in safety nets and still keep the good qualities that social media can bring. One solution is Human Experience (HX), a youth-led movement calling for greater agency, trust, and empowerment in digital environments. HX is an approach to developing evidence-based solutions that are scalable for a more equitable digital world.

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## MENTAL HEALTH & THE METAVERSE

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HopeLab's [Margaret Laws](#) and [Jaspal Sandhu](#) led a workshop on how the metaverse can be both a challenge to and promoter of mental health. The metaverse is the evolution of the internet towards experiences that are immersive, highly interactive, and interoperable. Tens of millions of Gen Z'ers have already engaged in the metaverse, and research shows that the scale in this space is far greater than gaming. Speakers shared a video clip of youth voices that captured conflicting emotions and opinions about emerging technology advancements. To explore these further, HopeLab has partnered with Artefact to identify focus areas for supporting positive experiences for young people on the web and in the emerging tech spaces. Two opportunity areas in particular are: 1) Peer-based support around shifting digital culture to empower youth towards positive online stewardship; and 2) Safe and inclusive spaces to support young people's ability to create, play, and explore 'self' freely, without threat to their physical safety and psychological well-being on and offline. Margaret and Jaspal emphasized that companies have a responsibility to acknowledge, support, and integrate considerations of mental health and well-being across their platforms. Philanthropic investment opportunities include exploring research gaps, lifting up youth leadership in creating the metaverse, and advocating for policies and regulations for a better future.

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### AT THE CUTTING EDGE: INNOVATIONS IN THE FIELD

[Lauryn Nwankpa](#) moderated this panel discussion exploring new and innovative approaches to well-being. [Sean Brecker](#) described how technological innovations can help address the lack of behavioral health providers by helping to expand access to services in removing barriers. [Carter Barnhart](#) and [Danish Munir](#) added that in conjunction with technological advancements, advocacy is needed in areas such as redefining what is reimbursable, reimagining who can provide care, and expanding Medicaid coverage of mental health services. Other

opportunities include research grants for frontier technologies, innovation in how effective delivery mechanisms are implemented and scaled (e.g. telehealth), and systems innovation in which providers can get paid for reducing cost and improving patient outcomes. [Obi Felten](#) recommended philanthropists fund independent research, as there are strategies and solutions that have yet to be deployed that could have a demonstrable impact in the mental health space. She also challenged funders to consider sustainability - "if it isn't scalable, maybe it isn't worth funding." And finally, she urged funders to be more willing to fail and learn lessons from those failures.

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### FUNDER STORY: JAN ELLISON BASZUCKI

Reflecting on her journey as both a parent and funder, [Jan Ellison Baszucki](#) described the experiences that inspired her commitment to mental health. Her son struggled with mental health challenges and was ultimately diagnosed with Bipolar 1 with psychosis, but the diagnosis was just the beginning of their “five year journey through America’s mental health madness.” Jan spoke of the many challenges they faced in getting their son access to quality care, even with the abundance of resources at their discretion. After years of struggling, her family was introduced to a ketogenic diet as a metabolic intervention. She shared that this is the single most effective treatment for pediatric epilepsy compared to any other treatment, including medications and surgical interventions, but it is not commonly used to treat any other brain disorders. Jan’s son began this treatment and stopped having symptoms after four months, and is symptom free after two years. Jan’s personal connection led her to focus her initial philanthropic investments on seed funding for bipolar research, but once her son got well, she pursued building the metabolic psychiatry field from scratch. She highlighted her family’s collaboration with two other families in activating \$150 million to fund this issue area. They have started BD2, which is a bipolar funding initiative that focuses on providing long-term collaborative grants for mechanistic research, and funding for a longitudinal study to evaluate the effectiveness of this novel intervention.

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## PSYCHEDELICS AND OTHER NOVEL THERAPIES FOR HEALING

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This discussion moderated by **Tyler Norris** helped attendees learn about the long history of psychedelic use across cultures, presented new ways that communities are engaging with this topic, and highlighted areas for philanthropy to advance the conversation. **Stephanie Taylor** spoke about how indigenous people have used natural psychedelics in ceremonies and as healing agents for centuries. Research evidence also shows the benefits of using psychedelics to treat PTSD, anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and substance use, particularly among the veteran population, but this practice is currently illegal in most states. **Hanifa Nayo Washington** described the work of the Fireside Project, a psychedelic peer support line providing emotional

support during and after psychedelic experiences. Their peer-to-peer support hotline has helped over 6,500 people, which has reduced the burden on emergency services and is providing a standard for what care integration should look like. **Ben Nemser** added that philanthropic investment in the therapeutic potential of psychedelics has been limited. He explained that in order to get mainstream appeal, there is a need for funding towards clinical trials to test the effectiveness of psychedelics as a treatment of mental health disorders. Learning from indigenous cultures' use of psychedelics and previous research done on these substances, as well as funding more research going forward, is the key to understanding the full potential of psychedelics.





# DAY 3

November 15th



ACTIVATING INVESTMENTS  
IN THE FIELD





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## THE STATE OF WELL-BEING IN AMERICA'S WORKFORCE AND LEVERAGING OTHER TOOLS BEYOND PHILANTHROPY

**Justin Lall** returned to highlight key data trends in workplace mental health and well-being. For example, one's career is the most impactful category for one's overall life evaluation, but only 30% of Americans who are currently employed feel that their job has a positive impact on their well-being. Employees reporting lower well-being in relation to employment are associated with a 5x increase in missed work days. Additionally, 36% of working women aged 18-39 rate their mental health as poor, 47% of those aged 18-29 report feeling extremely or somewhat negative about the impact their job has on their mental health, and only about 43% say their employer provides easily accessible mental health support services.

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## THE STATE OF WELL-BEING IN AMERICA'S WORKFORCE AND LEVERAGING OTHER TOOLS BEYOND PHILANTHROPY, CONTINUED

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**Kathy Pike** continued the conversation by exploring tools to support employees nationwide. She presented a strategic solution for organizations to support workplace mental health through a three Ps Framework: Protect, Promote, and Provide. The Mental Health at Work Index assesses 10 categories (e.g. Mental Health Strategy, Leadership, Workforce Engagement, and more) for each of the three P's. Kathy emphasized that mission-driven nonprofit workers

are at high risk for burnout, and that many healthcare providers are leaving the field. She urged funders to assess the mental health maturity of their own organization, consider the mental health maturity of organizations they support, fund organizational efforts that support worker mental health, and partner with an organization to support nonprofit efforts to address mental health at work.

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## STORIES OF ACTIVATION AND COLLABORATION

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**Ari Simon** discussed Pinterest's approach to emotional well-being and the role of collaboration and partnership in their social impact work. Pinterest has made emotional well-being a core element for their social impact goals - not only in their philanthropic giving, but also in regards to the content on their platform, how they leverage their social media reach, and how they aim to better serve their communities. Ari emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnership in achieving broader impact in the mental health space, and advised other funders and corporate leaders that "the best thing we can do is to lift up other voices of the people we are trying to support."

**Beth Brown** and **Mike Halligan** discussed their work with the Montana Mental Health Funders Collective and highlighted how philanthropic collaboration can achieve impact far beyond that of individual action. The lack of meaningful collaboration in philanthropy often results in forgoing opportunities to have an outsized

impact. Now is an opportune time for collaboration, given the relevance of mental health across sectors. One starting point for funders to collaborate on is in policy, by working together to complement or supplement federal dollars going towards support of mental health.

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## INVESTMENTS FOR IMPACT: OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT NOW

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Mindful Philanthropy’s co-founder and Director of Programs and Knowledge, [Kristen Ward](#), summarized the next steps in funders’ philanthropic journey for the greatest impact. Kristen presented key elements for funders to consider, including: 1) Collaboration towards a shared vision, 2) Knowing your role within a comprehensive strategy, 3) Listening to community voice, and 4) Being reflective. For example, “When we work together, we go farther,” she said. “And though there is a lot to do, you don’t have to do it all. Just know where your work fits within the broader ecosystem.” She also provided several urgent and opportune areas of investment, such as: investing in youth and their support systems, lifting up community driven solutions, expanding and alleviating the workforce, and reimagining systems of care. She discussed specific investment approaches to take in these areas such as direct services, policy and advocacy, system capacity building, and research and innovation.

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### CLOSING CONVERSATION: IGNITING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER

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In this closing conversation, **Tyler Norris** and **Dr. Vikram Patel** revisited philanthropy's role in funding mental health and well-being, and emphasized Mindful Philanthropy's vision to activate new impactful funding for the nation's well-being. Dr. Patel reiterated the importance of acting early, democratizing the provider class, mainstreaming mental health in all sectors, and holding this sector accountable to ensure dollars are being used intentionally. Tyler emphasized the importance of integrated care and the intersectionality of mental health and outcomes in other issue areas: "If

we don't have an ecosystem approach, you'll get things right, but we won't have a population outcome." Dr. Patel and Tyler agreed that advocacy is another great way for funders to get involved in the mental health space, particularly in facilitating connections between academics and philanthropic investments. Dr. Patel concluded with a call to action for philanthropy to act as a catalyst for greater well-being by funding and scaling evidence-based research interventions in communities to achieve the impact we seek in addressing the mental health challenges facing our nation.

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### CLOSING REMARKS

**Alyson Niemann** concluded our time together by inviting *Activate* attendees to join a movement to invest in solutions that will provide all people with the resources they need to be well. Alyson encouraged everyone to think differently about the complexity of the mental health space, and to consider innovative solutions to the challenges we face. She also challenged funders to be catalysts for change, and to envision new opportunities to collaborate with each other. The time is now for philanthropy to lead the way toward a healthier, brighter future.

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For a full list of Activate 2022 speakers and bios, please visit <https://www.mindfulphilanthropy.org/activate-speakers>.



**FURTHER TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO GUIDE YOUR FUNDING JOURNEY**

[Health in Mind](#) by The Center for High Impact Philanthropy  
[A Unified Vision for Transforming Mental Health and Substance Use Care](#)  
by the CEO Alliance for Mental Health  
[Mindful Philanthropy's Funder Guidance](#) on issue areas such as  
homelessness, youth well-being, and mental health crisis care

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**“A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY IN THE RIGHT PLACE CAN BE AN  
INCREDIBLE CATALYST FOR IMPACT” - VIKRAM PATEL, MBBS, PHD**

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