

11 tips for anyone wanting to develop a website about mental health for young people



Look inside



11 tips for creating a website about mental health for youths

Published by:

Center for Digital Psychiatry

Heden 11

5000 Odense

September 2022, version 1.0

Created by:

- Jakob Mejlholm
- Linn Søndergaard Lindegaard
- Magnus Ankersen
- Mark Buskbjerg

Content

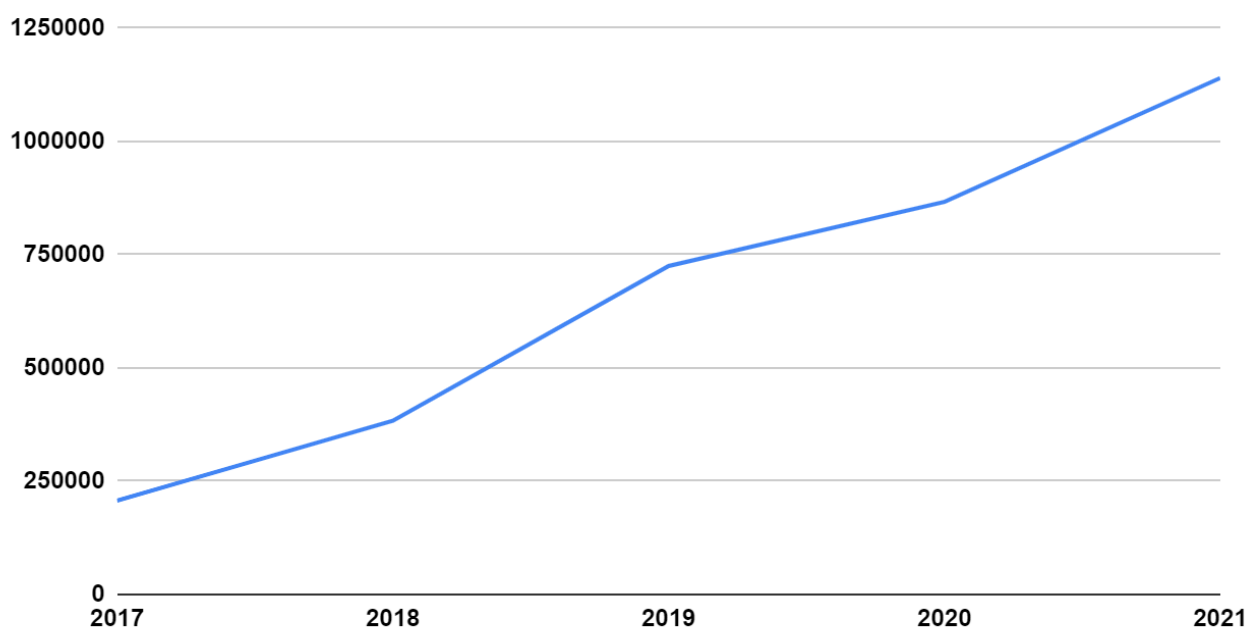
Mindhelper.dk in numbers.....	4
About Mindhelper.dk	6
11 tips for you.....	7
1. Establish a multidisciplinary development team and make room for external specialists.....	8
2. Prioritize search engine optimization	9
3. Use text as primary content and video and audio as secondary content	11
4. Prioritize user involvement in your development but don't expect youths to give you all the answers	12
5. Implement a "letterbox" on your website.....	13
6. Prioritize digital dissemination.....	14
7. Be present on social media but don't expect high interaction	15
8. Launch a beta version of your website when you have approximately 40 articles ready.....	16
9. Create a website with a broad focus on youths' mental health	17
10. Guide youths to other services that provide help with mental health.....	19
11. Remember: Developing a website with high-quality content costs money and is very time-consuming	20
Do you have any questions?	21

Mindhelper.dk in numbers

[Mindhelper.dk](https://mindhelper.dk) is Denmark's most extensive website about mental health for youths. On Mindhelper.dk, the visitors will find knowledge and advice on everything from heartbreak and loneliness to anxiety and depression.

We launched Mindhelper.dk in 2016. In 2021 we had more than 1.1 million unique visitors. The population of Denmark is approximately 5.8 million.

Unique visitors on Mindhelper.dk

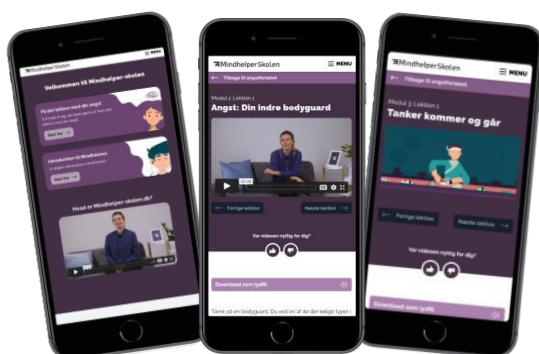


More than 12.000 visitors have given us feedback on the content on Mindhelper.dk. 9 out of 10 have responded that the content is helpful for them.

The primary audience on Mindhelper.dk is youths between 13-20 years, but we also regularly hear from youths above 20 and adults that the website's content is relevant for them.

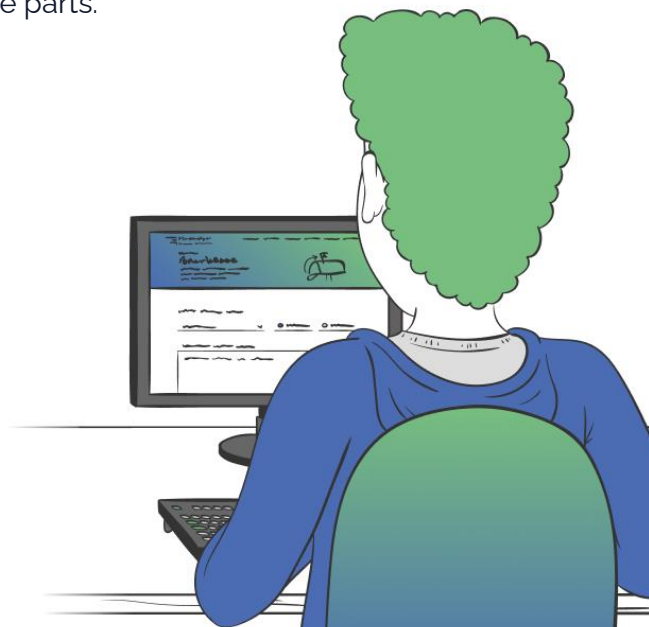
From the beginning of Mindhelper.dk youths have helped develop the website. More than 400 have participated in workshops, user tests and a yearly youth panel. We do this to ensure that youths find our content relevant and easy to understand besides being of high professional quality.

In 2021 we launched [Mindhelper-skolen.dk](https://mindhelper-skolen.dk) (Mindhelper school), where we have two free online courses about anxiety and mindfulness. An evaluation of the anxiety course shows that 95 % of the participants find the content useful. The evaluation also indicates that the participants experience a decrease in symptoms of anxiety and depression of 13.1 % and 9 %, respectively, during the course period.



In 2021 we also launched teaching material about gratitude for youths between 13-16 years old. In the Danish school system, this matches 7th-10th grade. The teaching material is based on research that shows that focusing on gratitude is one of the best ways to improve our mental health. The teaching material is available on the website "[Taknemli.dk](https://taknemli.dk)". (The Danish word for 'gratitude' is 'taknemlighed'.)

In 2022 we will initiate a research-based evaluation of Mindhelper.dk in cooperation with the National Institute of Public Health (Statens Institut for Folkesundhed). The study is conducted as a randomized controlled trial (RCT) and will include 10.000 youths between the ages of 15 and 25. The study both contains qualitative and quantitative parts.



About Mindhelper.dk

The first version of Mindhelper.dk was developed with a donation from TrygFonden of almost 6 million DKK (approximately 807.000 €). TrygFonden is a Danish foundation operating charitable projects across Denmark outside commercial interests. The Region of Southern Denmark also contributed to the development with a donation of 1.4 million DKK (approximately 190.000 €).

Mindhelper.dk is built on the open-source online platform WordPress. Today it is operated and developed as a nationwide service provided by the five Danish Regions with a yearly grant of 3 million DKK (approximately 403.000 €).

Mindhelper.dk is organizationally anchored in the Psychiatry in Region of Southern Denmark in the "Centre for Digital Psychiatry" department. Centre for Digital Psychiatry works with developing, implementing, and researching digital prevention and treatment services for people with mental disorders. [You can read more about the Centre for Digital Psychiatry here.](#)

Currently, Mindhelper.dk consist of four full-time consultants with expertise in psychology, communication, web development, user involvement and project management. Furthermore, two part-time psychology students.

11 tips for you

The idea of Mindhelper.dk started in 2015, and we have gained much experience along the way. We want to share that experience with you.

Before we start, we would like you to remember that our pieces of advice might not be possible to transfer directly to your local setting. Countries and societies are different, so what works for us might not work well for you.

Having that said, we hope you can use our experience and pieces of advice to build a great website that helps improve the mental health of youths in your country.

1. Establish a multidisciplinary development team and make room for external specialists
2. Prioritize search engine optimization
3. Use text as primary content and video as secondary content
4. Prioritize user involvement in your development but don't expect youths to give you all the answers
5. Implement a "letterbox" on your website
6. Prioritize digital dissemination
7. Be present on social media but don't expect high interaction
8. Launch a beta version of your website when you have approximately 40 articles ready
9. Create a website with a broad focus on youths' mental health
10. Guide youths to other services that provide help with mental health
11. Remember: Developing a website with high-quality content costs money and is very time-consuming

1. Establish a multidisciplinary development team and make room for external specialists

You need different professional skills to operate and develop an extensive website for youths about mental health.

The professional quality of your content must be high, but more importantly, the content must be relevant and easy to understand for your visitors.

Therefore, having employees with mental health expertise is not enough. We also recommend employees with expertise in:

- Copywriting
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Design
- Visual communication
- Video and audio production
- Web development

In Mindhelper.dk, we solve many tasks in-house with a multidisciplinary development team. Nevertheless, we use external consultants as well. Our website is hosted and supported by an external host, and we also use:

- Psychologists with expertise in specific methodologies or problems
- Copywriters
- Graphic designers

Therefore, we recommend you find a good balance between a development team with the necessary skills to solve most of your tasks and a budget with room for hiring external specialists when required.

2. Prioritize search engine optimization

In 2021 85 % of the visitors on Mindhelper.dk entered the website through Google or other search engines. This is not a coincidence. We have prioritized search engine optimization from the start of the project.

In short, search engine optimization is about:

- Identify keywords and phrases so your webpage appears on Google or similar search engines when people use the service. For example, when a young person goes to Google and searches for "social anxiety" or "sad all the time".
- Write articles with the chosen keywords.
- Develop and optimize your code, so it's search engine friendly.

Search engine optimization is an entire field of expertise, but plenty of good resources online cover the subject. Here are a few links that are an excellent place to start:

- [Content Marketing – A Comprehensive Guide – Ahrefs, Fio Dossetto](#)
- [How to Combine SEO & Content Marketing for Amazing Results – Ahrefs, Himanshu Gupta](#)
- [How to Create an SEO Strategy for 2022 – Hubspot, Drew Fortin](#)
- [SEO and Content Marketing: Complete Guide – Backlinko, Brian Dean](#)

It is an excellent idea to prioritize search engine optimization for several reasons:

First, you can reach youths searching for help when they are searching for knowledge and advice. This could be a young person googling:

- Do I suffer from anxiety?
- My parents argue all the time.
- I can't fall asleep.

Furthermore, organic search results on Google allow you to reach youths without paying for visibility through ads on Google, Facebook, or Instagram.

If your project is organized in the public sector like Mindhelper.dk, you have a great starting point for achieving high visibility on search engines. Having that said, you also need content of high quality. The search engine's decision on where to rank a specific webpage includes how many links you get from other websites. The better content you have, the higher the possibility for other websites to link to your content. This is important because search engines rank links from public websites very highly. This includes municipalities, regions, and governmental sites.

It is our experience that Danish municipalities link to Mindhelper.dk from their website mainly because of two reasons: First, they experience that Mindhelper.dk creates value for youths. Secondly, Mindhelper.dk is without commercial interests. Universities, regions, libraries, agencies, and non-governmental organizations also link to Mindhelper.dk.

Link-building is not the only important matter for achieving good search results on Google. You also need to focus on well-written content, how you structure your code and how fast your web pages are loading.

You could use an external expert to do the SEO work for you. Still, if possible, we recommend that you have a person in your team with the necessary expertise in SEO, as it will probably be your most important traffic source.

3. Use text as primary content and video and audio as secondary content

We often hear this: "Young people don't like to read. They want to watch videos".

This is not our experience. Youths like to read if the content is relevant and easy to understand. Using text as the primary content has some advantages:

- Skimming an article is easy if the piece has relevant headlines. This makes it easy to jump to the section you are looking for. This is hard to do in video or audio content.
- It's easy to update text. We often update and add text based on feedback from our visitors. Doing so in video or audio content is more time-consuming.

We highly recommend using pictures, video, and audio with your text content. We use guided audio meditations and short video clips with youths. Our free online courses about anxiety and mindfulness are also based on short videos.

In 2022 we published some of our most popular written articles in audio versions. In this example, you can read and listen to our article about mindfulness. The audio version is at the top of the article:

<https://mindhelper.dk/mental-fitness/mindfulness-oevelser/>

Our new audio content has some advantages:

- In Denmark, almost 500.000 persons have limited literacy skills. Audio versions of our content make the content more accessible for struggling readers.
- Furthermore, audio versions allow our visitors to consume our content while multitasking. They can listen to an article on the bike or bus on the way home from school.

We expect to prioritize audio content even more in the next few years as audio content like podcasts, audiobooks, and audio articles are getting increasingly popular in Denmark.

4. Prioritize user involvement in your development but don't expect youths to give you all the answers

We have involved more than 400 youths in the development of Mindhelper.dk. Some participated in development workshops, others in content and design user tests. Since 2016 we have also had a regular youth panel where 10-20 youths contribute with feedback and ideas to the development of our project.

Our youth panels work for a year at a time. Our current board is from an efterskole (similar to a continuation school) and consists of 12 students we meet four times a year. Meeting the same group of students several times makes them feel more comfortable and a part of the project.

Our experience is that the youths are very committed and contribute with lots of ideas and feedback. Therefore, we highly recommend that you continuously test your content, design, and functionality with different groups of youths and a regular youth panel.

Our user involvement is facilitated by an anthropologist and a psychologist from the Mindhelper-team. You could choose to use an external expert, but we recommend you do it yourself to understand your primary audience better.

Using a lot of user involvement brings us various inputs:

- Ideas and suggestions we can implement right away. This could be something with the design not working correctly or a passage of text not adapted for youths.
- Feedback in various directions. Sometimes we hear our articles are too long and other times too short. This is an indispensable part of user involvement but nevertheless gives you essential knowledge about your audience.

5. Implement a "letterbox" on your website

Our primary goal is to share general knowledge and pieces of advice. We do that through articles, interviews, videos and our two online courses. Furthermore, we have a "letterbox". This is a solution where youths write to us with questions and receive personal answers from one of our psychology students (they receive feedback from a professional psychologist). This could be a 15-year-old boy writing that he finds it hard to settle in at a new school or a 17-year-old girl who suffers from anxiety and doesn't know what to do.

Our letterbox is one-way communication and not a chat, which is an advantage as we can publish both the question and the answer (anonymized) on our website so all visitors can see and benefit from it. In 2021 we had more than 300.000 visitors in our letterbox section. The majority came from searches on Google.

When we answer a question in our letterbox, we usually link to articles on our website. We also link to our letterbox in the articles. We do this to achieve strong link-building on our website.

By linking to articles in our answers, we avoid writing the same pieces of advice again and again. Instead, we supplement our response with a link.

Another great advantage of a letterbox is the continuous knowledge you learn about your audience. You learn about present problems among youths, and through that, you get an idea of which themes you must cover on your website.

Through interviews with youths, we learned that anonymity and confidentiality are essential for using our letterbox. Because of that, we don't ask for an e-mail address or any other information that makes it possible to identify the person writing to us. We only ask about age. If the question contains information that makes it possible to identify the youth, we reserve the right to delete or edit that information before publication on our website.

We have chosen to answer all questions we receive unless we have a solid idea that the question is meant as trolling. We very rarely receive these. We have set a limit to 1.000 characters to avoid very long questions.

6. Prioritize digital dissemination

Even in a small country like Denmark, you will spend much time travelling if you want to spread knowledge about your website through physical meetings. We experience that you create a much higher value for the youths through digital dissemination.

Our primary audience is youths. Our secondary audience is professionals working with youths. They are also a significant audience. In this group, we have teachers, study advisers, school nurses and school psychologists.

We have created a newsletter for this audience. In the newsletter, we highlight new content on our website and share ideas of how you can use our website in your work with youths. To introduce professionals to our website, we made a series with 30 newsletters automatically sent to new subscribers who receive one weekly newsletter.

We also use the newsletter to achieve feedback from professionals who give us ideas for new content or campaigns we should prioritize. We have 2.000 subscribers we gained through targeting e-mails. It is time-consuming but essential in our attempt to reach more youths.



7. Be present on social media but don't expect high interaction

Since 2016 Mindhelper.dk has had a Facebook page and, since 2018, an Instagram account as well:

- <https://www.facebook.com/mindhelperDK>
- <https://www.instagram.com/mindhelper.dk/>

We have weekly posts with tips and pieces of advice about mental health and links to our content at Mindhelper.dk or other organizations.

In 2021 0.5 % of our visitors on Mindhelper.dk entered our website from social media. Our experience is that it's tough to direct visitors from social media to our website. We also experience that it's not necessary. Instead, we use social media to direct communication with the youths.

Lately, we launched a new format where we present some of our letterbox questions through video. We hope these videos will reflect on youths who can recognize the problems covered in the videos. We primarily use organic posts but paid ads on Facebook and Instagram occasionally.

8. Launch a beta version of your website when you have approximately 40 articles ready

We launched a beta version of Mindhelper.dk in April 2016. At this point, we had 40 articles ready. We see two advantages of an early launch of your website:

- You get the opportunity to collect feedback on content and design from real visitors – you can use these to qualify and optimize your website continuously.
- Google will index your website, and you can start getting external links to your site. Getting a high rank on Google won't happen in a day, so it's a good idea to start your SEO work as soon as possible to get good results.

9. Create a website with a broad focus on youths' mental health

The primary source of inspiration for Mindhelper.dk is the Australian site ReachOut.com. ReachOut is an excellent website with a broad focus on mental health. They cover everything from heartbreak and loneliness to anxiety and depression. We have chosen the same strategy on Mindhelper.dk and received great feedback for our broad focus.

We have two primary goals:

- We want to help youths through tough times and help in the early stages before their problems become too big.
- Secondly, we would like to improve the general mental health of Danish youths.

One of the ways we do this is through educational activities. In 2021 we launched teaching material about gratitude for youths between 13-16 years old. In the Danish school system, this matches 7th-10th grade. The teaching material is based on research that shows that focusing on gratitude is one of the best ways to improve mental health. The teaching material includes:

- 24 short videos with knowledge and an introduction to exercises
- A detailed teacher's guide
- A box with printed teaching materials

You can watch our teaching material at the following link. Note that it only exists in Danish:

<https://taknemli.dk/undervisning/materiale/>

The material is based on our book "A little book about gratitude". We have a free Danish electronic version of the book you can find here:

<https://taknemli.dk/bogen/>



In 2022 we received funds from TrygFonden for disseminating the teaching material to 1.500 school classes. Furthermore, getting an external evaluation of the material.

A teacher from the school facilitating the courses means we can reach more youths than a version with an external consultant. Furthermore, the teacher knows the students and can link the teaching to other topics they have worked on.

In addition, we have noticed two significant advantages with the teaching material:

- Youths receive knowledge and techniques they can use before problems grow too big.
- Mental health and general well-being become a common subject for the entire class.

In practical terms, we also use the material to make students aware of all our content at Mindhelper.dk and Mindhelper-skolen.dk.



10. Guide youths to other services that provide help with mental health

In Denmark, we have several excellent services that help mental health. Some of the services are based in a municipality. Others are non-governmental organizations.

We have created a directory on Mindhelper.dk that displays other services. Through a drop-down menu, a visitor chooses where they live; based on that, we show what services there are in the relevant municipality.

In addition to the directory, we regularly refer to other services in our articles and letterbox. We do this to ensure that our visitors always have the best opportunities to find the help they need.

We recommend you do the same to ensure you provide the best possible service for your visitors. Be aware that it can be time-consuming to add many services and keep them up to date.

Having said that, we believe it's the best solution. We do not see Mindhelper.dk as a competitor to other services but as the first step in a stepped care approach.

With a digital service such as Mindhelper.dk, we can make a difference for a large group of youths. We cannot solve all problems, and when our service is insufficient, we refer to other services higher up in the stepped care model.



11. Remember: Developing a website with high-quality content costs money and is very time-consuming

As earlier stated, Mindhelper.dk was developed with a donation from TrygFonden and the Region of Southern Denmark for a total of 7.4 million dkk (approximately 1.000.000 €). Mindhelper.dk is operated and developed as a nationwide service provided by the five Danish Regions with a yearly grant of 3 million DKK (approximately 403.000 €).

It indicates a relatively large cost to develop and operate a large website. However, the website helps many youths each year. The most significant advantage of a digital service like Mindhelper.dk is that it's scalable. Once the service is developed and operating, resource consumption is the same whether 10.000, 100.000 or 1.000.000 are using the service.

Another advantage is the flexibility to use the service wherever and whenever you want without waiting time or needing a referral from a doctor. At the same time, it helps increase health equality by making help accessible all over the country and free of charge.

Future ideas: 12-week online introduction to Mindhelper.dk through text messages

We are currently developing a solution that allows youths to receive tips on how they can use Mindhelper.dk to strengthen their mental wellbeing through text messages.

The idea is a series of text messages sent over 12 weeks focusing on simple techniques to improve mental health.

We expect to launch the text message service in 2023.

Do you have any questions?

We hope you can use our experience and pieces of advice to build a great website that helps improve the mental health of youths in your country. If you have any questions or want to collaborate, please get in touch with us at info@mindhelper.dk.

We wish you all the best with your new website. Please share your product with us when it's live.

Best regards

The Mindhelper team



Jakob Mejlholm

Projectleader



Mark Buskbjerg

Consultant



Magnus Ankersen

Journalist



Linn Lindegaard

Psychologist



Amalie

Psychology student



Sifka

Psychology student

Mindhelper.dk was launched in September 2016 and is today one of Denmark's largest sites for young people about mental health. The project is rooted in The Five Regions of Denmark: Capital Region of Denmark, Central Denmark Region, Region Zealand, Region of Southern Denmark and The North Denmark Region.

