

Distinguished guests,

I am truly honored to be here this evening celebrating with you the amazing work that Harold Koplewicz, Brooke Garber Neidich, and all of their colleagues at the Child Mind Institute, have done and continue to do in the field of mental health for children at large.

According to the Press Association, in a recent report that came out from the Roadmap for Mental Health Research project in Europe, scientists urged for the need of spending on mental health research to be doubled or tripled in the UK to ease the enormous burden of psychiatric and behavioral disorders on society. They urged everyone in the public and private sectors, Government, the industry, charities, to contribute much more than they do to mitigate the huge long term cost of inaction.

We live in a world where according to some health statistics almost 1 out of 10 people suffer from some form of mental health disorder. Here in the US more than 15 million children have been diagnosed with a mental health or learning disorder, and suicides are on an upward trajectory. And while the health industry and the news media are doing a much better job in acknowledging the problem we face as a society in the form of mental health disorders, the fear of stigma still surrounds us and acts as an inhibitive barrier to more people getting necessary treatment.

The Child Mind Institute (CMI) is at the forefront of a truly remarkable and successful effort to help mental health patients and their families, through clinical care, collaborative science, and open and honest conversation of how to help treat and/or cope with such mental health and learning disorders.

What I admire the most about the CMI is the comprehensive manner in which the Institute contributes to this effort. In its 2014 annual report, Harold and Brooke focus on, and I quote, "Children are at the heart of everything we do at the Child Mind Institute. In the mind of a child is a universe of possibilities for joy, hope, creativity, curiosity, and the power to love and be loved. Too often we see these possibilities curtailed by mental illness, learning disorders, and inadequate systems of support", end of quote. In my mind that sums it up in a most beautiful way. The CMI's mission statement further elaborates the work done at the Institute, where, and I quote, "The Child Mind Institute is an independent nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to advance the science of the developing brain, deliver the highest standards of care and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to effectively support children when and where they need it most. Together with

our supporters, we're helping kids reach their full potential in school and in life", end of quote.

Our family foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and I personally are very proud to be associated with the Child Mind Institute.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is an international philanthropic organization which has made 3,254 grants in 111 countries, total of \$1.8 billion in grant commitments since our inception back in 1996. A major part of our grant making takes place in Greece, the birthplace of my late great uncle and founder of our Foundation.

The well-being of children has been a focal point of our foundation's grant-making efforts since the very early days of our existence. Within SNF's four major programmatic areas – arts & culture, social welfare, education and health & sports – we have directed significant resources to support children's needs and best interests worldwide, always focusing on those that are most vulnerable and underprivileged.

Despite the fact, however, that all of us understand the importance that children's well-being and proper development play for the future of our societies collectively, this future is constantly jeopardized by the monumental inequities affecting millions of children worldwide and severely impacting their health, education, economic security and overall welfare. No single entity, of course, can address these issues on its own. Broad collaborations and focused, as well as concentrated efforts are required in order for all of us to achieve maximum impact.

Whether we are addressing issues such as food insecurity for thousands of schoolchildren, adequate health care by upgrading children's intensive care units throughout Greece which is going through a hard-hitting socioeconomic crisis, advocacy for early childhood education in New York, adequate and safe foster care, protection for unaccompanied minors, literacy, improved and accessible educational opportunities, access to cultural and artistic programs, access to critical after school programs, comprehensive mental health services, support for parents for the creation of better family environments, our goal always is to try and improve children's well-being at home and within their communities worldwide. More specifically regarding our activities in Greece, special emphasis has been given to groups that have a high-risk of developing mental health disorders: children of immigrants, children whose parents suffer from severe mental health disorders, children who are exposed to domestic violence, abandoned children, and children whose families have been severely affected by the on-going socio-economic crisis in the country.

When we talk about mental health in general and children's mental health in particular, we cannot ignore the critical role played by the notion of *stigma*. The etymological roots of the word derive from ancient Greece, where the word was used to allude to a mark that was cut into or branded/burned on a person's body to signify character defects or ownership. The concept of stigmatization plays a crucial role in effectively addressing issues pertaining to children's mental health. In many ways, the work that we do on this front worldwide, and the very important work that the Child Mind Institute does directly or indirectly touch upon the all too important issue of avoiding stigmatization.

I vividly remember one of our first meetings with Harold, then running the NYU Child Study Center, and Dr. Xavier Castellanos in our office in NY more than 15 years ago when we discussed Dr. Castellanos's innovative research techniques to deepen our knowledge of how the brain works. I believe today there is a much wider understanding not only in the scientific community but also in society at large of the need to understand this amazing 'thing' called the human brain; at the same time I think we all accept that this is only the beginning. Our Foundation was happy to contribute to Dr. Castellanos work and so our 'relationship' goes more than a decade back during which time we supported additional research projects designed to increase scientific research of activity in the brains of children and adolescents in order to better understand, classify and treat neurological disorders.

In 2009 the Child Mind Institute was founded and after continued dialogue with Dr. Koplewicz our Foundation continued to support his Institute's research endeavors. We have proudly supported CMI's Science and Innovation Program which allows scientists around the world to access more than 10,000 compiled datasets, and recently contributed to the Healthy Brain Network to advance understanding of brain development and the causes of psychiatric and learning disorders. The Healthy Brain Network will provide the field with necessary data to help accelerate the identification of biological markers of mental illness in children and the development of objective clinical tools for better diagnosis and treatment, as well as help promote early diagnosis and interventions for children and access to quality mental health care through the creation of a robust referral network.

I understand that the CMI's website has millions of visitors and rightly so; in addition to the scientific knowledge shared what I find very helpful is the variety of issues tackled which also help towards a very important matter, that of bringing science closer to society. Both benefit from such a productive collaboration. Recent topics addressed on childmind.org have to do with very timely and relevant issues, such as tips for raising grateful kids and how

holidays are a good time to help kids focus on the positive and find satisfying ways to express their appreciation, on surviving family gatherings, offering advice to parents on how to deal with getting kids ready for school every morning without stress (it was all Greek to me!), on how to help children cope with frightening news, on how to deal with bullying issues, on how not all kids with attention problems have ADHD as anxiety can often make children distracted, etc., all great day to day issues that are so important for all of us to learn more about and be better equipped to deal with in todays complicated world we live in.

In closing, it is evident, I think, that I should not be the one getting honored this evening. Instead it should be Harold and all of his colleagues whose work is so important in helping children with mental health and learning disorder issues get treatment and support, everything towards enabling them to have an as much as possible equal chance at a happy and productive life ahead of them. Because of their hard work, and through their living of their own passion, we can all dream for a better tomorrow.

Thank you!