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A Brief History of Jared Padalecki's Mental Health Awareness Contributions

Jared Padalecki is an actor who hails from San Antonio, TX. Born in 1982, he made his acting debut in 1999 in a movie titled *A Little Inside*. He had a memorable role in *Gilmore Girls*, but his most popular work has been on the long-running television show *Supernatural*. In March of 2015, he began a campaign to shine a light on depression. He has started funds and raised money to help bring to light a common issue that not everyone is willing to open up about (Hanks). Jared Padalecki has used his celebrity for good and is a role model for teenagers and young adults for his efforts.

The “Always Keep Fighting” campaign began in March of 2015 in a very grassroots sort of way. It started with t-shirts. The reported \$250,000 went to charities for support for those who cannot find it otherwise (“Always Keep Fighting”). After the initial campaign people began buying t-shirts for those who could not afford them and people who they had never met before to remind them that they are strong. Padalecki did not let this go unnoticed. He has applauded people who are fighting this fight very publicly and has even encouraged fans to open up about their own struggles (Bucksbaum).

Six campaigns led to thousands of t-shirts being sold and the establishment of The Pack Fund. This is a donor-advised fund that gives grants to non-profit organizations and was a vital part of the SPNFamily Crisis Support Network (Prudom). This campaign was spearheaded by his co-stars on *Supernatural*. At the end of this campaign, over 10,000 t-shirts were sold and fifteen hundred fans had volunteered.

Padalecki came forth about his issues with anxiety and depression to show that it can touch anyone. He has an amazing life and people who love and support him inside and outside of his family. If depression can get to him, sure the stigma will disappear

(Fitzpatrick). There have been numerous stars before and since he opened up, but he has used his status on social media in new ways.

He did not simply create a movement and start funds to help people. He keeps going. He continues to make a difference. He opens up about what helps him keep fighting and has normalized people speaking out about their problems. A generation of young people has been given a voice and an opportunity. A generation of adults no longer feels stigmatized about their feelings. Padalecki started a dialogue and remains a part of it today (Boardman).

Celebrities are given a chance to make a difference every day. Some make a difference by choosing a project that they feel passionately about. Others bring food, supplies, and entertainment to other countries and present calls to action on water conservation. Many celebrities use their influence to do good. Jared Padalecki saw a growing epidemic of people losing hope and brought about a movement to let them know that they are not alone in the world (“Jared Padalecki Explains What Inspires Him to “Always Keep Fighting”). He has used his fame to remind people with depression and anxiety to never quit fighting.

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