

Mental Health Awareness:

Empowering young people to manage their mental health



BayCare

Tampa Bay
Times
NIE
newspaper in education
tampabay.com/nie

Mental health



The number of young people reporting poor mental health has been increasing:

- **More than 1 in 3** high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40 percent increase over 2009.
- In 2019, **approximately 1 in 6** youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year, a 44 percent increase since 2009.

Some groups are more affected than others.

- These feelings were found to be more common among lesbian, gay or bisexual students and female students.
- Almost half of lesbian, gay or bisexual students and nearly one-third of students not sure of their sexual identity reported they had seriously considered suicide — far more than heterosexual students.
- The number of black students who reported attempting suicide in 2019 rose by almost 50 percent.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Why this is a big deal

Poor mental health in adolescence is more than feeling blue. It can impact many areas of a teen's life. Young people with poor mental health may struggle with school and grades, decision-making and their health.

It is important to note that mental health problems in youth often go hand-in-hand with other health and behavioral risks such as amplified risk of drug use, experiencing violence and higher-risk sexual behaviors than can lead to HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy.

Many health behaviors and habits established in adolescence will carry over into adult years; therefore, it is very important to help youth develop good mental health.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The good news

The good news is that young people are resilient, and experts know that feeling connected to school and family can promote good mental health as well as help prevent a range of negative experiences, such as drug use and violence.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Mental health affects every aspect of our lives: how we feel about ourselves and the world; solve problems, cope with stress, and overcome challenges; build relationships and connect with others; and perform in school, at work and throughout life. Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological and social well-being, and is an essential component of overall health.

Source: Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory

Facing challenges

“Every child’s path to adulthood — reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills, and dealing with problems — is different and difficult. Many face added challenges along the way, often beyond their control. There’s no map, and the road is never straight,” writes Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, Surgeon General of the United States.

Murthy notes that the challenges today’s generation face are “unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate. And the effect these challenges have had on their mental health is devastating.”

Murthy writes, “We know that mental health is shaped by many factors, from our genes and brain chemistry to our relationships with family and friends, neighborhood conditions, and larger social forces and policies. We also know that, too often, young people are bombarded with messages through the media and popular culture that erode their sense of self-worth — telling them they are not good-looking enough, popular enough, smart enough or rich enough. That comes as progress on legitimate and distressing issues like climate change, income inequality, racial injustice, the opioid epidemic and gun violence feels too slow.

“And while technology platforms have improved our lives in important ways, increasing our ability to build new communities, deliver resources and access information, we know that, for many people, they can also have adverse effects. When not deployed responsibly and safely, these tools can pit us against each other, reinforce negative behaviors like bullying and exclusion, and undermine the safe and supportive environments young people need and deserve.”

Source: Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory



A mental health crisis

Dr. Claire McCarthy, senior faculty editor, Harvard Health Publishing, declares “We are in the midst of a pediatric mental health crisis. Over the past couple of years, the pandemic has not only killed hundreds of thousands; it has also shut us inside, cut off social contacts, taken parents out of work and children out of school. The consequences have been tremendous.” One of those consequences is that doctors are seeing alarming amounts of anxiety and depression in children and teens.

Sources: Harvard Health; World Health Organization



DID YOU KNOW?

- Among youths ages 10-19, one in seven (13 percent), experiences a mental disorder.
- Depression, anxiety and behavioral disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.
- Suicide is the fourth-leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 19.
- Physical, emotional and social changes, including exposure to poverty, abuse or violence, can make young people vulnerable to mental health problems.
- Globally, it is estimated that one in seven (14 percent) of youths ages 10 to 19 experience mental health conditions, yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated.

Source: World Health Organization

Going beyond the text What do you know?

As you begin exploring this publication and the topic of mental health, start a journal. On the first page, create a KWL chart.

Create a chart listing what you know (k), what you wonder (w) and what you have learned (l). On the back of the chart, start listing vocabulary words you may be unfamiliar with, such as vulnerable, pandemic, depression, anxiety or resilient. Look through the Tampa Bay Times for examples of mental health and/or mental illness in words, images and photos. Share the information on your chart and what you have discovered in the Times with your class.

COVID-19 and teens

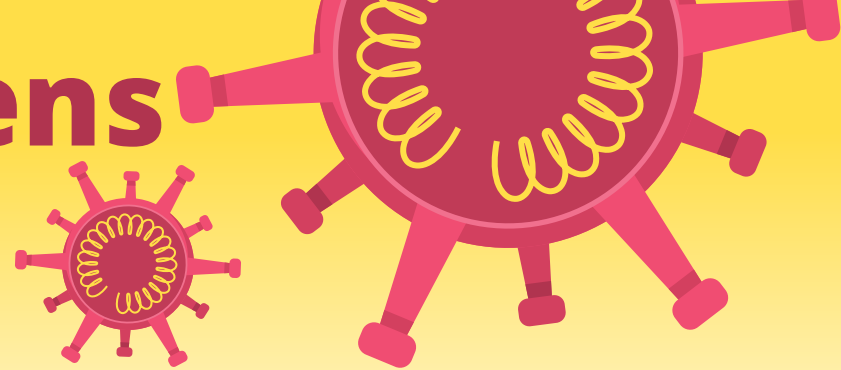
Is the pandemic stressing you out? Some of the questions you might be asking are, "Should I be freaking out about COVID-19?" and "How can I hang out with my friends in person?" You may be feeling worried, bored or frustrated. COVID-19 is frightening, and you are not the only one feeling stressed.

While anyone can catch the virus that causes COVID-19 and people of all ages and backgrounds can get severely ill, most people have a mild illness and are able to recover at home.

There are things you can do to manage your stress:

- Learn about COVID-19. Knowing the facts and stopping the spread of rumors about COVID-19 can help you feel more in control of what is happening.
- Help stop the spread of COVID-19 by washing your hands often with soap and water, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding close contact with other people – even your friends.
- Get vaccinated. Vaccination against COVID-19 and other preventable diseases can protect you from the risk of severe illness.
- Find ways to relax. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to do activities you enjoy, like exercising, gaming, reading or other hobbies.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs. These substances can weaken your body's ability to fight infections and increase the risk of certain complications associated with COVID-19.
- Talk with someone you trust about your thoughts and feelings.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Florida Department of Health

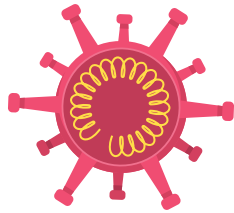


Experiencing stress

Teens experience stress and can benefit from learning stress management skills. Most teens experience more stress when they perceive a situation as dangerous, difficult or painful. Some sources of stress for teens include:

- School demands and frustrations
- Negative thoughts or feelings about themselves
- Changes in their bodies
- Problems with friends and/or peers at school
- Unsafe living environment/neighborhood
- Separation or divorce of parents
- Chronic illness or severe problems in the family
- Death of a loved one
- Moving or changing schools
- Taking on too many activities or having too high expectations
- Family financial problems

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry



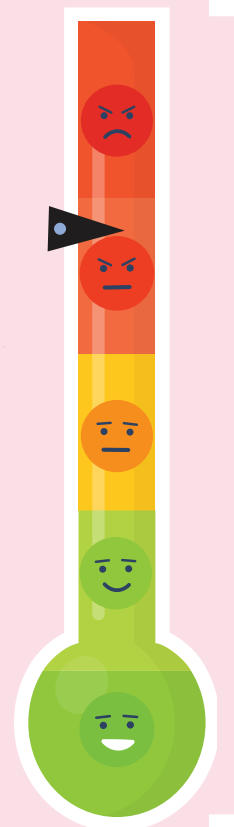
Stress overload

When teens are overloaded with stress, it can result in anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, physical illness or poor coping skills such as drug and/or alcohol use.

When we view a situation as being difficult or painful, our minds and bodies prepare to deal with that situation in three ways: freeze, fight or flight. The outcome of this may include a faster heart and breathing rate, increased blood to muscles of arms and legs, cold or clammy hands and feet, upset stomach and/or a sense of dread.

Keep in mind that the same process that turns on the stress response can turn it off. When we decide that a situation is no longer dangerous, our minds and bodies help us calm down. Our heart and breathing rate decrease, which creates a sense of well-being. Teens that develop stress management skills feel less helpless and have more choices when responding to stressful situations.

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry



Stress management

That sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, the clenching of muscles, the raging headache, a race of adrenaline or perhaps the urge to scream and throw things are all signs of stress. Stress puts a strain on your body and brain, and although it cannot be avoided completely, it is possible to keep it at a minimum.

While stress is an everyday occurrence in busy lives, it is not always bad. As long as you learn some techniques for managing stress, you can help achieve a harmonious balance.

- Keep a positive attitude. Accept that there are things beyond your control in your life: at home, at school and at work.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Speak out about your feelings, opinions or beliefs instead of becoming angry or defensive.
- Exercise on a regular basis. Not only does the act of exercise relieve stress, being fit helps to fight off the onset of stress.
- Vigorous exercise, such as hitting a punching bag, dancing or running, is good for relieving stress.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks. Visit myplate.gov for resources and recipes.
- Make time for enjoyable hobbies and relaxing activities, such as reading a book, building models, playing video games or playing sports.
- Get plenty of rest and sleep. Sleep is the best way to recover from and prepare for stressful events.
- Seek out social support. In other words, spend time with your family and friends.
- Learn to relax: Practice yoga or tai chi, listen to music, meditate, read or play a musical instrument.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; WebMD, Cove Behavioral Health

Going beyond the text Using the news

Teens spent a lot of time during the pandemic behind screens, which experts say exposed them to harmful behaviors such as cyberbullying and self-loathing. Read the article "Tampa Bay teens are depressed and anxious. Social media deserves blame" from the Tampa Bay Times: <https://www.tampabay.com/news/health/2021/09/07/tampa-bay-teens-are-depressed-and-anxious-social-media-deserves-blame/>. In your journal, write down your thoughts about this article. Do you agree with the author's points? Have you had similar experiences to those described in the article? Share your thoughts and ideas with your classmates.



Substance abuse

Problems with relationships at home and at school, a family history of substance abuse, mental health challenges like depression and anxiety, or a history of sexual abuse can increase your risk for a substance use disorder. Stress, anxiety and depression caused by isolation and other changes to your way of life during the COVID-19 pandemic also can increase your risk for a substance use disorder.

Early treatment for a substance use disorder can help prevent serious health issues or death. People with substance use disorders are also at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. When a substance use disorder is left untreated, the risk for drug overdose or suicide becomes higher.

If you or someone you know may be at risk for a substance use disorder, talk to a trained professional, such as a guidance counselor or social worker or check out the resources on page 15.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Stress is real

Sometimes, when teenagers report experiencing stress, adults can be dismissive. However, stress is very real for teens and stress management techniques should get more recognition.

In some cases, stress levels in today's teens may be more intense than stress experienced by adults. For young people, stress comes from different sources. Teens today face mounting pressure to achieve perfection (or the image of such) on social media. When they fail to achieve it, it can lead to depression and anxiety.

Sources: Choose Mental Health; American Psychological Association



Stress in teens?

It is important to note that there are many factors stressing out young people. Not only do teens have social media demands on their lives, but they also may be facing the following challenges:

- Bullying
- A changing body
- A lack of friends at school
- Family financial or relational problems
- Excessive extracurricular expectations
- Adjustment to a new school
- Demands of a rigorous course load
- The pressure to figure out what comes next in life

Source: Choose Mental Health

Decreasing stress

Young people can decrease stress with the following behaviors and techniques:

- Exercise and eat regularly.
- Get enough sleep and have a good sleep routine.
- Avoid excess caffeine, which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.
- Avoid illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques).
- Develop assertiveness training skills. For example, state feelings in polite, firm and not overly aggressive or passive ways.
- Rehearse and practice situations that cause stress. One example is taking a speech class if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.
- Learn practical coping skills. For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.
- Decrease negative self-talk: challenge negative thoughts — with alternative, neutral or positive thoughts.
- Learn to feel good about doing a competent or "good enough" job rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others.
- Practice positive affirmations.

- Build a network of friends who help you cope in a positive way.
- Keep to a schedule. Plan times for doing school work, relaxing and connecting with friends.
- Talk with someone you trust about your thoughts and feelings.
- Do something you enjoy outside, like going to the park or for a run.

Sources: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Choose Mental Health

Care for yourself one small way each day

- Treat yourself to healthy snacks and get enough sleep.
- Remember, you're not alone.
- Make time to relax by reading, listening to music or exploring a new hobby.
- Talk to someone you trust if you or a friend feels bad.
- Treat yourself to healthy foods and get enough sleep.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Coping with stress

Stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness or frustration.
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires and interests.
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions.
- Nightmares or problems sleeping.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems or skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems and mental health conditions.
- Increased use of alcohol, illegal drugs and misuse of prescription drugs.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Going beyond the text Under pressure

Young people often encounter peer pressure to do things that may be harmful to them. Peer pressure can contribute to stress, negative feelings and harmful behaviors. Look for an article in the Tampa Bay Times in which peer pressure may have played a role for an adult or young person. In your journal, write about the peer pressure you perceive in that article and share it with your class. Next, take notes about the examples of peer pressure you see, read and hear about at your school and in your community during the week. Are all of these examples negative or are some positive? Explore in a short essay why it is important for people to be prepared for situations in which they may feel pressured to do something that may have negative effects on their lives. Be sure to use specific examples from the article to support your ideas.

Journaling

"Journaling can be an excellent outlet for emotions," notes Choose Mental Health. "Writing in a journal about trauma not only provides release, it also helps process negative events and heal from them. Research shows that journaling can strengthen the immune response, improve mental function and counteract negative stress responses. Making this a habit can provide your teen with clarity about their thoughts, feelings, and emotions and help them make changes that will alleviate the stress in their life."

Healthy ways to cope with stress

It's natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are ways that you can help yourself, others and your community manage stress.

- Take breaks from news stories, including those on social media. It's good to be informed, but constant information about the pandemic can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV and computer screens for a while.
- Take care of your body:
 - o Get vaccinated and stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines.
 - o Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. Eating well also means limiting saturated fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars.
 - o Going to bed at the same time each night and getting up at the same time each morning, including on the weekends, can help you sleep better (seven or more hours per night for adults).
 - o Move more and sit less — every little bit of physical activity helps. You can start small and build up to 150 minutes a week that can be broken down to smaller amounts such as 20 to 30 minutes a day.
 - o Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate.
 - o Avoid using prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed, or using someone else's prescription.
 - o Avoid smoking and the use of other tobacco products.
 - o Continue with regular health appointments, testing and screening.
- Connect with community- or faith-based organizations.

Talking to friends

There is no right or wrong way to share your thoughts and feelings. While some people are open and honest with friends and relatives, some people are more private.

It is important to note that while sharing personal information may help you feel closer to people, it also opens the possibility of your friend sharing information with others against your wishes. Therefore it is important to decide what you are comfortable with sharing about your mental health. Also, it may be helpful to consider why you want to share the information:

- To show that you have common experiences with someone
- To ask for help
- To gain empathy and compassion from someone
- To explain your actions or behavior

Before starting a conversation about your mental health, think about what you want to accomplish when you share personal information, or what you expect from your friends as a response.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

What to say

Some conversations are bigger than others. Sometimes people feel uncertain or anxious about sharing something personal or emotional. It might be helpful to write down what you want to say or practice a few times in private before having a conversation with someone. You also can discuss the topic with a trusted adult, such as a therapist or school counselor.

What you chose to share is up to you. You can keep some things private, including specific diagnosis and treatment details. You may want to let friends and parents know that you are experiencing a mental health or emotional problem and you appreciate their support while you are learning to manage it.

Sharing basic information with a friend might prevent you some worry in the future. That way, if you need to change a plan because of your mental health, your friends will be more likely to understand and be supportive.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness



Talking to parents or guardians

If you are feeling down, anxious or nervous much of the time, it's important to talk with your parent or guardian and let them know you need help. Sometimes having this conversation can be tricky. NAMI has these tips:

- **Plan what you want to say:** A good starting place is to think about how you will explain what you are experiencing. It can be helpful to provide a few specific examples of what you are feeling to help your parents understand.
- **Find a private place to talk:** Try to find a time and place where you can have some privacy, away from any other family members or distractions. See if you can take a walk or sit outside together. Ask everyone to leave their cell phones somewhere else during the conversation.
- **Explain as clearly as you can:** Try to be as clear and specific as you can about what you are experiencing and give them a chance to ask you questions. If you start feeling overwhelmed or anxious, it's all right to pause to take some deep breaths and collect your thoughts.
- **Discuss possible next steps:** It's okay not to have a plan for what comes next — you can't be expected to. Consider asking them if they have suggestions, or even looking at online resources together to help everyone understand what you are experiencing and for suggestions about how to find help.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness



Social media and health

Think about it. You are growing up in a world where social media has always been a part of connecting with others. For teens, social media is an integral part of life. Social media has made it possible to connect to others from almost anywhere and at any time. However, social media also can make things more difficult for you emotionally. Be aware when patterns of social media use are unhelpful or harmful and understand the potential consequences.

Here are a few suggestions to maintain your mental health while using social media:

- Limit your time on social media platforms. Some platforms, such as Apple and Google, have settings to help you do this automatically on your phone.
- Consider what sites and profiles you visit. If they make you feel bad, unfollow them.
- Before you post something about yourself or someone else, consider if you would make this comment in an in-person setting.
- Remember that what you post will be very hard to take back or remove.
- Remember that what people post, or what you see, may not be honest or real presentations of their experiences or lives.
- Leave or unfollow a profile/page/site if it is making you feel worse.
- Report posts that are hurtful or making you worried.
- Tell an adult you trust — a parent, teacher or school counselor — immediately if a friend is posting content that worries you or suggests that they may be in a serious situation.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness



Social media

Social media is a big part of many teens' lives. Did you know that 97 percent of teens use social media, and 45 percent of teens are constantly online?

Social media benefits ...

- You can create online identities to communicate with others
- You can build social networks
- You can be entertained
- You can express yourself
- You can connect with friends and people around the world

... and drawbacks

Social media can have negative effects as well. For example, social media can distract you from getting work done, disrupt your sleep, expose you to bullying, rumor-spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives and peer pressure. A 2019 study found that teens who spend more than three hours a day using social media might be at an increased risk for

mental health problems. Other studies have concluded that there are links between high levels of social media use and depression or anxiety symptoms.

Source: The Mayo Clinic

Protect yourself

- Avoid letting social media interfere with your activities, sleep, meals or homework.
- Keep your cellphones and tablets away from your bed.
- Be responsible. Avoid gossiping, spreading rumors, bullying or damaging someone's reputation.
- Avoid relying solely on social media to interact solely with friends.
- Do not share overly personal information or photos on social media.

Going beyond the text Preventing deaths driven by social media

Did you know children's deaths have been blamed on cyberbullies, dangerous viral challenges and drug dealing – all on social media? Several studies have tied social media use in teens and younger children to depression and anxiety. Research shows that limiting social media to 30 minutes a day could lead to significant improvement in mental well-being. Go to <https://nieonline.com/tbtimes/videooftheweek.cfm?id=614> to read the article and watch the video on this topic. Discuss the questions posted with your class. Next, using the editorials and letters to the editor in the Tampa Bay Times, create an opinion article focused on this topic. Share your article with your classmates.

A growing problem for young people

Adolescence is a time for young people to have a healthy start in life. The number of adolescents reporting poor mental health is increasing. Schools and parents can create these protective relationships with students and help them grow into healthy adulthood.



Mental health warning signs

Diagnosing mental health disorders, especially for teens, can be challenging. Mental health is not simply the presence or absence of symptoms; it also includes how these symptoms are experienced. Young people may need help if they:

- Lose interest in activities that they used to enjoy.
- Have low energy.
- Have difficulty sleeping or eating.
- Spend more time alone and avoid social activities.
- Excessively exercise, diet and/or binge eat.
- Harm themselves (e.g., burning or cutting their skin).
- Use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.
- Engage in risky or destructive behavior.
- Have thoughts of suicide or death.
- Think their mind is being controlled or is out of control or hear things other people cannot hear.

- Feel restless, wound up or on edge.
- Experience irritability.
- Have difficulty keeping worry levels under control.
- Feel very anxious at the thought of being around others, and struggle to talk to other people.
- Experience extreme self-consciousness and fear of humiliation, embarrassment, rejection or offending people.
- Worry about being judged.
- Avoid places where other people will be.
- Feel persistently sad, anxious or empty.
- Experience hopelessness or pessimism.
- Feel guilty, worthless or helpless.
- Struggle with concentration, memory and/or decision-making.
- Experience unexplained changes in appetite or weight.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health; Penn Medicine

Common mental health disorders

Common mental health disorders in adolescence include those related to anxiety, depression, attention deficit-hyperactivity and eating.

- **Anxiety disorders:** Characterized by feelings of excessive uneasiness, worry and fear. Examples include generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobias. Globally, the frequency of youth experiencing anxiety symptoms — roughly 1 in 5 — nearly doubled during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Depression:** Depressed mood that affects thoughts, feelings and daily activities, including eating, sleeping and working. Examples include major depressive disorder and seasonal affective disorder.
- **Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):** Characterized by continued inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with daily functioning or development
- **Eating disorders:** Characterized by extreme and abnormal eating behaviors, such as restricted or excessive eating. Examples include anorexia nervosa, bulimia and binge-eating disorder.
- **Social phobias:** Severe feelings of self-consciousness and insecurity in social settings.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Penn Health



Dealing with grief

Grief is a natural response to an important loss of any kind — whether it's a family separation, a big move or the loss of a loved one or close friend.

Many people are experiencing some kind of loss as the result of the pandemic. This includes the loss of normal routines, jobs, in-person social interactions or even financial stability. Grief and loss can be overwhelming. We all need to help each other as we go through these experiences.

Everyone processes and reacts to grief differently. "One of the most important things to know about grief is that there isn't a quick fix," says licensed therapist Jody Baumstein, LCSW, with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life. "The only way to truly deal with grief is to acknowledge it, feel it and work through it."

Source: Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Inc.

Don't delay getting help

Problems with relationships at home and at school, a family history of substance abuse, mental health challenges or a history of sexual abuse can increase your risk for a substance use disorder. Stress, anxiety and depression also can increase your risk for a substance use disorder.

Early treatment for a substance use disorder can help prevent serious health issues or death. When a substance use disorder is left untreated, the risk for drug overdose or suicide becomes higher.

If you or someone you know may be at risk for a substance use disorder, talk to a trained professional, such as a school counselor or nurse. Don't delay getting help because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health

Going beyond the text Public service awareness

Mental health and mental illness are important issues. As a proponent of teen safety, it is your job to educate your fellow students by planning a school Mental Health Awareness Month campaign. You may make posters, plan daily morning show announcement spots, create slogan buttons and/or plan a schoolwide assembly. You may want to organize your information according to the following subcategories: facts about mental health, different types of mental illness, warning signs, effects of mental illness, breaking the cycle of silence and the law. Look through the advertisements, editorials and cartoons in the Tampa Bay Times to help plan your campaign. Create an informational news spot about the campaign that could air as a public service announcement (PSA). Create advertisements, cartoons and an editorial for the Times as well as your school newspaper.

Moodiness or depression?

All of us experience stress and mood swings. It's normal for teenagers to be moody at times. But when are your mood swings a sign of something more?

Although mental illness is more common in teens than you think, most types of mental illness are treatable. It is just matter of getting a diagnosis.

Physicians look at specific symptoms to determine if a person has a mental illness. For example, a person who has depressed mood or lack of interest in hobbies and work or recreational activities may be diagnosed with major depressive disorder. However, in teens, signs of depression may show up as changes in grades, a disinterest in friends or out-of-character irritability.

THINK ABOUT IT

Half of adolescents have had a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.

It is a normal part of development for teens to experience a wide range of emotions. It is typical, for instance, for teens to feel anxious about school or friendships, or to experience a

period of depression following the death of a close friend or family member. However, mental health disorders are characterized by persistent symptoms that affect how a young person feels, thinks and acts. Mental health disorders also can interfere with regular activities and daily functioning, such as relationships, schoolwork, sleeping and eating.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

Reaching out for help



Coping with substance abuse in the family

Did you know that one in four people under age 18 lives in a family where a person abuses alcohol or suffers from alcoholism? Countless others are affected by a family member's use of drugs. If you or someone in your family is suffering from drug abuse, remember the following:

- You are not alone. Lots of teens are in your situation and it's important to deal with it.
- Addiction to alcohol or drugs is a disease. When one member of the family has this disease, all family members are affected.
- It's not your fault; it's a disease. You didn't cause it, and you can't make it stop. You need and deserve help for yourself. Young people with alcohol- or drug-addicted parents are four times more likely to become addicted if they choose to drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.
- Take care of yourself. Talk with an adult — maybe a teacher, school counselor or nurse, friend's parent, doctor, grandparent, aunt or uncle, or neighbor — who will listen and help you deal with problems at home.
- Join a support group — they're great places to meet other young people who are struggling with the same problems at home that you face. To find a local support group, talk to your school counselor or social worker.
- It is important to find caring adults who can help you.
- Get involved in activities at school and in the community where you can hang out with other young people, use your special talents and strengths and learn new skills while you are having fun.
- Even if the person with the disease doesn't get help, you can still get the help you need to feel better and to have a safe and productive life.

Source: National Association for Children of Alcoholics

You don't have to experience these feelings alone. There is usually someone in your life you can turn to when you are struggling: parents, caregivers, relatives, coaches, teachers, people in your faith-based community or relatives. The important thing is that you tell someone how you are feeling.

- **Talk to an adult you trust:** There are many people who can be a source of support or guidance, including teachers, school counselors, coaches, club leaders or faith leaders. Sometimes, a grandparent or older sibling is easier to talk to than a parent.
- **Ask for help:** Reaching out and letting someone know how you are feeling is the first step. Your family may want you to talk to your doctor as a starting place. Another great option is to reach out to your school guidance counselor, nurse or social worker.
- **Consider talking to a therapist:** If your mental health concern is affecting your school work, your friendships or your relationships with family, your parent or guardian may want you to see a therapist. Talk therapy can help you learn approaches to understanding and managing your feelings, thinking and behavior.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

NEED HELP?

**Suicide Prevention
Hotline: 988**

Crisis Center: 211

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255)**



Suicide

Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety and other emotional or financial stresses are known to raise the risk for suicide. You may be more likely to experience these feelings during a crisis like a pandemic, other natural disaster or crisis at school or home.

Different life experiences may affect the risk for suicide. For example, suicide risk is higher for those who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying or sexual violence.

There are ways to protect against suicidal thoughts and behaviors. For example, support from family and community, or feeling connected. Reach out to others online, through social media, video chat or by phone. Having access to in-person or virtual counseling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



**Text HOME to
741741 to connect
with a
crisis counselor**

If you can't think of anyone in your family or community to talk with, check if your school has a counselor or social worker or even nurse. NAMI notes, "You can meet privately to speak with them and ask their advice. They may also be able to meet with your family to try to work out the differences in understanding. Even if none of these options seem to work, don't give up. If you have access to a mobile device or computer, you can connect to free confidential text-based support through the Crisis Text Line or other text-based support services."

Going beyond the text Getting along with others

Research illustrates that young people who have difficulty developing relationships are more likely to participate in aggression, abuse drugs or suffer from depression. How you get along with others will affect your mental health as well as the health of others. This activity, from Learning for Justice, will help you examine what it means to relate to others.

Step 1: Defining reliability

Writing prompt: Is it easier to get along or to fight with others?
Activity directions: Students will create a chart exploring relationships observed through the media and through personal experiences. Using the Tampa Bay Times as well as other media as resources and students' own observations, list examples of people getting along and people not getting along, and show the effects of getting along, as well as the effects of not getting along.

Step 2: Assessing reliability

Writing prompt: How can you measure the quality of relationships?
Activity directions: Students should complete the survey below. Students must provide a personal example for each survey question. Students should refer to the scale to learn their level of reliability.

Assessing reliability survey

1. Do you initiate conversations with others (text, email, call)?
2. Do you respond when other people initiate conversations with you (text, email, call)?
3. Are you a member of a group or organization?
4. Do you cry or laugh at things (movies, books, songs, jokes)?

5. Do you apologize when needed?
6. Do you accept apologies?
7. Do you share secrets with others?
8. Do other people share secrets with you?
9. Do you seek advice or the opinions of others?
10. Do others come to you for advice or for your opinion?

Total # of YES answers _____

Total # of NO answers _____

Scale

8-10 YES Answers: You are a very relatable person.

5-7 YES Answers: You are a social person.

0-4 YES Answers: You may need a reliability mentor.

Process questions: What is your reaction to your score? Do you think the survey measures reliability accurately? Explain why.

Step 3: Reshaping your reliability

Writing prompt: How can you improve your interactions with others?
Activity directions: Students should brainstorm a list of factors that they use to help build relationships in their lives. They also should make a list of factors that they feel are harmful to the development of relationships in their lives.

Process questions: Review your list and explain what behavior/factor is hurting your interactions with others the most. Now that you are aware that this is hurting your relationships with others, what will you do with this information?

Source: Learning for Justice



Getting help

If you are feeling like you may harm yourself, or you know someone who is, let a parent, guardian or another trusted adult know immediately. If this is not an option for any reason, contact a resource such as 988 or the National Alliance for Mental Health Crisis Text Line (text "NAMI" to 741741) for support and direction.

The most important thing is that someone is there for you — whether it is over the phone, by text or chat, or in person. If you do not have access to a mobile device or computer, you need to let a teacher, coach or faith leader in your community know about your crisis situation. If you have already harmed yourself, consider calling 911 for immediate medical assistance.

If you observe warning signs and need to seek help, consult your healthcare provider or mental health professional. In crisis or life-threatening situations, call 911, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by dialing 1-800-273-8255 or using Lifeline Chat, or go to your nearest hospital emergency room.

Sources: National Institute for Mental Health; National Alliance for Mental Illness

RESOURCES

If you need help with substance abuse:

Alcoholics Anonymous

aa.org

Find Treatment

findtreatment.gov

Narcotics Anonymous Florida

844-623-5674

naflorida.org

National Helpline

Treatment referral and information, 24/7.

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

samhsa.gov/find-help/

nationalhelpline

If someone in your life has a substance abuse issue:

Al-Anon/Alateen

1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666)

al-anon.org

Nar-Anon

800-477-6291

nar-anon.org

If you need help with thoughts of harming yourself:

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay

211

Florida Suicide and Crisis Hotline

800-346-6185

Suicide prevention hotline

988

Suicide prevention lifeline

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

The Trevor Project

Hope for young LGBTQ lives starts here

thetrevorproject.org

If you need help with an abusive situation:

Child Abuse Hotline

800-962-2873

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay

211

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Florida

1-800-273-8255

namiflorida.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233

thehotline.org

Going beyond the text Paying attention to the details

Most of the time when we are looking at a problem, we tend to get overwhelmed, which causes stress. Instead of focusing on taking care of one item at a time, we tend to look at the big picture and it may seem insurmountable. That is why bringing yourself to the present and dealing with one item at a time can reduce stress. Look for a photograph in the Tampa Bay Times. What do you see when you look at the whole photograph, the big picture? What is the main point of the photo? In your journal, write down two or three sentences about the photo. Now look at the details. What details do you see in the photo? Look for small details that tell you more about the setting or characters in the photo. Write down as many details as you can in your journal. Write a descriptive story about the photo using the details and photo as the basis for your story. Be creative.



About BayCare Health System

BayCare is a leading not-for-profit health care system that connects individuals and families to a wide range of services at 15 hospitals and hundreds of other convenient locations throughout Tampa Bay and central Florida. Inpatient and outpatient services include acute care, primary care, imaging, laboratory, behavioral health, home care and wellness. BayCare's mission is to improve the health of all they serve through community-owned health care services that set the standard for high-quality, compassionate care. For more information, visit BayCare.org.

Going beyond the text Let's relax

Throughout this publication, there are ideas presented to help people calm down when they are stressed out. With a partner, or in a small group, brainstorm as many ideas and strategies as you can to help students avoid and eliminate stress. Using this publication, your brainstorming notes and the Tampa Bay Times as resources, create a comic strip depicting strategies for students to use to relax and calm down during times of high stress.



Educators

Share 100 words about how you used this resource in your classroom for a chance to win a \$15 gift card! Visit tampabay.com/nie for details and to enter.

Newspaper in Education

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program (NIE) is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times Publishing Co. to encourage the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources – a living textbook.

Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text, a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world. NIE serves educators, students and families by providing schools with class sets of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Tampa Bay Times plus award-winning original educational publications, teacher guides, lesson plans, educator workshops and many more resources — all at no cost to schools, teachers or families.

In 2020-2021, NIE provided more than 1 million print copies and 10 million digital editions of the Times to area classrooms. For more information about NIE, visit tampabay.com/nie, call 727-893-8138 or email ordernie@tampabay.com. Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/TBTimesNIE. Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/TBTNIE.

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Credits

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Florida standards

This publication and its activities incorporate the following Florida Standards for middle and high school students.

Health: HE.68.B.3.3; HE.68.B.3.4; HE.68.B.4.1; HE.68.B.4.4; HE.68.B.5.1; HE.68.B.6.2; HE.68.B.6.3; HE.68.C.1.2; HE.68.C.1.3; HE.68.C.1.4; HE.68.C.2.1; HE.68.C.2.2; HE.68.C.2.3; HE.68.C.2.5; HE.68.C.2.6; HE.68.C.2.8; HE.68.P.7.1; HE.68.P.7.2; HE.68.P.8.2; HE.68.CE.2.1; HE.912.B.3.4; HE.912.B.4.1; HE.912.B.4.3; HE.912.B.5.1; HE.912.C.1.1; HE.912.C.1.2; HE.912.C.1.3; HE.912.C.2.5; HE.912.C.2.6

Language Arts: LAFS.612.L.1.1; LAFS.612.L.1.2; LAFS.612.L.3.4; LAFS.612.L.3.6; LAFS.612.RI.1.1; LAFS.612.RI.1.2; LAFS.612.RI.3.7; LAFS.912.RI.4.10