



Good Vibes: Pass 'em On Patch Program

Girl Scout Levels: Cadette, Senior, Ambassador

In this patch program, you will choose to address one of the mental health issues that many adolescents and teens in America face daily. The goal is to build a positive campaign or project to raise awareness and provide information and resources around the issue. You are taking the lead to impact positive change in your communities by building healthy relationships and providing resources and empowering others to seek help if they need it.

Stage 1: Choose and research an issue

This could be an issue that you are familiar with, or one you know nothing about. Make sure to choose something that interests you! As you research each topic, get a jump start by answering the following questions:

- How are kids from the ages of 10-18 affected by this issue?
- What percentage of kids is affected by this issue?
- What are some positive ways to understand, raise awareness, or help this issue get better?

Possible issues to research could be:

- Stress
- Depression and anxiety
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Self esteem
- Your own chosen topic around mental health within teens and adolescents

Once you have chosen a topic, use the resources provided (websites and information sheets below) to learn about the subject. Note anything that you didn't know before, and also keep track of what you think would be most helpful for your peers to know. You will use this information to build your project or campaign.

Note: Per GSUSA guidelines, Girl Scouts should have adult supervision as they research these topics. If this is not possible, use the PDF resources below. Please refer to the Computer/Online Use: Safety Activity Checkpoints for more information.

<https://www.tolerance.org>

www.cfchildren.org

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

www.safekids.com

<https://www.stompoutbullying.org/>

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

www.nami.org

PDF Resources:



Stress Fact Sheet.pdf



Depression-Recognizing Depression.pdf



Anxiety



Bullying What To Do If You Are Being



Exercise Fact Sheet.pdf



Suicide-Preventing suicide.pdf



Mental Health Tips for Talking.pdf



Mental Health Facts for Children and Teens



Time to Talk.pdf



Time to Talk-talking to parents.pdf

Stage 2: Choose and implement a plan of action to help solve this issue

Here are some possibilities:

1. Create a campaign around the school (posters, pamphlets, bracelets, buttons, hashtags, etc.) raising awareness and providing information on how to create a safe environment, and what to do if you don't feel safe.
2. Public Service Announcement: Create a video or speak at a school assembly about your chosen issue.
3. Create a Dropbox where kids who are struggling with issues at home, school or in relationships can communicate this to the school staff or troop leader, or they can communicate if they are concerned about another kid.
4. Once you are educated on your chosen topic, wear a ribbon (Blue Ribbon Project) to start conversations with members of your school and community.
5. Do a presentation or activity with your troop to help raise awareness about one of these issues, and to encourage kids to seek help if they are struggling.
6. Create and distribute information packets defining boundaries, bullying or warning signs in a relationship to help other kids understand what is acceptable.
7. Build a "kindness wall" at your school or in your community, where kids are encouraged to commit acts of kindness and post their experiences.
8. Create a project of your own choice, approved by your troop leader.

Stage 3: Reflect

Document/reflect on your experience. Please write your answers on this form and include these answers when you submit your patch order form.

Questions to consider:

1. What did you learn that was new or surprising during this patch program? What would you tell other girls who are just learning about the patch?

2. What activity did you choose to complete? What were some struggles? What were some successes?

3. What impact did this project have on you, or anyone around you? Did you have any responses from your peers? If possible, provide quotes or pictures.

4. How will you use this experience, (or what is a takeaway) in the future?

Once you have completed your patch project, you can order the patches at our online store, www.shopgirlscouts.com, and search for the specific patch.

Table of Contents for Additional Resources:

Stress Facts Sheet.....	5
Depression: Recognizing Depression.....	7
Anxiety: Recognizing Anxiety.....	9
Bullying: What to Do if You Are Being Bullied.....	11
Exercise Fact Sheet.....	12
Suicide.....	14
Mental Health: Tips for Talking.....	16
Mental Health: Facts for Children and Teens.....	20
Time to Talk.....	21
Time to Talk: Talking to Parents.....	25



STRESS

No one likes to be stressed out – especially when we know it can be linked to poor health. Learning how to manage your stress can be a small change with a big positive impact on your physical and mental health.

EVERYONE HAS STRESS

Stress is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is struggling with illness or difficult circumstances.



In response to these strains, your body releases chemicals that cause increases in blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, availability of cell energy, and blood flow to your muscles. At the same time, it also releases chemicals to slow down less urgent bodily functions that deal with digestion, growth, sex, and aspects of the immune system.

These stress responses are intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to dangerous or high-pressure situations – known as the “fight or flight” reaction – and were especially important when our ancestors were living in the wilderness, facing exposure to predators and extreme weather conditions.



WHEN STRESS DOESN'T LET UP

When stress comes and goes relatively quickly the body can return to functioning in a normal, healthy way. When you are constantly reacting to stressful situations (chronic stress), cells in your immune system can cause inflammation that doesn't go away.¹

Chronic stress and inflammation have been linked to reduced ability to fight off viruses (from HIV to the common cold), and increased risk for heart disease, headaches, intestinal problems, sexual dysfunction, diabetes, and even cancer.²

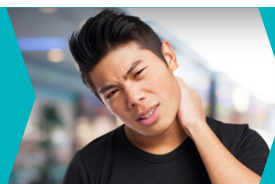


Stress can also cause a number of other physical symptoms, including:

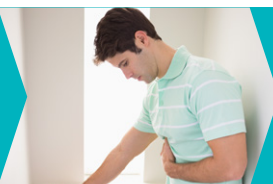
Acne and other skin problems



Muscle aches and tension



Nausea, stomach pain, and heartburn



Diarrhea, constipation and other digestive issues



Irregular or painful periods



Changes in appetite and weight



TEN TIPS FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

BE REALISTIC

You may be taking on more responsibility than you can or should handle for yourself or your family. If you feel overwhelmed by how many things are on your schedule, it's ok to say "No" to new activities! You may also decide to stop doing an activity that is not 100% necessary. If friends or family criticize your decisions, give reasons why you're making the changes. If you are a parent and your kids' activities are part of your stress, be willing to listen to their concerns and stay open to compromise.

NO ONE IS PERFECT

Shed the "superman/superwoman" urge. Don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done? How much can I do? Is the deadline realistic? What adjustments can I make?" Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

MEDITATE

Just ten to twenty minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things or nothing.

VISUALIZE

Use your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully. Whether it's a business presentation or moving to a new place, many people feel visual rehearsals boost self-confidence and help them to take a more positive approach to a difficult task.

ONE THING AT A TIME

For people under tension or stress, their day-to-day workload can sometimes seem unbearable. You may feel like you have to multi-task, but that often leads to more stress. Take one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to get done and start with one task. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. The feeling of checking items off a list is very satisfying and can motivate you to keep going.

EXERCISE

Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. It gives an outlet to energy your body makes when it is preparing for a "flight or fight" response to stress or danger. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind.

GET A HOBBY

Take a break from your worries by doing something you enjoy. Whether it's gardening, painting, doing jigsaw puzzles or playing video games, schedule time to indulge your interests. The "zoned out" feeling people get while doing these types of activities is a great way to relax.

VENT

Talking with a friend or family member lets you know that you are not the only one having a bad day, caring for a sick child or working in a busy office. Try to limit complaining and keep conversations constructive. Ask them how they have dealt with a similar situation that may be "stressing you out." Let them provide love, support and guidance. Don't try to cope alone.

BE FLEXIBLE

If you find you're meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your approach. Arguing only intensifies stressful feelings. Make allowances for others' opinions and be prepared to compromise. If you are willing to be accommodating, others may meet you halfway. Not only will you reduce your stress, you may find better solutions to your problems.

GO EASY ON CRITICISM

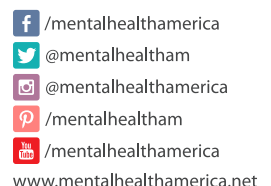
You may expect too much of yourself and others. Try not to hold on to frustration or disappointment when another person does not measure up. The "other person" may be a coworker, spouse, or child whose behavior you are trying to change or don't agree with. Avoid criticisms about character, such as "You're so stubborn," and try providing helpful suggestions for how someone might do something differently. Also remember to be kind to yourself. Negative self-talk doesn't fix problems and will make you feel worse.

TAKE THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE!

Join Mental Health America this May as we challenge ourselves each day to make small changes – both physically and mentally – to create huge gains for our overall fitness. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for the challenge of the day and share your successes by posting with #4mind4body.

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

For a complete list of sources, download the complete 2018 May is Mental Health Month toolkit for end notes or visit the corresponding page on our website, www.mentalhealthamerica.net.



BACK TO SCHOOL: *Recognizing Depression*

It's not unusual to have "the blues" or feel down occasionally—especially when you are in middle or high school. Bodies go through major chemical changes as you mature. The expectations of your teachers, family and friends—and the fear of not meeting them—can create stress and worry. When things go wrong at school or at home, you may feel unsure of yourself or wonder how you fit in. The idea of preparing for college or making decisions about your future can be overwhelming. On top of that, you face choices about friendships, sex, alcohol, and drugs. You may feel like you are getting mixed messages from parents, teachers, friends, and society.

Feeling down from time to time is different than having depression. When you have depression, it feels like there is a dark cloud over everyone and everything, and it is hard to feel good.

3.1

MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE AGES
12-17 DEAL WITH PERIODS OF
MAJOR DEPRESSION.¹

78%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGES 11-17 WHO TOOK
MHA'S DEPRESSION SCREEN SCORED POSITIVE
FOR MODERATE TO SEVERE DEPRESSION.²

Signs of Depression

It is important to recognize depression so it can be treated. The earlier you get help, the sooner you can get back to feeling like yourself again. If you have some of the symptoms below, you might be dealing with depression.³

- HAVING TROUBLE WITH SCHOOLWORK
- NOT PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES YOU USED TO ENJOY
- SADNESS AND HOPELESSNESS
- LACK OF ENTHUSIASM, ENERGY OR MOTIVATION
- ANGER AND RAGE
- OVERREACTION TO CRITICISM
- FEELINGS OF BEING UNABLE TO MEET EXPECTATIONS
- POOR SELF-ESTEEM OR GUILT
- PROBLEMS WITH MAKING DECISIONS, LACK OF CONCENTRATION OR FORGETFULNESS
- RESTLESSNESS AND AGITATION
- CHANGES IN EATING OR SLEEPING PATTERNS
- REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS, TEACHERS, OR OTHER AUTHORITY FIGURES
- SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS

Don't Suffer in Silence

Depression can make people feel hopeless about their current circumstances or the future. Left untreated, depression can cause some young people to think about doing drastic or violent things.

If you see suspicious posts on social media or hear people say things that suggest they might be planning to hurt themselves or other people, tell an adult right away. If you feel this way, don't suffer in silence! It is important to remember that there is help and there is hope.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, seek immediate help by calling 911 or going to the closest emergency room. Trust your instincts, and if necessary, break a confidence in order to save a life.

SCREENING IS AN ANONYMOUS, FREE, AND PRIVATE WAY TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND IF YOU ARE SHOWING WARNING SIGNS OF A CONDITION. A SCREENING IS NOT A DIAGNOSIS, BUT IT CAN BE A HELPFUL TOOL FOR STARTING A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH.



TAKE THE YOUTH SCREEN
AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org)

If you just don't feel right or notice that someone else is struggling, it's important to get help sooner rather than later. Reach out to a friend or trusted adult and tell them how you feel or that you are worried about someone. If you need help starting a conversation, visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/timetotalk for tips on how to get started.

TRAINED CRISIS COUNSELORS ARE AVAILABLE 24/7 BY TEXTING "MHA" TO 741-741 OR CALLING 1-800-273-TALK(8255).

YOU CAN ALSO DOWNLOAD THE NOTOK APP ON GOOGLE PLAY OR THE APP STORE. THE NOTOK APP ALLOWS YOU TO IDENTIFY UP TO 5 PEOPLE WHO WILL RECEIVE A NOTIFICATION WHEN YOU PRESS A BUTTON INDICATING THAT YOU'RE NOT OK.

Sources

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2017). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. SMA 17-5044, NSDUH Series H-52). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

² Proprietary data from mhascreening.org.

³ American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.




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BACK TO SCHOOL: *Recognizing Anxiety*

Being nervous, uneasy, or worried can be summed up as feeling anxious. Everyone feels anxious from time to time, and often for good reason—you may have a big test coming up, be changing schools, have concerns about relationships with friends, feel self-conscious in certain situations, or have a very realistic fear of something. In most cases, anxious feelings pass relatively quickly.

Having anxious feelings is different than having an anxiety disorder. When you have an anxiety disorder, anxious feelings are extreme, can happen without warning or reason, have physical symptoms, and last for extended amounts of time.

31.9%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGES 13-18
HAVE AN ANXIETY DISORDER.¹

1/2

OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGES 11-17 WHO TOOK MHA'S ANXIETY
SCREEN SCORED POSITIVE FOR SEVERE ANXIETY.²

Types of Anxiety Disorders

There are many different types of anxiety disorders, but some of the most common are Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Phobias, Social Anxiety Disorder, and Panic Disorder. Here are some of the signs for each.³

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

- FEELINGS OF CONSTANT, EXAGGERATED WORRY AND TENSION
- ALWAYS EXPECTING THE WORST
- DIFFICULTY RELAXING OR SLEEPING
- PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS SUCH AS TIREDNESS, TREMBLING, MUSCLE TENSION, HEADACHES, IRRITABILITY OR HOT FLASHES
- TIGHTNESS IN YOUR CHEST OR KNOTS IN YOUR STOMACH

PHOBIAS

- BEING AFRAID OF AN OBJECT OR SITUATION THAT IS ACTUALLY RELATIVELY SAFE, BUT THE THOUGHT OF FACING IT BRINGS ON A PANIC ATTACK OR SEVERE ANXIETY
- INTENSE FEAR OF BEING HUMILIATED OR EMBARRASSED IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE WHICH KEEPS YOU FROM BEING SOCIAL
- HAVING INTENSE ANXIETY ABOUT BEING IN PLACES OR SITUATIONS THAT MIGHT MAKE YOU FEEL HELPLESS OR TRAPPED, OFTEN MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO LEAVE THE HOUSE

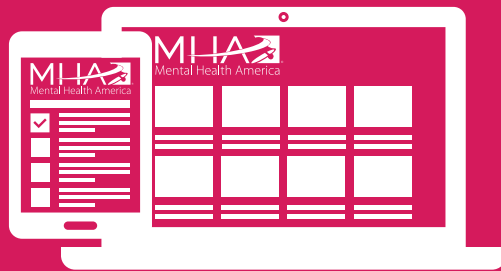
PANIC DISORDER

- UNEXPECTED ATTACKS OF EXTREME TERROR WHICH OFTEN HAVE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS LIKE SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR RAPID BREATHING, SHAKING, CHOKING SENSATION, SWEATING, AND FAST HEART RATE
- FEELING LIKE YOU'RE LOSING CONTROL, GOING CRAZY, OR DYING
- INTENSE FEAR BETWEEN ATTACKS ABOUT WHEN & WHERE THE NEXT ONE WILL HAPPEN

SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

- EXTREME FEAR OF SOCIAL OR COMPETITIVE SITUATIONS
- BEING TERRIFIED OF HUMILIATION, REJECTION, OR BEING JUDGED NEGATIVELY
- PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS SUCH AS RAPID HEART RATE, SWEATING, AND RACING THOUGHTS AT THE IDEA OF INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE OR BEING IN LARGE GROUPS

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Sources

¹ Kessler RC, Chiu WT, Demler O, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of 12-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2005 Jun;62(6):617-27. PMID: 15939839

² Proprietary data from mhascreening.org.

³ American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.



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WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE BEING BULLIED



Being bullied sucks! It's hurtful, scary and confusing. When bullying is aggressive and physical, it can be dangerous. When it's emotional – like name calling, or cyberbullying – it's easy to feel alone. If you're being bullied or see someone being bullied, here are some things to do:

- ❑ Try to stay calm.
- ❑ Don't let hurtful words beat you down
- ❑ Be a friend - listen, support and speak up (especially if the situation is unsafe).
- ❑ Tell them to stop.
- ❑ Say nothing and walk away...if you need to, run away!
- ❑ Remember – bullies hurt others because something wrong is going on in their lives. Even bullies need help.
- ❑ Get off the internet! Avoid checking the internet (even though you want to).
- ❑ Delete accounts where you are bullied. Take a screen shot so that you can share it with your parents or others for evidence and support.
- ❑ Don't respond to online bullies – getting into online conversations/chats can make you feel worse.
- ❑ Brush it off with humor.
- ❑ Tell someone you trust – a friend, parent, teacher, and/or mentor.
- ❑ Avoid “problematic areas” – areas around the neighborhood or school where bullying can happen.
- ❑ Safety in numbers - keep yourself surrounded by people.
- ❑ Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself (we like this one!).
- ❑ Don't become a bully yourself. Don't give in to anger. Don't give in to peer pressure. If you can, be a friend – apologize to those you've bullied and support those who are being bullied.
- ❑ Ask adults to listen. Tell them: “It's important.”
- ❑ Recognize the signs of depression - sadness, wanting to be alone, poor concentration, sleeping problems, and difficulty in school.
- ❑ If you're feeling very sad or unsafe – always, always find help (best to find a trusted adult).
- ❑ If you do not know who to talk to and you feel like you want to hurt yourself. **Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255.**

For more information, contact Mental Health America at



EXERCISE

Staying active can benefit so many aspects of your health and can even prevent physical and mental health symptoms from worsening. It's important to incorporate exercise daily to ensure your body and your mind are healthy.

EXERCISING BENEFITS NEARLY ALL ASPECTS OF A PERSON'S HEALTH

In addition to helping control weight, it can improve the chances of living longer, the strength of bones and muscles, and your mental health.¹



WHEN A PERSON DOESN'T GET ENOUGH EXERCISE, THEY ARE AT INCREASED RISK FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS

These include cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and metabolic syndrome.²



EXERCISE INCREASES A VARIETY OF SUBSTANCES THAT PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRAIN FUNCTION

BDNF

BDNF (brain derived neurotrophic factor) is a protein that creates and protects neurons (nerve cells) in the brain, helps these cells to transmit messages more efficiently, and regulates depression-like behaviors.^{3,4}

ENDORPHINS

Endorphins are a type of chemical messenger (neurotransmitter) that is released when we experience stress or pain to reduce their negative effects and increase pleasure throughout the body.⁵ Endorphins are also responsible for the euphoric feeling known as a "runner's high" that happens after long periods of intense exercise.

SEROTONIN

Serotonin is another neurotransmitter that increases during exercise. It plays a role in sending messages about appetite, sleep, and mood.⁶ It is the target of a medications known as SSRIs or SNRIs, which are used to treat anxiety and depression.

DOPAMINE

Dopamine is involved in controlling movement and the body's reward response system. Due to its role in how the body perceives rewards, it is heavily involved with addictions. When amounts of this chemical messenger are low, it is linked to mental health conditions including depression, schizophrenia, and psychosis.⁷

GLUTAMATE & GABA

Glutamate and GABA (Gamma-amino butyric acid) both act to regulate the activity of nerve cells in the parts of the brain that process visual information, determine heart rate, and affect emotions and the ability to think clearly.⁸ Low levels of GABA have been linked to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and mood disorders.⁹

EXERCISE CAN HELP PREVENT MENTAL ILLNESSES AND IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TREATMENT

Just 1 hour of exercise a week is related to lower levels of mood, anxiety and substance use disorders.¹⁰



Among people in the U.S., those who make regular physical activity a part of their routines are less likely to have depression, panic disorder, and phobias (extreme fears).¹¹

One study found that for people with anxiety, exercise had similar effects to cognitive behavioral therapy in reducing symptoms.¹²



For people with schizophrenia, yoga is the most effective form of exercise for reducing positive and negative symptoms associated with the disorder.¹³

HOW MUCH EXERCISE SHOULD YOU BE GETTING?



Exercise doesn't have to be done for hours on end. Ten minutes of moderate or vigorous activity at a time, fifteen times a week will get you to the recommended amount.

Muscle strengthening activities should be incorporated into your exercise routine twice a week. This includes yoga, lifting weights, resistance band exercises, and things like push-ups and sit-ups. Your muscles should be tired by the time you are finished with your exercises, but make sure you aren't trying to lift too much too soon or you could injure yourself.



You don't have to have a gym membership to make exercise a part of your life! Picking physical activities that are easy to incorporate into things you already do and having a strong social support system are important in incorporating exercise into your routine.

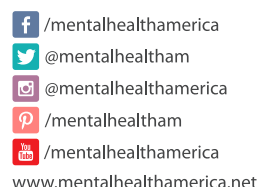


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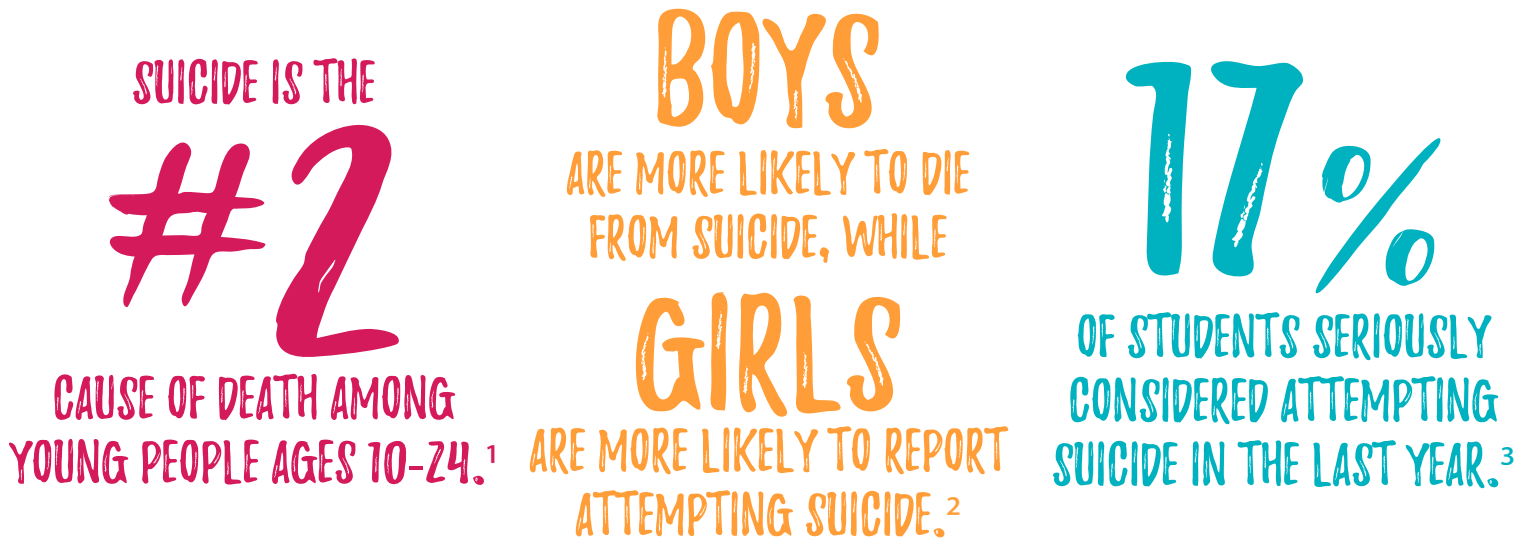
If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

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BACK TO SCHOOL: Preventing Suicide

It can be hard to know how to deal with all the things life throws at us. For some, sometimes death seems like the only option. More young people survive suicide attempts than die, but even one death is too many. It's important to know that there is help and there is hope.



Warning Signs

If you think someone you know is considering suicide, look for these warning signs:

- THREATS OF SUICIDE—EITHER DIRECT OR INDIRECT
- VERBAL HINTS SUCH AS “I WON’T BE AROUND MUCH LONGER” OR “IT’S HOPELESS”
- OBSESSION WITH DEATH
- DEPRESSION
- OVERWHELMING SENSE OF GUILT, SHAME OR REJECTION
- PUTTING AFFAIRS IN ORDER (FOR EXAMPLE, GIVING OR THROWING AWAY FAVORITE POSSESSIONS)
- SUDDEN CHEERFULNESS AFTER A PERIOD OF DEPRESSION
- DRAMATIC CHANGE IN PERSONALITY OR APPEARANCE
- BECOMING ANGERED EASILY
- BIZARRE THOUGHTS
- CHANGES IN EATING OR SLEEPING PATTERNS
- CHANGES IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
- LACK OF INTEREST IN FUTURE PLANS

What Can You Do?

If you think someone you know is at immediate risk of suicide, you need to ACT.

A IS FOR ASK:

ASK YOUR FRIEND IF THEY ARE CONSIDERING SUICIDE OR IF THEY HAVE A PLAN TO END THEIR LIFE. IT'S OKAY TO BE DIRECT, JUST TRY TO BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL AND SHOW YOU CARE.

C IS FOR CARE:

IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, STAY WITH THEM AND OFFER TO GO WITH THEM TO FIND HELP. EVEN IF IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO YOU, TRY YOUR BEST TO SYMPATHIZE AND OFFER SUPPORT. TRY NOT TO LEAVE SOMEONE WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS ALONE.

T IS FOR TELL:

TELL A TRUSTED ADULT WHAT'S GOING ON. YOUR FRIEND MIGHT ASK YOU NOT TO TELL ANYONE, BUT YOU SHOULD NEVER KEEP TALK OF SUICIDE A SECRET. IT IS WORTH BREAKING TRUST TO SAVE A LIFE. YOU SHOULD NEVER TRY TO HANDLE THE SITUATION BY YOURSELF. THE MOST HELPFUL THING YOU CAN DO IS GUIDE YOUR FRIEND TO SOMEONE WITH TRAINING.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF TAKING SUICIDAL ACTION, SEEK HELP BY CALLING 911 OR GOING TO THE CLOSEST EMERGENCY ROOM.

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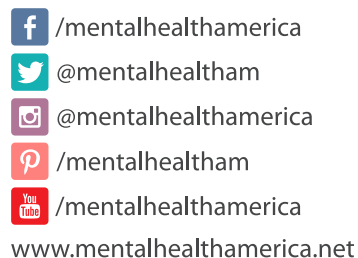
Content adapted from Red Flags "Suicide: A Permanent Solution to a Temporary Problem," and "How to Help."

Sources

¹ CDC. Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html

² Drapeau, C. W., & McIntosh, J. L. (2017, December 24). U.S.A. Suicide: 2016 Official Final Data for America for the America Association of Suicidology. Retrieved from <https://www.suicidology.org/resources/facts-statistics>

³ Kann, L., Kinchen, S., & Shanklin, S. (2014, June 13). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance - United States, 2013. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6304a1.htm.



Time To Talk: Tips For Talking About Your Mental Health

 mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/time-talk-tips-talking-about-your-mental-health

August 7,
2015

Tips For Talking

Start a conversation about mental health when there is an open window of time to have an in-depth discussion, and neither you or the person you're talking to will have to cut the conversation short to take care of other obligations. Plan to set aside at least 30 minutes to an hour.

If you aren't sure how to bring up the topic of your mental health, here are a few ways to get started:



Start with a text if a face-to-face talk is too intimidating. It could be a plain old text message with a note that says, "I have some important things on my mind and need to make time to talk to you about them."



Find important information online that might help you explain what you're going through. Print it and bring it with you when you're ready to talk.



Take the Youth Screen at mhascreening.org. Print out your results to share with the person you plan to talk to.

Still Stumped About How To Get Started?

Use the letter below and fill in the blanks. Pick from the options we've listed or use your own words.

Dear _____,

For the past (*day/week/month/year/_____*), **I have been feeling** (*unlike myself/sad/angry/anxious/ moody/agitated/lonely/hopeless/fearful/overwhelmed/ distracted/confused/stressed/empty/restless/unable to function or get out of bed/_____*).

I have struggled with *(changes in appetite/changes in weight/loss of interest in things I used to enjoy/ hearing things that were not there/seeing things that were not there/ feeling unsure if things are real or not real/ my brain playing tricks on me/ lack of energy/increased energy/ inability to concentrate/alcohol or drug use or abuse/self-harm/skipping meals/overeating/overwhelming focus on weight or appearance/feeling worthless/ uncontrollable thoughts/guilt/paranoia/nightmares/ bullying/not sleeping enough/ sleeping too much/risky sexual behavior/overwhelming sadness/losing friends/unhealthy friendships/unexplained anger or rage/isolation/ feeling detached from my body/feeling out of control/ thoughts of self-harm/cutting/thoughts of suicide/plans of suicide/abuse/sexual assault/death of a loved one/_____).*

Telling you this makes me feel *(nervous/anxious/hopeful/embarrassed/ empowered/pro-active/mature/self-conscious/guilty/_____)*, **but I'm telling you this because** *(I'm worried about myself/it is impacting my schoolwork/it is impacting my friendships/I am afraid/I don't want to feel like this/I don't know what to do/I don't have anyone else to talk to about this/I trust you/_____).*

I would like to *(talk to a doctor or therapist/talk to a guidance counselor/talk to my teachers/talk about this later/create a plan to get better/talk about this more/find a support group/_____)* and I need your help.

Sincerely,
(Your name_____)

What if someone talks to you about their mental health?

- **Listen.** Let them finish their sentences and complete thoughts without interrupting. After they have finished you can respond.
- **Let them know if you understand.** If someone has just spilled their guts and and you've gone through something similar—tell them. It helps a lot for someone to know they aren't alone. Make sure you don't switch the topic of conversation to your struggles though; focus on their needs.
- **Avoid being judgmental.** Don't tell them they are being weird or crazy; it's not helpful at all.
- **Take them seriously.** Try not to respond with statements that minimize how they are feeling or what they are going through, such as, "You're just having a bad week," or "I'm sure it's nothing."

- **Make yourself available to talk again if needed.** While it can be a big relief for someone to share something they have been keeping secret, mental health struggles usually aren't solved with one conversation. Let the person who has spoken with you know that they can reach out to you again if they are having a tough time. It's ok to let them know if there is a time of day or certain days of the week that you aren't available. For instance, "I'm here for you if you need to talk, but my parents don't let me use the phone after 9 on school nights, so call before then.
- **Don't turn what you've been told into gossip.** If someone is talking to you about their mental health, it was probably tough for them to work up the nerve to say something in the first place and you shouldn't share what they tell you with other students at school. Let them share on their own terms.
- **If you don't understand, do some research and learn about what you've been told.** Make sure that your information is coming from reliable sources like government agencies and health organizations.
- **Tell an adult if you have to.** It's important to have friends that trust you, but if a friend indicates they have thoughts or plans of hurting themselves or another person, have been hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see, or have any other signs and symptoms that shouldn't be ignored then you need to tell an adult what is going on. That doesn't make you a bad friend; it just means that the problem requires more help than you can give. If someone you know is in crisis and needs help urgently, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text 741741, go to your local Emergency Room or call 911.

Now what?

If you've made the decision to talk to someone about your mental health, you may be nervous about how things will go and what could happen. Check out the list below to find out more about what you can expect.

Things might be a little awkward at first for both people in the conversation. For a lot of people, talking about anything related to their health or body can be kind of tough at first.

You'll probably feel relieved. Being able to open up and share something you've been keeping to yourself for a long time can feel like a weight has been lifted. You might learn that the person you're talking to has had some personal experience or knows someone in their family who has gone through something similar, which will help you to feel less alone.

You may encounter someone who doesn't understand. While it's likely that a person will know someone who has struggled with their mental health, they may not understand what it's like- especially if they haven't struggled themselves.

Expect to be asked questions. Some questions might include: How long has this been going on? Did something difficult happen before you started feeling this way? Can you describe what it's like? You don't have to answer every question that you're asked if you don't want. Remember that the person you're talking to is probably asking questions to help them better understand what you're going through.

It's possible that you might not get the reaction you were hoping for. It can be discouraging if you work up the nerve to speak up and are then told, "you've just got the blues" "get over it" "stop being silly" or "you worry too much." Sometimes this kind of reaction has to do with culture or expectations. Try to explain how it is really having an effect on your ability to live a healthy and happy life and you aren't sure how to make things better. If for some reason the person you chose to talk to still isn't "getting it" someone else will. Think about someone else you could talk to that would give you the help you need. Don't stop or go back to ignoring your situation or struggling alone.

The conversation is the first step in a process. Congratulations for getting the ball rolling.

If your first conversation isn't with your parents, you'll probably need to talk to them at some point. See the following page for tips and common concerns about talking to parents.

Your next step might be going to an appointment of some sort. It may start with someone at school like the guidance counselor or school psychologist, a visit to your regular family doctor or psychiatrist, or with another kind of treatment provider like a therapist or social worker. These professionals can help figure out what exactly is going on and how to start getting you the help you need. You might need to talk to more than one person to find someone who can be the most helpful.

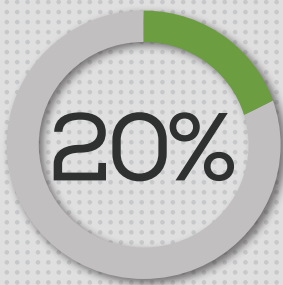
It takes time to get better. You could be going through something situational, which can improve with time to process feelings (for example, grief after the death of a loved one or a tough break-up) or adjustments to your environment (like switching lockers to get away from someone who is a bully), or you could have a more long term mental health issue. Mental health issues are common and treatable; however, you may have to try a few different things to find right type of treatment or combination of strategies that works best for you.

Don't forget to visit the other pages.

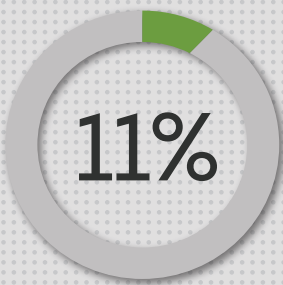
Mental Health Facts

CHILDREN & TEENS

Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹



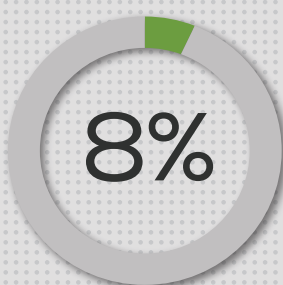
20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition¹



11% of youth have a mood disorder¹



10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹



8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

Impact



50%

50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹

10 yrs



The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.¹

50%



Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school.¹

70%



70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide

3rd



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹



90%

90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.¹

Warning Signs



Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).



Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.



Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.



Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.



Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.



Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.



Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.



Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).



Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.



Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

4 Things Parents Can Do



Talk with your pediatrician



Get a referral to a mental health specialist



Work with the school



Connect with other families

¹ This document cites statistics provided by the National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov

Follow Us!

[facebook.com/officialNAMI](https://www.facebook.com/officialNAMI)

twitter.com/NAMImcommunicate

Time To Talk: Uncomfortable, But Important

 [mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/time-talk-uncomfortable-important](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/time-talk-uncomfortable-important)

August 6,
2015

A Guide for Adolescents and Teens

It's hard to start the conversation about your mental health, but our guide can help you get started.

It's time to talk about your mental health when...

- You just don't "feel right" and aren't sure why.
- Your thoughts or things you do just don't seem the way other people think or behave.
- Your thoughts, feelings or behaviors are starting to affect your life at home, school or with friends in a bad way.
- You've had some of the signs and symptoms below for more than a week:

Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or worthless



Sensitivity to sound, sight, smell, or touch



Feeling overly worried





Not being able to do school work



Feeling like your brain is playing tricks on you and hearing knocking or scratching sounds, or your name being called



Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy, or withdrawal from others



Changes in sleep patterns or energy levels



Irritability or restlessness



Problems with concentration, memory or thinking



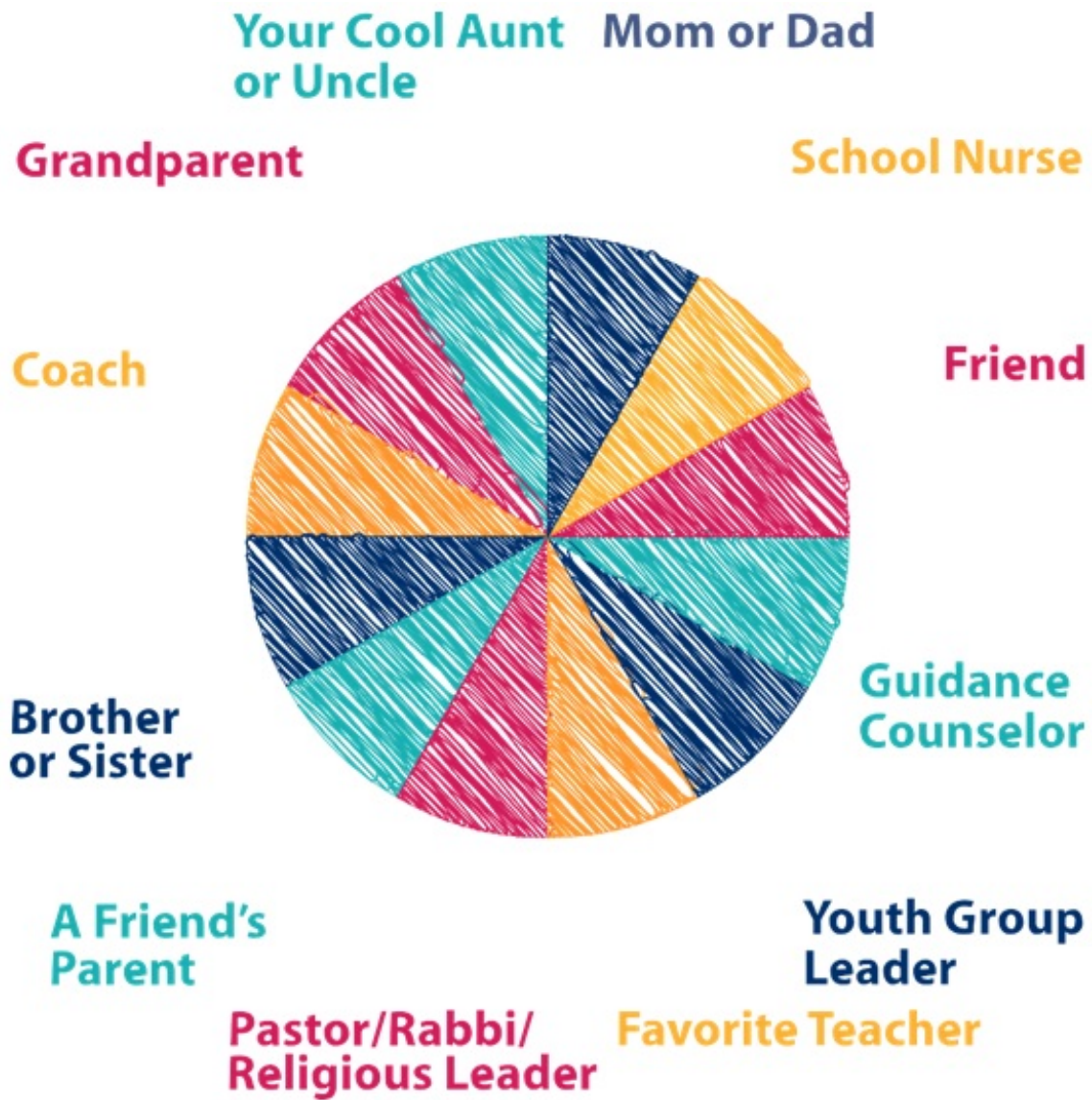
Signs And Symptoms That You Shouldn't Ignore

- Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting one's self or another person
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
- Unexplainable changes in thinking, speech, or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Serious drop in school performance
- Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text 741741, go to your local Emergency Room or call 911.

Who Can You Talk To?

Find a person you trust. Someone who will listen to you, and help you plan your next steps. While this could be a family member (parents, grandparents, aunt, or uncle), you can also seek out resources at your school (nurse or guidance counselor), church (rabbi, pastor, youth group leader), or community (coach, neighbor).



Don't forget to visit the other pages.

Time To Talk: Talking To Your Parents

 [mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/time-talk-talking-your-parents](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/time-talk-talking-your-parents)

August 7,
2015

Talking To Parents

Talking to a parent about mental health can be scary for a number of reasons.

Many people report being afraid to tell their parents because they do not want to upset them. Sometimes we don't understand where troubling feelings or thoughts are coming from and feel guilty for having them. A good question to ask yourself in this situation is how would you feel if someone you love were suffering and came to you? Likely, you would be upset that they were struggling, but you would not be upset with them. You would be glad they confided in you and ready to help them in any way you could.

Here are some of the most common concerns people give for not talking to their parents and some tips for overcoming them.

"I don't know how my parents will react."

Talking can be scary, but the help available is worth it. The sooner you address things, the sooner you can feel better and the better you will be in the long-run. If you are concerned about how your parents will respond, one option is to schedule a meeting with both of them or with one parent at a time. Instead of a sudden, potentially unexpected conversation, choose a time and place where you are comfortable and plan what you want to say beforehand. You can plan by researching information online, taking a mental health screening and printing the results, or just by writing out a script for what you'd like to say.

On that note, you could also write a letter if you are not as comfortable with a conversation. A letter allows you to express exactly what you want to say without the pressure of an immediate response. Check out our sample letter on page 2. Remember, even if it seems scary or if your family never discusses these things, you are doing what is right for you. Be honest with where you are and think about the specific support you need from them. Focus on actions they can take or things they can change.

"My parents will be sad or disappointed."

It might be hard for your parents not to show that they are sad, upset or disappointed. They might be sad that you are suffering, but this does not mean they are upset with you. In fact, many parents are upset because they care about you. Parents often wonder if there was something they could have done differently that would have prevented you from struggling.

Maybe you feel that there are high expectations of you and you're afraid that having mental health problems will be a disappointment. It's important to ask where these expectations come from and whether the expectations are real (have you been told certain things are expected, or are you assuming they are expected) or reasonable. Thinking through and explaining your fears about their sadness or disappointment might help them to respond in a way that is more helpful for you.

"My parents will be angry or won't take me seriously."

Another concern many people have is that their parents will become angry or dismiss their feelings, both of which are painful experiences when you are already hurting. When dealing with a potential conflict, it is helpful to plan a meeting or to write a letter saying that you are worried about anger or dismissal. Explain to your parents that you are struggling and believe you would benefit from extra support. If they dismiss your concerns, tell them that you are trying to take care of yourself and would like to at least have a discussion with a professional. You can also support your desire for treatment with information and mental health screening results.

A lot of the time, reacting with anger or dismissal is about fear. Your parents might not know how to react or may have preconceived notions about what it means to get help for mental health concerns. Even if they do not know the best way to respond, it is important that you speak up for yourself, as we know the earlier a person gets help the better they are in the long-run. You may have to turn to other trusted adults or mental health resources if needed.

"My parents will ask too many questions."

Sometimes parents will get upset and afraid and want to know all of the details of what you are experiencing. While only you know your parents and level of comfort, do not feel that you have to share every detail of your experience. You may be unsure of how to describe what you're feeling or afraid of getting in trouble for certain behaviors. Your thoughts or concerns about how your family relates to one another might also be playing a role in what you're going through. There are reasons why you may not want to tell your parents every single detail of what is going on, and it makes sense to want some privacy when first opening up about your struggles.

It might help to plan or review what you are comfortable sharing beforehand. You can tell your parents that you would really like to speak to a mental health professional, as an outside input with knowledge and experience in what you are dealing with. While it is unhealthy to hold things in, it is important to make sure you are in a safe space when beginning to open up.

"My parents already have enough to worry about."

All adults have responsibilities and stress. While some families may be dealing with more stressful or serious situations than others, your wellbeing and health is important and deserves attention—regardless of what else may be going on with your parents. If you're worried about stressing out your parents, pick a time to talk when things are calm, and bring information about what you're going through and what kind of help you would like.

"One or both of my parents are part of why I am struggling."

If one or both of your parents contribute to your desire to seek help, there are several options for what you can do. If you trust one parent, you can explain how you are feeling and ask that they either tell or do not tell the other parent. Often parents may not be willing to keep things of this nature from one another so make sure to check beforehand.

This might be an opportunity to reach out to another trusted adult in your life. Guidance counselors in particular can be very helpful in these situations, as they have experience and expertise with students in similar situations. Other trusted adults may be able to help you as well, particularly in creating a plan to talk to your parents. While speaking with a trusted adult is not a substitute for a needed treatment program, outside resources can guide you to the help or support you need.

If you are currently experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect, inform a trusted adult. You can visit www.dorightbykids.org to find out more information on definitions of abuse and neglect, reporting, and what happens after you report.

"My parents do not believe me."

Even if your parents care for you, sometimes it's hard for them to see what is actually going on. This could mean they label your struggles as typical "growing up" experiences, or they dismiss the entire possibility of getting help for mental health. Ignoring problems because they are unpleasant does not make them go away, and it is important for you to continue to ask for what you need. You can explain to them that, even though you hear their beliefs, you would like the chance to speak to a mental health professional based on your experiences and research.

If it is unlikely that you will change their minds, you may have to reach out to other resources. This includes teachers, relatives, and guidance counselors. These individuals could help you talk to your parents and/ or put you in contact with resources to help. Even though your parents are not validating your struggles, it does not make them unreal or unimportant. If you need professional help, put together a list of reasons why this is the help you think you need. You can also lean on friends, online communities, and other accessible mental health resources like apps and online education.

Other Resources

For more information and resources in your area contact your local MHA affiliate. Find one near you at mentalhealthamerica.net/find-affiliate.

Take the youth screen at www.mhascreening.org.

Don't forget to visit the other pages.