

Mental Health & Youth:

Mental health and behavioral concerns among adolescents have been on the rise for the last decade. It should be noted that about 1 out of 5 youth (between 12yrs.-18yrs.) have at least one mental health disorder.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders reported in youth. According to the National Institutes of Health, almost 1 out of 3 youth (31.9%) will develop an anxiety disorder. There are several types of anxiety disorders.

- Generalized anxiety disorder is excessive worry and/or apprehension about a number of events or activities;
- Phobias are highly specific and exclusive fears;
- Separation anxiety disorder is the child or adolescent's excessive worry and apprehension about being away from their parents;
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a condition involving obsessions and compulsions.
- Panic disorder is characterized by discrete and intense periods of anxiety that occur unexpectedly, without warning.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder is an intense re-experiencing of a traumatic event by distressing recollections, dreams, and/or associations (such as things or situations that remind the child or adolescent of the traumatic event).

And even though, in the past 10 years, there has been increase in anxiety in youth, as little as 1% of youth who have symptoms of anxiety seek out treatment within a 12-month time period.

Likewise, according to a recent study released by the American Psychological Association, rates of mood disorders and suicide-related results have increased drastically over the last ten years among adolescents.

According to the 2016-2017 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), almost 1 in 3 youth (31.5%) report being depressed in the past 12 months.

And while depression is one of the most common and treatable mental health disorders, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that only about 1 out of 5 youth (20%) who live with a mental health disorder, like depression, receive treatment for their disorder.

Furthermore, the 2017 YRBS shows that almost 1 in 6 youth (17.2%) have contemplated suicide in the past 12 months and almost 1 out of 12 youth (7.4) have attempted suicide in the past 12 months.

While bipolar disorder is rather uncommon in youth and adolescents, as less than 3 out of 100 kids and adolescents (2.9%) are diagnosed with the disorder, the disorder causes extreme changes in a person's mood, actions, thinking, and overall behavior

which not only impacts that one student but can impact and disrupt an entire classroom. Children and adolescents with bipolar disorder have periods/episodes of time of mania and depression.

- Mania Episodes: An episode of mania includes a period where someone's mood has changed and it is elevated (overly happy), expansive, or very irritable and the person also has increased energy at the same time.
- Depressive Episodes: People who have bipolar disorder may also experience periods of depression. An episode of depression includes low, depressed, or irritable mood.

Mental and emotional health refers to the overall psychological well-being of a person. It includes the way one feels about themselves, the quality of their relationships, and their ability to manage their feelings and deal with difficulties.

With all that being said, there are things that can help youth and adults alike improve their mental health, whether one has a diagnosed disorder or not. Just like it takes effort to build and maintain good physical health, it also takes effort to build and maintain good mental and emotional health.

- Get enough rest. To have good mental and emotional health, it's important to take care of your body. That includes getting enough sleep.
- Learn and practice good nutrition and eating habits.
- Exercise to relieve stress and lift your mood.
- Get a dose of sunlight every day. Sunlight lifts your mood.
- Do things that positively impact others. Being useful to others and being valued for what you do can help build self-esteem.
- Make leisure time a priority.

<https://bosr.unl.edu/20162017-yrbs-results>

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