

Norcross MD Advocacy

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Youth Mental Health: What's going on with today's teens/young adults?



Tomorrow's Generation struggling

As kids, we often feel as if we are invincible, as if nothing in the world can stop us beyond our own mind and imagination. While this is obviously false, the mind of many of today's youths has proven to be more of an obstacle for children and young adults than ever before.

Some baseline statistics for you to gloss over regarding youth mental health are becoming more and more eye-opening every single year. According to the CDC¹, in 2021, **roughly 42%** of high school students in the US reportedly **felt persistently sad or hopeless** while still **29%** of high school students in the US had **experienced more extreme forms of poor mental health**. Furthermore, over **20%** of all high school students had reported **having suicidal thoughts** while about **10%** of them reportedly **attempted suicide along with those thoughts**.

If you yourself are within this demographic, or more broadly between the ages of 12 and 25, you have almost certainly felt these feelings yourself or you know someone or some people close to you who have. These are more than just numbers too. This is the society we live in today. This glaring problem has been overlooked for far too long and it deserves to be discussed. In this month's newsletter, we'll be going over the problem influencing more and more of today's young people; a mental health crisis.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, June 1). *Mental health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm#:~:text=Adolescent%20Mental%20Health%20Cont%20inues%20to%20Worsen&text=In%202021%2C%20more%20than%204,10%20\(10%25\)%20attempted%20suicide](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm#:~:text=Adolescent%20Mental%20Health%20Cont%20inues%20to%20Worsen&text=In%202021%2C%20more%20than%204,10%20(10%25)%20attempted%20suicide)

Sources of the Problem

In a world full of conflict and hardship, the causes of such a jump in teen mental health difficulties could be linked to a lot of things. However, there are a few that stand out from the rest.



We hear all about how *those damn phones* are influencing *you kids*. There

is a lot of truth behind this, particularly with social media. Today's youth are exposed to social media in some way at ages as young as 10 years old, the average being around 12 years old². Social media, while it brings about benefits such as staying connected with friends or news easily, also brings about **pressuring expectations of lifestyles** on young kids, brings about terribly **toxic atmospheres** and new dimensions of **bullying**, and can be **very addictive** to young, developing minds.

Particularly young adults face more and more pressure to not only enter the workforce but also now having to solve the world's problems as they continue to become more drastic. When we're kids, we **often lack perspective of what it really means to be in the real world**. Young adults are the first to realize what that means, which has become very daunting as of recently. Anxiety levels have statistically risen³ over the last two decades because of this scary reality.

There are also more general causes of this mental instability seen in today's youth that include:

- **Family** (divorce, domestic violence, expectations, etc.)
- **School** (lack of support, lack of mobility or freedoms, pressure to succeed, etc.)
- **Friends/in society** (ridicule, bullying, social isolation, loneliness, peer pressure, etc.)
- **Many more** causes that can be attributed to this, see further resource links at end of article

² U.S. National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). *News: What's the average age when kids get a...* (CNN News) - behind the headlines - NLM. National Center for Biotechnology Information.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/search/research-news/3780/#:~:text=About%2056%25%20of%20US%20youth,an%20account%20was%2012.6%20years.>

³ *Anxiety*. Newport Institute. (2023, August 28).

https://www.newportinstitute.com/programs/anxiety/?kpid=go_cmp-17672242732_adg-ad-dev-c_ext-prd-utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=NI_performance&utm_term=&gclid=CjwKCAjwo9unBhBTEiwAipC11w0_NvFHqET30yGGbiPeyrw4v8qrpOV8hgToscMDZ5qbUyt0FeDeCRoC6WEOAvD_BwE



What can be done?

The youth of our world are the future of it. They represent the future of all of us. This widespread problem is heartbreaking to be so intertwined into our world but there are things that can be done. Not only for this generation of teens and young adults, but for future ones as well.

Thankfully, there have already been many services in schools and universities for teens and young

adults to receive help for this mental health crisis. Schools have been making it more and more of a priority to monitor and keep this problem in check. Not only have administrators found more time to talk to students and families about these problems and to make themselves resources for students in need, programs led by students themselves have also been on the rise. These are particularly amazing, both because it can be more impactful for students to receive help from like-minded peers as well as it shows students taking on initiative and leadership roles.

As individuals, if you yourself or someone you know is going through problems like these, there are things you can do or recommend for help:

- **Creativity-based self therapy:** things like **creative writing, painting, drawing, building something**, or anything in between have all shown incredible relief associated with anxiety⁴
- **Exercise: aerobic exercising and activities** generally help more with things like depression or anxiety while **weight-lifting workouts** have shown to assist more with self confidence⁵
- **Talking with someone:** whether it be **a trusted friend, a close family member, or a licensed therapist**, talking with someone helps to reduce feelings of loneliness and conditions of anxiety and depression, however it is not always the easiest or most comfortable form of handling these difficult emotions
- There are things that **work better for others**, there will always be hundreds of things to try

⁴ Tauber, A. (2020, October 11). *Does art therapy work for anxiety? creativity and comprehensive treatment programs*. Bridges to Recovery.

<https://www.bridgestorecovery.com/blog/does-art-therapy-work-for-anxiety-creativity-and-comprehensive-treatment-programs/#:~:text=creativity%2C%20and%20calm.-,Does%20art%20therapy%20work%20for%20anxiety%3F,in%20reducing%20symptoms%20of%20anxiety>.

⁵ Emoha. (n.d.). *Take better control of your emotions with exercises*. Manage Your Emotions Better with a Fitness Routine -. <https://emoha.com/blogs/busy/take-better-control-of-your-emotions-with-exercises>



As a society

It is important to reiterate that the youths of today are the future of all of us. They are those who represent the face of the world and its inhabitants. With that sense of global unity, what can be done as a society to help the younger generation is crucial in all of these many ways.

Creating a loving and supportive environment for your friends or people around you makes a world of difference to those dealing with these problems. If it is you who is dealing with these things, surrounding

yourself with people who make you feel **comfortable** and **secure** can help you feel more comfortable in your own skin and will drown out those negative thoughts in your mind.

Australian musician Michael Clifford once said, **“It’s okay not to be okay.”** If you or someone you know is struggling with any sort of a wide plethora of things, make sure that you know or let them know this to be true. Often the problem with things like mental health is that people are very capable of hiding their pain and struggles from everyone else which makes it hard to identify it and help them if they don’t want to open up about them. A good practice that everyone should do is to check up on a few people every once in a while, just to let them know that you’re thinking of them. Even if they don’t end up opening up, it still helps them to know that you care enough to reach out and to be there for them if needed.

Further resource links:

World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Mental health of adolescents*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

Starting the conversation - subpage having a conversation. Seize the Awkward. (n.d.). https://seizetheawkward.org/conversation/starting-the-conversation?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwo9unBhBTEiwAipC11-BjkXaRosv1IDlwqJ6Hdk9TfV-HA8jDP2CTyasS6RextAUfNFXv_xoCwbMQAvD_BwE

Person. (2020, October 23). *Benefits of therapy for yourself, family, and relationships*. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-therapy#:~:text=Working%20with%20a%20psychologist%2C%20therapist,symptoms%20associated%20with%20your%20diagnosis.>