

Supporting Youth Mental Health

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The percentage of adolescents who experience persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness has been on an upward trend over the last decade. In order to address these mental health challenges, increased support from schools, communities, and families is needed. This [on-demand webinar](#) features panelists from Sandy Hook Promise sharing ideas for how educators might discuss mental health with students. Tips and additional resources are also provided.

Learning Outcomes

- » Describe key considerations for talking to youth about mental health
- » Participate in activities that contribute to positive mental health for staff and students
- » Understand what mental health resources are available

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Young people deal with a variety of mental health diagnoses, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and disorders with psychotic features.
- ✓ Mental health challenges and suicidality are increasing in adolescent populations. This necessitates support from both schools and community organizations to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of students.
- ✓ Use person-first language when discussing mental health with youth. Avoid centering someone's identity around a diagnosis. Reinforce the understanding that mental health conditions are health conditions, and just like our physical health we all need to work on our mental health.
- ✓ When unsure of what to say or how to say it, it is important to ask individuals how they would prefer to refer to something. Make space for people to share their own stories in their own voice.
- ✓ Supporting mentally healthy habits includes promoting sufficient sleep, good nutrition, social connectedness, time outdoors, physical activity, and positive mental stimulation.
- ✓ When talking to youth, take time to genuinely listen, be present, learn, and be willing to engage in conversation even if you don't have all the answers.
- ✓ When planning events or initiatives to promote youth mental health, be sure to include the voices of youth in addition to parents, staff, community members, and community organizations.

Additional Resources

[SAMHSA Locator Map](#) – Confidential and anonymous resource for locating treatment facilities for mental and substance use disorders.

[Youth.gov Mental Health Resources](#) – A collection of information and resources catered specifically to supporting mental health in a school setting.

Important Phone Numbers

Questions for Discussion

- » What are some local resources that may be beneficial to incorporate into your mental health initiatives?
- » What efforts can your school make to support good mental health among students?
- » How can youth voices be incorporated/highlighted in your school's mental health conversations?
- » **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988**
- » **Crisis Text Line: 741-741**
- » **Trevor Project Lifeline: 678-678, 1-866-488-7386**

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