



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Erica Butler, Ed.D.

Alabama State Department of Education

Prevention and Support Services

334-694-4717

2020 MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

- **11.9% (45,000) youth ages 12-17 suffer from at least 1 Major Depressive Episode (MDE)**
- **8.1% (29,000) had 1 severe MDE**
- **Depression often co-occurs with substance use disorders, anxiety and disorderly behavior**
- **Approximately 25% of young people have experienced some type of anxiety disorder, including obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder or panic attacks**
- **3.9 % (15,000) with substance use disorders**
- **25.9% (6000) with severe MDE received consistent treatment; 67.5% (26,000) didn't receive mental health services**

Limited demographic data available for pediatric / adolescent cases and from private providers

Data collected from Mental Health America

MENTAL ILLNESS vs. MENTAL DISTRESS

Mental Illness (MI) – a specific set of medically defined conditions that affect mood, thinking and behavior. Ex. - Bipolar or Schizophrenia

Mental Distress - a range of symptoms and experiences of a person's internal life that are said to be troubling, confusing or out of the ordinary such as anxiety, confused emotions, hallucination, rage, and depression.

Ex. - Life situations such as bereavement, stress, lack of sleep, use of drugs/alcohol, assault, abuse or accident can cause mental distress.



CAUSES OF MI DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

- * Drugs
- * Childhood Illnesses
- * Genetics
- * Traumatic Head Injury
- * Adverse reaction to medication
- * Abuse (Mental or Physical)
- * Sexual Assault

Definiton of Mental Health according to the World Health Organisation



A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

HOW CAN MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES INTERFERE WITH THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR STUDENTS?

- **Difficulty processing new information**
- **Unable to objectively analyze data**
- **Unable to concentrate**
- **Forgetful**

WARNING SIGNS & SYMPTOMS




<https://youtu.be/zt4sOjWwV3M>

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?


Academic Red flags

- Dropping grades
- *Missed or incomplete assignments*
- Inability or unwillingness to participate in class
- Writing about violence, death, suicide or other disturbing subject matter


BEHAVIORAL RED FLAGS

- **Withdrawing or isolating**
 - *Pattern of unexplained tardiness / absences*
 - **Behaviors that disrupt the class**
 - Avoidance of situations that might be stressful or trigger anxiety such as participating in group assignments
 - **Seeking excessive reassurance**
 - **Time management problems**
- 

PHYSICAL RED FLAGS

- ❖ **Unexplained aches, pains, cuts, bruises, scars or burns**
 - ❖ **Noticeable weight loss or gain**
 - ❖ **Falling asleep in class**
 - ❖ **Significant changes in appearance**
 - ❖ **Signs of alcohol or drug use (breath odor, dilated pupils, etc.)**
- 

HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE COPE WITH, MANAGE OR AVOID THEIR SYMPTOMS?

- **Social withdrawal and isolation**
 - **Substance abuse**
 - **Eating disorders**
 - **Self-harm – cutting or hair pulling**
 - **Participating in or becoming the target of bullying**
 - **Excessive or compulsive reliance on sleeping, eating or screen time (TV, gaming, social media, etc.)**
- 

HOW CAN I HELP A STUDENT IN MENTAL DISTRESS?

1. Talk to the student.

Name the things that you have noticed

- ❖ You seem ____ (down, distant, angry, upset)
- ❖ I'm sensing that you're feeling overwhelmed by today's class discussion. Talk to me and we'll figure it out together.

Ask in a direct way

- ❖ Sometimes when people are feeling stressed like you are they have depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide. Do you?

HOW CAN I HELP A STUDENT IN MENTAL DISTRESS?

2. Listen and show you care

With a calm voice say ----

- ❖ You're dealing with a lot.
- ❖ Talk to me, I'm listening.
- ❖ Will you walk with me to the counselor's office?

HOW CAN I HELP A STUDENT IN MENTAL DISTRESS?

3. PRACTICE YOUR CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

- Communicate respect for the student.
- Express empathy through reflective listening – ex. “I’m sick and tired of people always telling me what to do” and your response – “You don’t like people ordering you around”
- Help students see the difference between where they are and where they want to be.
- Affirm the positive attempts the student has made so far
- Summarize

4. BUILD MOTIVATION

- ✓ **Use open-ended questions – ex. “Tell me why you were late to class today?”**
- ✓ **Affirm and compliment**
- ✓ **Summarize and present feedback throughout the conversation**
- ✓ **Handle resistance – learn the signs and practice reflective listening instead of putting up resistance of your own.**
- ✓ **Reframe his/her statements into more direct ones – ex. Student says “I don’t know why I keep doing this” and your response “You are aware of the dangers and keep looking for ways to stop.”**
- ✓ **Ask permission instead of offering advice as the expert, ask if it would be okay to share some other ideas.**

5. STRENGTHEN THE COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

- Discuss a plan – elicit suggestions from the student for the plan
- Communicate his/her free choice
- Provide information
- Deal with resistance without fighting it
- Develop a change plan worksheet
- Review, clarify, and identify gaps and answer questions
- Ask for commitment
- Ask how likely it is that the student will follow through with the plan



THESE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES TAKE
TIME AND PRACTICE TO MASTER.

***Your central role is to teach,
not diagnose or treat mental illness.***



REFERENCES

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Classroom Mental Health
Federal Department of Mental Health