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STUDY OVERVIEW AND UPDATES



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Adolescent mental health needs that are not appropriately addressed can negatively affect many aspects of life. Despite primary care doctors conducting mental health screenings with their patients, fewer than 40% of adolescents are seen on a regular basis. Project SHIELD has partnered with 14 high schools throughout Pennsylvania to explore whether the school setting would be an ideal location for mental health screenings to identify students in need. This study has three phases which include:

- 1) Gathering stories and feedback from school staff, parents and students to ensure it is most appropriate and applicable for those audiences;
- 2) Conducting mood screeners with participating high schools; and
- 3) Engaging communities from participating schools to help advance mental health awareness and reduce stigma.

As we complete the school screenings, our work with participating schools will continue into the fall to engage school communities as they improve awareness and the school culture surrounding mental health. This edition features stories and resources that may help you identify ways to create and improve a culture of understanding in your home, office, or school setting. Please share these resources with friends and colleagues as we work together to bring healthy choices to life.

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH FINDINGS

Lower Risk of Depression with Elevated Exercise

By MGH News and Public Affairs
November 5, 2019

Harvard researchers at the Massachusetts General Hospital reviewed lifestyle surveys and for two years followed electronic health records of 8,000 patients. They found that individuals who are genetically pre-disposed to depression were more likely to develop an episode. They also found that daily physical activity protected against depression, even in those with a greater risk. Researchers found that both high-intensity (aerobic exercise, dance, and exercise machines) and low-intensity activities (yoga and stretching) have shown positive outcomes against

depression. It is important to understand how lifestyle can influence individual risk for depression. Understanding creates opportunity to make changes. Consider what personal changes you can make to meet the recommended amount of physical activity and how to encourage others to do the same.



LINK TO FULL STORY:

<https://bit.ly/ProtectAgainstDepression>

SUCCESS STORIES



York County Youth Mental Health Alliance

In York County, students and school professionals have united to form the student-led York County Youth Mental Health Alliance (YCYMHA). Their mission is three-fold: destigmatize mental illness, provide opportunity for youth voice in decision making, and improve accessibility to services.

YCYMHA holds quarterly meetings to spread positivity, raise awareness, and connect with peers and community members. Dr. Kathy Leh, one of YCYMHA's leaders described the meetings as interactive with activity stations to generate discussion and break down barriers regarding mental illness. In addition, the meetings, which are held during the school day, are student-driven. Leh noted, "We [try] to make whatever the students come up with happen." This mindset has served the organization well as it continues to grow, boasting over 150 student and 75 adult members from York County's 17 school districts.

YCYMHA's adult leaders attribute the group's success to student leadership and community involvement. Students are responsible for generating ideas and adult leaders reduce barriers for implementation, including supporting student participation in YCYMHA meetings. Community members share their voices through town hall-style meetings where students respond to questions about their perceptions of mental health. In addition, the group regularly involves the community in awareness events, such as "Light Up The Night", an event that featured a Glow 5K with colored glow sticks representing various mental illnesses.

For more information about YCYMHA, contact them at ycymha@gmail.com.



#TSEH "The Silence Ends Here"



CULTURE



LANGUAGE



ART



BELIEF



FOOD



CLOTHING



CELEBRATION

Knowledge is Power and "Culture Counts"

Culture plays an important part in our everyday lives and influences our language, customs, and beliefs. Being purposeful about understanding cultural differences provides an opportunity to create acceptance within a community and can reduce misunderstandings that arise from cultural differences.

Derry Township School District has developed the "Hershey Culture Counts" initiative to increase understanding and awareness among families and reduce cultural barriers as a result of evolving demographic representation. The program launched in March 2020 with a community event that invited students, parents, and staff of varying backgrounds and cultures. The event included activities and games, along with facilitated discussions among attendees about the variety of cultures that make up the district's 3,400 students and their families.

"The more understood and accepted students feel, the greater the academic environment will be, so that kids of all ages can learn and play together and achieve academic success" said Christine Drexler, a community representative of Culture Counts. The initiative plans to continue to engage students and families in the coming school year.

For more information about Hershey Culture Counts, email them at culturecounts2020@gmail.com.



What To Expect When Discussing Adolescent Mental Well-Being

By some reports, the likelihood that a teen will experience not only low mood, but major depression exceeds 15%. Unfortunately, **more than half never get help**. As a pediatrician, it is my hope that parents and their teens in my care would turn to me as a resource in addressing depression and other emotional concerns. After all, I have a stake in the emotional well-being of my patients just as much as their physical well-being. Many patients have questions about what to expect when scheduling a visit for an emotional concern such as depression. What can you expect? What will the visit look like? How will the visit help the problem?

Typically, an initial visit will have three parts:

Part 1: A conversation between the doctor, parent, and teen.

The doctor will want to hear a summary of what has led the family to the visit — mostly from the teen, but with the parent's comments and observations when appropriate. The doctor will ask questions, such as...

What symptoms are you experiencing? Is there...

persistent or intermittent sadness?

trouble with sleep?

difficulty with appetite and nutrition?

decreased pleasure in activities that are usually fun or enjoyable?

Have you experienced any recent stressful events?

How are your activities and interactions with friends?

Part 3: Discuss and agree on a plan.

During the final part of the visit, the doctor, teen, and parent will discuss and agree on a plan. The plan might include investigating problems that can cause, mimic, or magnify symptoms of depression. Such problems include sleep disorders, hormonal imbalances, side effects of medications that the patient is taking for other reasons, or chronic conditions, which occasionally have not yet been recognized. Sometimes, additional testing is in order.

For many depressed teens, symptoms of low mood result from a combination of "vulnerability" (think genetics and family history) and environmental stressors (school, home, friends, among other things). In such cases, a plan will likely include some combination of therapy or counseling, consideration of medication, and close follow-up visits for support and monitoring improvement. Most important to understand, just like other medical problems (asthma, diabetes), when treated, depression gets better.



STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATION

Mark Widome, MD
Penn State Children's Hospital



Part 2: A conversation between the doctor and the teen.

There should be an opportunity for the teen to talk individually with the doctor, without the parent present.

This provides a time for the teen to discuss sensitive subjects freely without parent comment. Prior to that conversation, the doctor, parent, and teen should agree on what kinds of personal information can and cannot be confidential. While this discussion can be particularly productive if the doctor and teen already have a trusting relationship, it is acknowledged that for a teen with limited interaction with their physician, it may be difficult to speak up.



Generally, pediatricians can maintain confidentiality unless there is concern that the patient or another person may be harmed or is in danger.

*"If you or someone you know is showing symptoms of a low mood, talk to **SOMEONE**. Even if it's not your doctor, reach out to a trusted friend or guardian."*

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



Source:

<https://bit.ly/TalkToFamilyMentalHealth>

Offering Support

Feelings of sadness, anxiety, or trouble sleeping are all typical problems that people deal with on a daily basis. Despite these problems, most people still go about their daily routines without too much trouble. Sometimes those symptoms can go away on their own, but if those feelings get worse and continue to take up more space in an individual's daily life, they can interfere with routines and relationships at home, school, and work. If you have a friend or family member who may be in need of mental health support, it can be challenging to know how to initiate a conversation about your concerns. Show your support by practicing these tips:

HOW TO OFFER SUPPORT:

- ☒ Express your concern and support, and treat everyone with respect, compassion, and empathy.
- ☒ Ask questions, listen to ideas, and be responsive when the topic of mental health comes up.
- ☒ Offer to help your friend or family member with everyday tasks.
- ☒ Reassure your friend or family member that you care about him or her.
- ☒ Include your friend or family member in your plans—continue to invite him or her without being overbearing, even if your friend or family member resists your invitations.
- ☒ Educate other people so they understand the facts about mental health problems and do not discriminate.
- ☒ Remind your friend or family member that help is available and that mental health problems can be treated—connect him or her to help, if needed.



HOW TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

Do you need help starting a conversation about mental health? Try leading with these questions and make sure to actively listen to your friend or family member's response.

- ☒ I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?
- ☒ What can I do to help you to talk about issues with your parents or someone else who is responsible and cares about you?
- ☒ I am someone who cares and wants to listen. What do you want me to know about how you are feeling?
- ☒ Who or what has helped you deal with similar issues in the past?
- ☒ Sometimes talking to someone who has dealt with a similar experience helps. Do you know of others who have experienced similar feelings and might be willing to talk?
- ☒ It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help you to find help?
- ☒ I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?



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