

THE TOP 10 QUESTIONS (WITH ANSWERS) THAT PARENTS OFTEN ASK ABOUT TEEN MENTAL HEALTH

**Prevention Strategies, Warning Signs, and
Interventions to Care for Your Teen**

WHAT IS "MENTAL HEALTH"?

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, mental health includes our **emotional**, **psychological**, and **social well-being**.

- Affects how we **think**, **feel**, and **act**
- Helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices
- Important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

OKAY, BUT WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

Mental illness is an umbrella term used to describe a **disorder that affects your mood, thinking, or behavior**. According to the Mayo Clinic, mental health episodes become mental illnesses when it interferes with your ability to function in everyday life. This can include disorders such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Bipolar Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- And many others

IS THIS REALLY AN ISSUE?

- **One in five** children experience symptoms of mental illness each year.
- The delay between onset of symptoms and intervention or treatment is **eight to ten years**.
- Many children do not receive treatment at all for these mental illnesses:
 - **40%** of children with ADHD
 - **60%** of children with depression
 - **80%** of children with anxiety

MY CHILD HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS. DOES THAT MEAN I'M A BAD PARENT?

- In short - **no, you're not a bad parent**
- There is not a sure way to prevent mental illness
- Anyone can be affected
- According to the Child Mind Institute, this is a very common misconception in today's society

WHAT OTHER COMMON MYTHS ARE THERE?

- Psychiatric issues result from **personal weakness**
- Mental health issues can be managed through willpower
- Therapy is a “**waste of time**”
- Children are **overmedicated**
- Children can grow out of their mental health problems

PREVENTION STRATEGIES
AND WAYS TO STAY
MENTALLY HEALTHY

HOW CAN YOU STAY MENTALLY HEALTHY?

- **Get routine medical care.**
 - a. Don't neglect checkups or skip visits to your health care provider, especially if you aren't feeling well.
- **Get help when you need it.**
 - a. Mental health conditions can be harder to treat if you wait until symptoms get bad.
- **Take good care of yourself.**
 - a. Sufficient sleep, healthy eating and regular physical activity are important.
 - b. Try to maintain a regular sleep schedule.

WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR WITH MY TEEN?

- Major changes in **eating habits**
- **Withdrawal** from friends and regular activities
- Significant **tiredness**, low energy, or trouble sleeping
- Reduced ability to concentrate or sit still
- **Inability to cope** with daily problems or stressors
- **Flat affect**: showing limited range of emotions
- **Increased anxiety** with common activities
- **Reckless behavior**, increased impulsivity

INTERVENTIONS AND RESOURCES

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO HELP?

- **Be attentive**
- Schedule an appointment with a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist as soon as you can
 - If one is not available, your pediatrician or primary care physician would be a good initial step until an appointment with a psychiatrist is available
- **Educate yourself** as much as possible about your child's mental health condition
- Talk with your child's school
- **Remain respectful and understanding** of your child's feelings
 - This doesn't mean you can't set limits or impose discipline.

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES IN COLUMBIA?

MU Bridge Program: School-based Psychiatry

- Program for children in all **Boone County schools**
- **No cost** to parents and no insurance needed
- Meet with children **in their own schools** when possible
- Treatment is provided until the child's first appointment with a community provider.
 - Typically, this is done in 2-4 appointments.

WHAT IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY?

- Like in any emergency, if a situation is life-threatening call 9-1-1
- **National Suicide Prevention Hotline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- **The Trevor Project Lifeline:** 1-866-488-7386
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text 741741
- Inpatient Resources
 - Missouri Psychiatric Center
 - Take your child to the University Hospital emergency room to be medically cleared
 - From there, they will be transferred over to the Missouri Psychiatric Center for evaluation

IN SUMMARY

ANY QUESTIONS?

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