



TEENAGE STRESS

Adolescence is a very stressful time of life, dominated by change – physical, mental and emotional. For many it is a roller coaster of ups and downs, but negative beliefs, painful memories and experiences can cause mental health issues in later life.

Some of the symptoms of stress in young people are often caused by all the developmental changes they are dealing with. Others are the result of the situations or circumstances they find themselves in which are often outside their control.

If young people are showing sudden changes in their behaviour – withdrawn, unresponsive, crying, lethargic, edgy, angry, short tempered, depressed, unable to concentrate, not eating or binge eating, then they are showing signs of stress. Spending hours online being & being secretive could be a sign of inappropriate online sharing & grooming.

Stress may be short term due to exam pressure or something more serious like bullying, particularly online bullying with 24/7 social media access, maybe peer pressure, rejection, fears, negative beliefs or painful memories. If any of these are not dealt with, they can lead to low self-esteem and depression which can then affect their futures.

Adults who live or work with young people frequently struggle to understand self-harming, which is a clear cry for help. Young people self-harm when they just cannot cope with their emotions, but they can cope with physical pain which acts as a distraction.

Mental health is a big issue for young people...

- 1 in 8 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder – that's roughly 3 children in every classroom.
- 1 in 6 young people aged 16-24 has symptoms of a common mental disorder such as depression or an anxiety disorder.
- Half of all mental health problems manifest by the age of 14, with 75% by age 24.
- In 2017, suicide was the most common cause of death for both boys (16.2% of all deaths) and girls (13.3%) aged between 5 and 19.
- Nearly half of 17-19 year olds with a diagnosable mental health disorder has self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point, rising to 52.7% for young women. (Young Minds 2019)

It also has a big impact later in adulthood...

- 1 in 3 adult mental health conditions relate directly to adverse childhood experiences.
- Adults who experienced four or more adversities in their childhood are four times more likely to have low levels of mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. (Young Minds 2019)



TOP TIPS FOR TEENS

Physical Health: Taking care of your body:

- Exercise regularly by being physically active at least 60 minutes of every day.
- Eat a healthy diet & maintain a healthy weight.
- Get enough sleep. You need between 9 and 9 ½ hours of sleep every night.

Mental health: Taking care of your mind

- Learn ways to manage stress. You can't avoid stress, so you need to learn how to manage it.
- Study and do your best in school. There is a strong link between health and academic success.

Emotional health: Taking care of your feelings & know the signs of mental illness. These include:

- Anxiety, depression, excessive tiredness, loss of self-esteem, loss of interest in things you used to like, loss of appetite, weight gain or loss, out-of-character personality changes.
- Pay attention to your moods and feelings. If you're worried about something, ask for help. If you can't talk to your parents, talk to a favourite teacher or find an adult you can trust.
- If you're feeling really sad or are thinking about harming yourself, get help right away.
- Don't bully other people. And if you are being bullied, tell a parent, teacher, or other adult. This includes being bullied online or on your phone.

Behavioural health: Taking care of your safety through your behaviours

- Stay away from situations where violence or fighting may cause you to be physically injured. If you have a weapon you might not always plan to use it – but whether you use the weapon or not, it is still illegal.
- Avoid substance use or abuse. This includes alcohol, street drugs, other people's prescription drugs, and any type of tobacco product.
- Drive safely. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in teenagers. Always use your seat belt. Avoid riding in a car full of other teenagers. Never get in a car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Practice abstinence (no sex) or safe sex. If you have sex, always use condoms to help avoid sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Even if you use contraceptives, these do not prevent STIs; use condoms in addition to other contraceptive methods.