

Mental Health for Parents & Carers

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How much do you know?

QUIZ- True or False

1. A-It is easy to distinguish psychological disorders from normal adolescent development
2. B-Most psychological problems in young people require intensive specialist management
3. C-Psychological problems in young people can present as changes in behaviour, declining academic performance or physical symptoms
4. D- Some young people are more vulnerable than others to developing psychological problems and disorders
5. E -Psychological problems in adolescence rarely cause problems in adulthood

A. False. Although there are certain features that help to distinguish the two, it can often be difficult for both parents and health care professionals to do this with absolute certainty and there is a clear overlap.

B. False. The majority of disorders in young people are self-limiting or can be helped with a variety of relatively simple techniques in community settings.

C. True. Young people only uncommonly present explicitly with overt psychological or emotional symptoms.

D. True. A range of biological, developmental and environmental factors influence the likelihood of a young person developing a psychological disorder.

E. False. Although many problems resolve, depending on the condition, symptoms may persist into adulthood or may result in secondary problems (such as alcohol misuse) which impact on adult function.

What does normal look like?

- ▶ Mental health and emotional well-being are difficult concepts to define.
- ▶ During adolescence it can be particularly difficult to distinguish those aspects of emotion and behaviour that are due to normal development from those that may indicate a psychological problem.
- ▶ This is a particular challenge to teachers who are not trained in mental health assessment (nor should they be expected to be).
- ▶ This also means parents & carers may struggle to work out when a teenager needs outside help.

What does normal look like?

The aim of this session is to:

- ▶ raise awareness about how mental health problems may present in adolescents.
- ▶ give parents & carers some idea of when a teenager's behaviour and presentation may be indicative of an underlying mental health problem.
- ▶ What to do if you think there is a problem.

What does normal look like?

Mental health problems are relatively common and affect 30-40% of all children and young people at some time. They are usually transient and mild, have limited or temporary impact on functioning, and usually do not require any formal intervention.

Such problems in adolescents may include:

- ▶ Emotional crises surrounding relationship problems
- ▶ Transient anxieties
- ▶ Conflict with adults
- ▶ Difficulties with anger control
- ▶ Sleep problems

This is what you as parents and carers may see very regularly!!!

Mental disorders

Mental disorders and illnesses are formally diagnosed and usually require trained intervention.

Examples include:

- ▶ Obsessive compulsive disorder
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Generalised anxiety disorder
- ▶ Eating disorders

The adult - parent/carer/teacher who is talking to the young person should not try to diagnose, but it is ok to ask about feelings and worries.

You are not going to make someone worse by showing care and interest.

If a teenager says they are having very dark thoughts or saying they feel like they can't go on it's ok to ask them about it, you aren't going to put the idea into their head by asking.

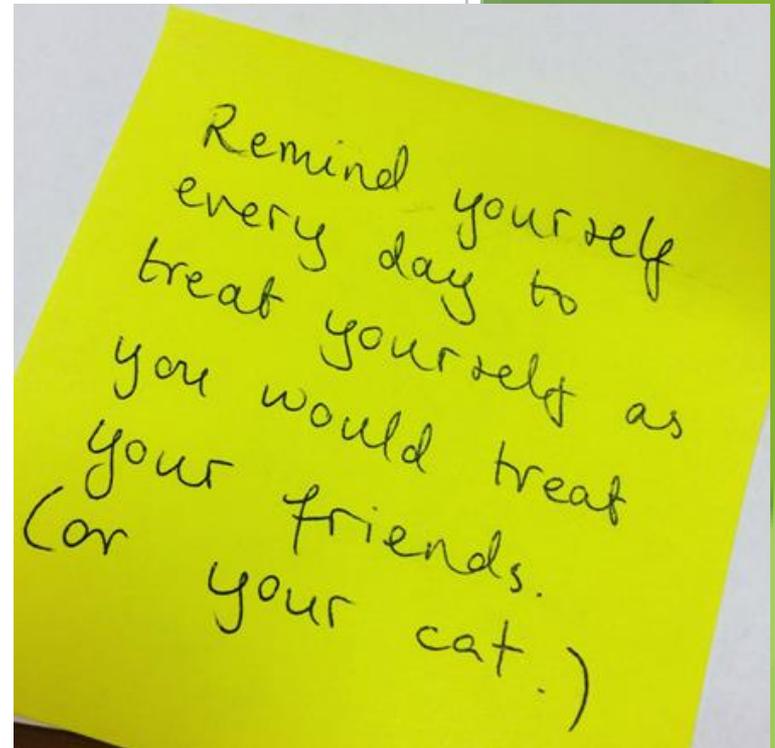
WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ▶ **NOTICE**
- ▶ **CONVERSE**
- ▶ **ACT (if required)**

- ▶ Take an interest, listen.
- ▶ “watchful waiting” , in most cases it will probably pass

5 ways to well being

- ▶ CONNECT
- ▶ TAKE NOTICE
- ▶ GIVE
- ▶ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- ▶ LEARN



Building character:

- ▶ Research on mental health promotion shows that the most effective way of maintaining positive emotional well-being is by **enhancing a young person's resilience**. This is strongly linked to:
 - ▶ **Self-esteem** (an internal sense of self worth)
 - ▶ **Self-identity** (personal, cultural, and spiritual)
 - ▶ **Sense of self-efficacy** (being confident to make independent decisions and to act on them)
- ▶ These findings are very much in line with the work we are doing at Steyning on building character.

Goals of childhood

There are three main responsibilities of childhood:

- ▶ to learn,
- ▶ to make (and maintain) friends,
- ▶ to have fun

If anxiety or depression PREVENTS these three there is cause for concern.

It is a problem if it is significantly impairing a young person's life

Anxiety and Depression

- ▶ These are the two problems with the greatest prevalence in young people
- ▶ 8-12 percent of 4-20 year olds suffer with an anxiety disorder
- ▶ Rates in adolescence are around double that of primary school age children

Depression

- ▶ 2% of 4-10 year olds
- ▶ 2-5% adolescents
- ▶ By 18 years of age 28% will have experienced an episode of depression
- ▶ Studies show rates increasing, alongside self-harm and suicidality (e.g. 68% increase in A&E presentations for self-harm in the last 10 years)

When is it more than normal?

- ▶ Some anxiety is normal- often a **realistic response** to new roles and responsibilities, as well as to sexual and identity development.
- ▶ Adolescence is a huge time of change, it's usual and healthy to reflect on these changes and feel some trepidation.
- ▶ Anxiety (and depression) becomes a problem and a disorder when it is enduring, has an impact on functioning in one or more settings (school, home life, social life and other extra-curricula activities) and causes significant suffering to the individual.

What does anxiety look like?

- ▶ Expressed worry and anxiety or a sense of foreboding
- ▶ Avoidance behaviours such as school refusal
- ▶ Poor sleep and/or fatigue
- ▶ Somatic symptoms such as abdominal pain or headaches
- ▶ Panic attacks with physical symptoms such as chest pain, palpitations, breathlessness, nausea, and dizziness
- ▶ Deteriorating school performance due to poor concentration

KEY POINT - these symptoms are long lasting (over a period of months) and recur regularly

Depression

- ▶ Feeling sad is part of being human
- ▶ It's normal to feel varying degrees of sadness after break up, bereavement or following a sad film or tragic world event
- ▶ Sadness is a healthy response to events
- ▶ Having off days and low moods is also normal, many people suffer transient low mood that picks up spontaneously after a day or two.
- ▶ Depression is not just a low mood or being sad, a person with depression may not look sad. It is can be masked with smiles.

What does depression look like?

- ▶ Low mood & tearfulness
- ▶ Physical symptoms - recurrent headaches or abdominal pain
- ▶ School refusal or self-harm
- ▶ Sleep disturbance or fatigue
- ▶ Irritability & moodiness
- ▶ Academic decline
- ▶ Lack of interest or enjoyment in previously pleasurable activities
- ▶ **DIAGNOSIS** - duration of at least 2 weeks and 4 symptoms
- ▶ Poor concentration
- ▶ Poor or excessive sleep
- ▶ Weight loss (or failure to gain weight normally) or excessive weight gain
- ▶ Suicidal thoughts or acts
- ▶ Low self-esteem
- ▶ Loss of energy
- ▶ Agitation or slowing of movement or speech
- ▶ Hopelessness

What does depression look like?

- ▶ Depression isn't always obvious
- ▶ The sufferer may not seem sad, might appear unemotional
- ▶ Irritability and agitation are more common in adolescents than depressed adults
- ▶ Depression slows down thinking, concentration and behaviour- it has an **IMPACT** on daily living
- ▶ Most students won't be depressed but may feel down. Again **NOTICE** and **CONVERSE** may often be enough
- ▶ If it feels more than normal adolescent emotionality **ACT**
- ▶ Social impairment or serious symptoms such as suicidal talk or attempts

What can parents do?

- ▶ Share concerns with family friends & school (Form tutor, HoY, Pastoral Team, CP)
- ▶ Support by listening and talking, encourage young person to share with friends and family
- ▶ Signpost to self help resources : e.g. www.youngminds.org, www.studentdepression.org , West Sussex Youth Emotional Service ([YES](#)), MANSAFE Project, [Kooth](#) online support
- ▶ Look for opportunities to raise young person's self esteem
- ▶ Encourage and support physical activity and creative extra-curricula activities
- ▶ Recommendations and support to contact GP