



YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

One in five youth between the ages of 9 and 17 has a mental health disorder with some impairment. The sad fact is that only one-third of these youth receive the necessary treatment. In fact, suicide is the second biggest cause of death in people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Adolescence is the formative years of a person's life and poverty, bullying, neglect, domestic abuse, and violence can make them more susceptible to mental health issues. On top of them all, youth have to deal with growing concerns like social media, climate change, pandemic, natural disaster, mass violence, political divisiveness, and more.

As such, these youth can become socially isolated, discriminated, stigmatized, commit risk-taking behaviors, have academic difficulties, and ill health. Protecting youth from adversity and ensuring their physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing are critical for their health during this crucial phase of life.



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AT-RISK YOUTH AND THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Many at-risk youth are in danger of falling into a juvenile justice system, which can worsen their mental health disorders. About 70% of youth in the juvenile justice system experience a diagnosable mental health

disorder, and 30% of these suffer from severe mental health issues. This can have a terrible impact on their future:

- ✓ These youth are less likely to be placed in permanent homes
- ✓ These youth are also more likely to be placed in state-secure facilities, particularly if they use substances

- ✓ They are more likely to be placed in restrictive services like juvenile detention centers
- ✓ These youth also more often end up in the emergency room

These youth often share the below mentioned attributes:

- ✓ They experience disproportionate marginalization as members of racial and ethnic groups
- ✓ They live at or below poverty level
- ✓ They have limited, strained, or non-existent family connections
- ✓ They do not have good educational experiences or outcomes

Although these facts are alarming, mental health disorders in these youth may be temporary not permanent. With the help of mentors and support groups, these youngsters can successfully manage any challenge due to a mental health disorder. Youth with more persistent issues have been seen to do well with professional support services, treatment, and social support networks.

DOES SUBSTANCE USE EXACERBATE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN YOUTH?

Substance use issues are common among adolescents and youth.

Almost 30% of high-school students say they have tried alcohol and 14% binge drink. About 17% of youth have gotten into a car driven by an inebriated person. About 15% have used street drugs and about 14% have used prescription opioids. Drinking and using drugs can be a way to escape deep-seated emotional pain. However, if it is occurring alongside mental health symptoms, then it is even more concerning.

HOW DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTE TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN YOUTH?

Young people spend a large amount of time on social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. According to a study, about 90% of all youth between the ages of 13 and 18 use multiple social media platforms. The quantity and quality of social media use can have adverse effects in teens.

Overuse of social media can prevent youth from participating in other important activities, including socializing with

family, making friends, playing sports, or getting enough sleep.

In addition, social media also has the potential to harm youth who do not use it frequently as well. These adolescents may be exposed to violent, inaccurate, and dangerous content. Social media also presents untrue idealized images of people that can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem in youth.

HOW TO PROMOTE MENTAL WELLBEING AMONG YOUTH

Despite the alarming stats on youth mental health problems, there are ways to empower youth to cope with adversity in a healthy way.

- ✓ Recognize that mental health disorders are real, common, and treatable and that youth with mental health issues need support with care and compassion, free of stigma.
- ✓ Empower youngsters to manage difficult emotions by building strong relationships with peers and supportive adults and asking for help when they need it.
- ✓ Create safe, supportive, and affirming education environments that promote healthy development of youth and provide support to meet the

mental, emotional, and social needs of youth.

- ✓ Reduce social and economic barriers like child poverty and provide access to quality education, healthcare, food, housing, and neighborhood.
- ✓ Promote positive mental health in communities and schools and set a good example by ensuring your own mental health.
- ✓ Create a safe, judgment-free environment for youngsters with mental health disorders and normalizing conversations about mental wellbeing.
- ✓ Educating others about mental health order, how common they are, and why positive mental health needs to be promoted in youth.
- ✓ Help youth learn and practice coping skills and educate them on ways that can improve their mental health.
- ✓ Be a positive role model for youth, be it when it comes to using social media or behavior in society.
- ✓ Promote physical wellbeing as well as mental and emotional wellbeing. This includes healthy eating, exercising, limiting screen time, sleeping, and more.
- ✓ Be aware and recognize signs of youth struggling with mental health issues to make sure they get help as fast as possible.

BOTTOM LINE

As we embark on our leadership journey, it bears repeating that mental health issues among youth are one of the most pressing problems for future leaders. Each and every one has a responsibility to create a healthy and supportive environment for youngsters where they can thrive and which can help them learn positive coping strategies.

Together, we can create a conscious world where every youth feels safe and valued and can access the best opportunities to grow. So, embrace this challenge with determination and let your leadership be a force for positive impact.

Youth with a Future is dedicated to equipping youngsters from urban communities with the right tools and resources to help them become future leaders. Through our networking programs, workshops, and mentorships, we polish the skills they naturally possess so they may reach their true potential, give back to their communities and change the world for the better.

Join us in our cause today! **Get in touch** with our team, or check out our website to learn more.

