

TEENAGE STRESS

Adolescence is a very stressful time of life, dominated by change – physical, mental and emotional. For many it is a rollercoaster 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 situations or circumstances they find themselves in, which are often outside their control.

If young people show sudden behavioural changes – being withdrawn, unresponsive, crying, lethargic, edgy, angry, short-tempered, depressed, unable to concentrate, not eating or binge-eating, these are signs of stress. Spending hours online and being secretive could be a sign of inappropriate online sharing and 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. Other causes include peer pressure, rejection, fears, negative beliefs or painful memories. If these aren't dealt with, they can lead to low self-esteem and depression, which can affect young people's 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 can't 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 have symptoms of a common mental disorder such as depression or an anxiety disorder.
- 50% of all mental health problems manifest themselves by the age of 14, with 75% by age 24.
- Suicide is the most common cause of death for young people under the age of 35 in the UK. In 2018, 1,866 young people under 35 took their own lives - over three-quarters were boys or young men. Over 200 schoolchildren are lost to suicide every year ([Papyrus UK](#))
- Nearly 50% of 17-19 year olds with a diagnosable mental health disorder have self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point, rising to 52.7% for young women. ([Young Minds, 2019](#))

Always consult your GP if you are concerned about your health

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 4 or more adversities in their childhood are 4 times more likely to have low levels of mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. ([Young Minds, 2019](#))

TOP TIPS FOR TEENS

Physical health: Take 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 every night.

Mental health: Take care of your mind

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

Emotional health: Take 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 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're being bullied, tell a parent, teacher, or other adult. This includes being bullied online or on your phone.

Behavioural health: Take care of your safety through your behaviours

- Stay away from situations where violence or fighting may lead to you being physically injured. If you have a weapon, you may not always plan to use it – but whether you use it or not, it's 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 crashes are the leading cause of teenage death. Always use your seat belt. Avoid riding in a car full of other teenagers. Never get in a car with a driver who's 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.

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