Mental Health and Teens: A RI Emergency!

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Rhode Island Chapter (RI AAP) the Rhode Island Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (RICCAP), Hasbro Children's Hospital, and Bradley Hospital issued a declaration of emergency regarding the state of child and adolescent mental health in Rhode Island.



This declaration is unprecedented! Read the full statement here.

Anxiety is more prevalent for children today than ever before, with anxiety symptoms starting as early as 7 years old (Anderer, 2019). Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among teenagers in this country. It has increased 56% from 2007 to 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control (Wan, 2019).

While the cause is complex, a combination of variables including social media, bullying, lack of boundaries with technology, and loneliness contribute to the challenge. Bullying continues to be a problem for young people and is sometimes harder to identify than other forms of aggression.

Social media has amplified feelings of loneliness for many young people. Today's youth are bombarded with images of their peers doing things together, sometimes without them, and those images can leave scars (Sills, 2011).

Lack of boundaries with technology has also lead to many adverse outcomes in children and teens. The AAP recommends only 1 to 2 hours of total screen time per day for children, whose brains are still developing. But children may spend up to 7.5 hours per day in front of a screen, and for some families, there are no rules with regard to electronic devices. Constant use of technology could cause children to have a harder time understanding how to solve problems with others.

Loneliness may also be a problem, especially for teen girls. Studies show teen girls spend more time on social media than ever before, and over 95% of American teen girls have smartphones. The American Academy of Pediatrics has advised that too much time on social media can lead to more depression and anxiety in teens. In addition, teens starting college are

less likely to be able to solve their own problems and more likely to rely on their parents to solve problems than before (Pipher & Gilliam, 2019).

How Parents and Caregivers Can Help

There are many ways to combat the problems of bullying, social media, and boundaries with technology. Parents play a key role in the lives of their children. Parents who enforce firm rules within a loving relationship tend to have more successful outcomes for their children, research suggests.

Here are strategies to help their children with social and emotional issues:

1. **Give as much attention to children when they show kindness as you do to their achievements.** We may often ask our children about their days, what grades they received on tests. But have you thought about asking them how they were kind to a classmate? Make it a regular part of everyday conversation to show them that you value kindness as much as achievement.
2. **Encourage your child to work out their relational problems directly with their classmates.** As parents, we may often want to step in and solve every rift between friends. For example, consider a child who shares that a classmate was making fun of their appearance. A parent's first instinct might be to call that classmate's parents. Instead, a parent could ask their child to tell that classmate how they were feeling and that they don't want them doing that again. Applaud the child's bravery for telling the classmate how they were feeling.
3. **Encourage your children to have empathy for others.** You may notice that your children are gossiping to you about a friend who lost a part in a play because they did not remember their lines. Rather than join in the gossip, encourage them to think about their friend and how it might feel to lose a part in a play.
4. **Limit your own use of technology.** Perhaps adults are the worst teachers of all when it comes to limiting technology around our children. Consider putting your phone away at the dinner table, at bed time, and while driving in the car, as these are critical moments for connection with your kids.
5. **Be Prepared** Click here to find out about resources in RI. And click here to download a Family Behavioral Health Emergency Plan for your family!



Talk. They Hear You!

Before your kids head out for prom talk to your them about why it's important to you that they don't drink alcohol underage. Your values matter to your child even though they may not always show it.

Check this out!



Youth Driven will have an overnight conference this summer! If you are a parent of a high school student, make sure they are at this Summit! Youth Driven is a dynamic program encouraging our future leaders.

Over the course of the 3 day summit, high school students from across RI learn components of traffic safety with a focus on substance use prevention strategies and safe decision making skills. Students develop leadership skills to keep themselves, their schools and their communities safe and strong. School and community teams will create action plans to take back to their schools and communities to implement over the course of the school year. Sign up today to save your teen's spot!

Register today! https://lnkd.in/dvb5cBd



The Student Assistance Counselor is here to help you and your student.

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