

Mental Health Awareness Month: Focus on adolescents

Adolescence is a period of social, hormonal, and emotional change. It's common for young adults to be concerned with their self-image and to act unpredictably and rebelliously against authority, including parents and teachers.

Globally, an estimated one in seven (or 14.3 percent) of 10- to 19-year-olds experience a mental health condition, yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated.

To grow and thrive, adolescents need to strengthen their emotional regulation, learn alternatives to risky behaviors, bolster their resilience, and build healthy support networks. The following tips can help you give your adolescent the tools they need during this often-difficult period of change.



1 Provide structure

A set routine and clearly defined expectations for behavior give adolescents a sense of stability and help them develop decision-making and impulse control.

2 Build self-confidence

Risk-taking can be a normal part of adolescence, but offering support through healthy experiences such as sports, arts, and academics can help them develop their unique personality, abilities, and strengths and even learn to understand their weaknesses.



3 Normalize mental health discussions

It's important to discuss mental health so adolescents feel safe expressing emotions without shame or fear.

4 Promote healthy habits

Explain the importance of getting enough sleep, staying physically active, and eating healthy foods. Encourage balance between online and offline activities, including limiting screen time before bed.

5 Allow time for relaxation

These days, adolescents' schedules are so packed with after-school and weekend activities that they have little or no time to decompress and be themselves. Giving them time and space to relax can help them develop their creativity and coping skills.

6 Encourage friendships

When kids lack friends, the challenging times can feel even more difficult. Encourage your adolescent to reach out to others and develop meaningful friendships. Good friends can even be a buffer against peer pressure.

It can be hard to know where to turn when a child is struggling. Log on to guidanceresources.com for information on parenting stress, social media safety, responding to bullies, avoiding discipline pitfalls, or any other situation you and they may face.



If your adolescent shows signs of persistent sadness, withdrawal, or drastic changes in behavior, consider reaching out to a mental health professional. Your Employee Assistance Program offers no-cost counseling to support you and your household members when dealing with issues big or small.



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