

# When Mental Health and Substance Use Collide: Know the warning signs and actions you can take


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Aussem Counseling & Wellness

March 16, 2023



# Let's talk

- Teen mental health
  - Risks of self-medicating
  - Influence of social media
  - Resources to help
- 





# Teen development



# Job #1: Developmental tasks

- Physical – growth spurt, hormones
- Cognitive – better thinking and language skills
- Social and emotional – peers matter, more privacy



NEWSLETTER  
**The Morning**

## ***The Phone in the Room***

We examine the raging debate about smartphones and teenage mental health.

Give this article



## **Teens turning to TikTok for mental health advice are self-diagnosing**

Young people are increasingly turning to social media platforms like TikTok to diagnose their mental health struggles and often getting misinformation. A California psychology professor has gained a million followers on TikTok by debunking wellness advice that could do more harm than good. [Read more](#)

## **Children languish in emergency rooms awaiting mental health care**

Fearing Daniel might harm himself, his parents took him to the only place they could: the emergency room. After seven days in the ER, Daniel was discharged; hospital staff felt he was no longer in danger. His parents disagreed. [Read more](#)

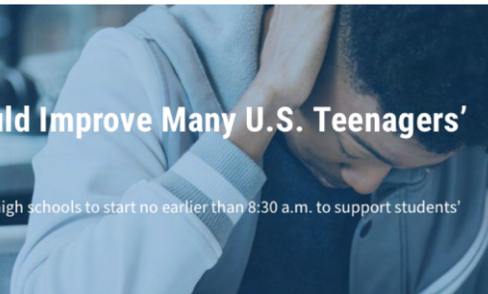


WHAT WE DO + PROJECTS DATA CENTER + RESOURCE LIBRARY

Resource Library

### **More Sleep Could Improve Many U.S. Teenagers' Mental Health**

California now requires most high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. to support students' well-being and safety.



Kids Are Not Alright - The Decline in Mental Health Among Youth



## **The Kids Are Not Alright**



Frank C. Worrell, PhD



Vice Admiral  
Vivek H. Murthy, MD, MBA



Geoff Cohen, PhD



DeLeon Gray, PhD



Watch on YouTube  
Candice Rogers, PhD



Mitch Prinstein, PhD



Maysa Akbar, PhD



MODERATOR  
Soledad O'Brien



# What do teens think about?



# NAMI Poll of Teens 12-17 in 2022

## Teens are facing mental health struggles

**64%**

64% feel the world is more stressful now than when parents were their age

**1 in 6**

About 1 in 6 report experiencing specific negative emotions all the time or often

**1 in 4**

1 in 4 have been diagnosed with a mental health condition



# NAMI Poll of Teens 12-17 in 2022

**Teens want schools to play a big role in their mental health,**  
and they trust the information they get there,  
and are open to receiving information at school

**2 in 3**

More than 2 in 3 agree schools  
should teach about what mental  
health is, including where and how  
to seek treatment

**56%**

56% say their school thinks  
that mental health matters

**67%**

67% think schools should offer  
days off for mental health



# And what about parents and other caregivers?

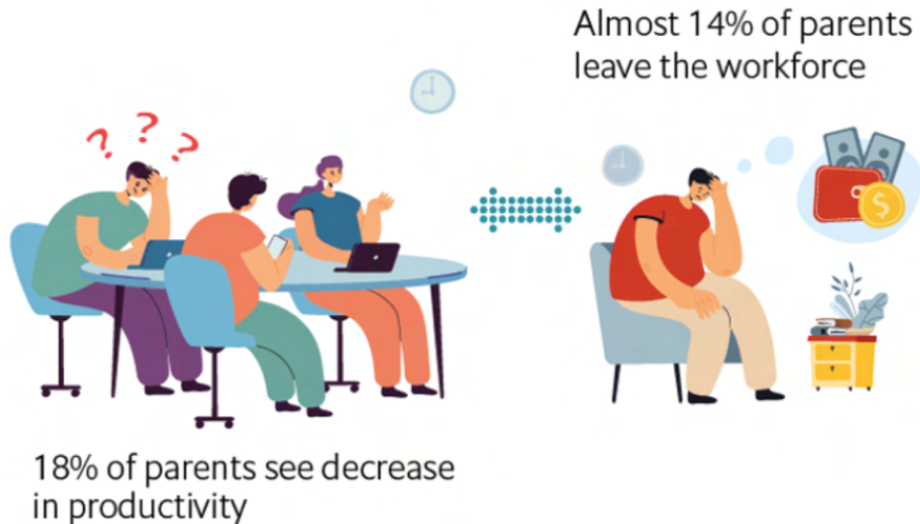


Cigna

<https://newsroom.cigna.com> › teen-mental-health-take...

## Teen Mental Health Takes Toll on Parents at Work

May 11, 2022 — The number of **teenagers** facing **mental health** issues has been rising every year, and the recent upheavals in their lives due to COVID-19 had ...



Source: Economic Impact commissioned by Cigna 2022  
[https://impact.economist.com/perspectives/sites/default/files/sounding\\_the\\_alarm\\_parent\\_perceptions\\_of\\_teen\\_mental\\_health\\_in\\_the\\_us\\_final3.pdf](https://impact.economist.com/perspectives/sites/default/files/sounding_the_alarm_parent_perceptions_of_teen_mental_health_in_the_us_final3.pdf)

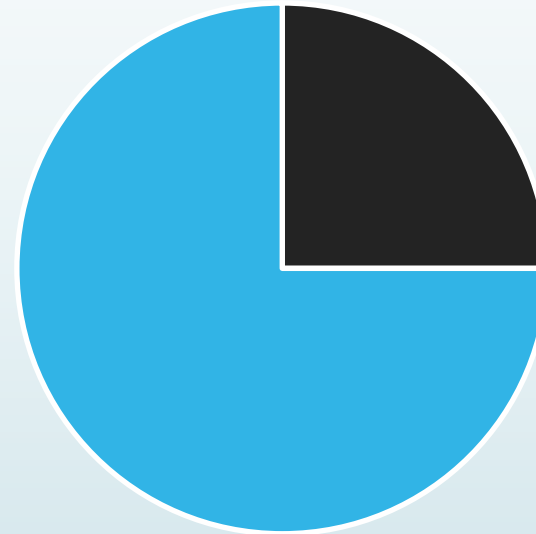
# When do mental health problems surface?

50% of mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% begins by age 24.

Age 14



Age 24



# Mental health disorders





# Anxiety disorders

- ▶ When anxious feelings escalate to a point that they interfere with a young person's ability to handle everyday situations, and can prevent them from enjoying "normal" activities
  - ▶ Generalized anxiety disorder
  - ▶ Social anxiety
  - ▶ Separation anxiety
  - ▶ Specific phobias
  - ▶ Panic disorder

# How does anxiety show up in teens?

- Recurring fears and worries about routine parts of everyday life
- Repeated reassurance-seeking
- Extreme self-consciousness or sensitivity to criticism
- Irritability
- Withdrawal from social activity
- Avoidance of difficult or new situations
- Trouble concentrating
- Chronic complaints about stomachaches/ headaches
- Drop in grades or school refusal
- Sleep problems







# Anxiety and substance use

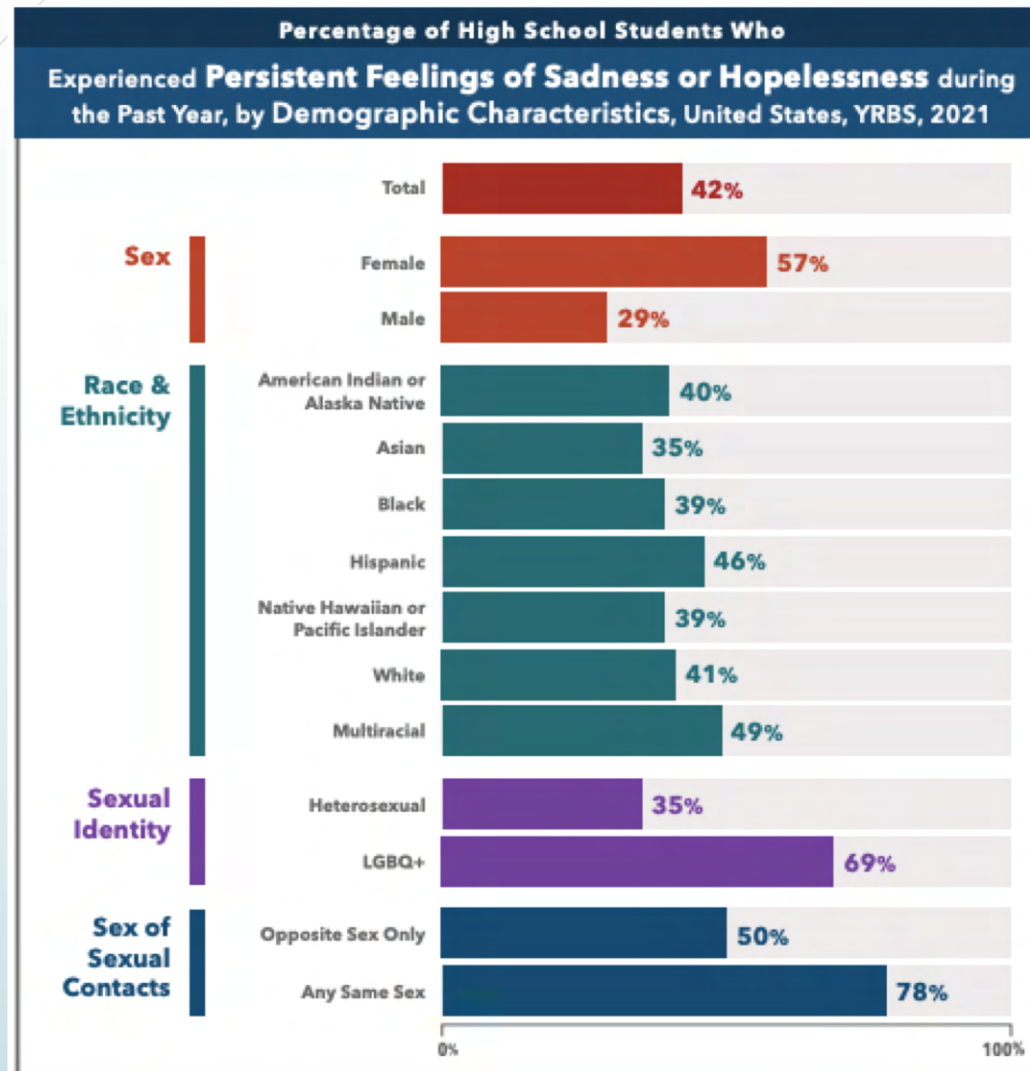
- May use alcohol and other drugs to temporarily alleviate anxious feelings
- The effects of the substance cover up or mask the anxiety symptoms, it becomes that much more difficult to assess the disorder.
- May feel their anxiety is more intense when they aren't using substances.



# Depression

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Persistent Depressive Disorder
- Depressed teens are more irritable than adults with depression, and they are more likely to report a loss of interest in things once enjoyed than sadness.
- In addition to irritability and loss of interest, the hallmark of depression involves shifts in mood, eating, sleep habits or interests.

# Feeling sad and hopeless



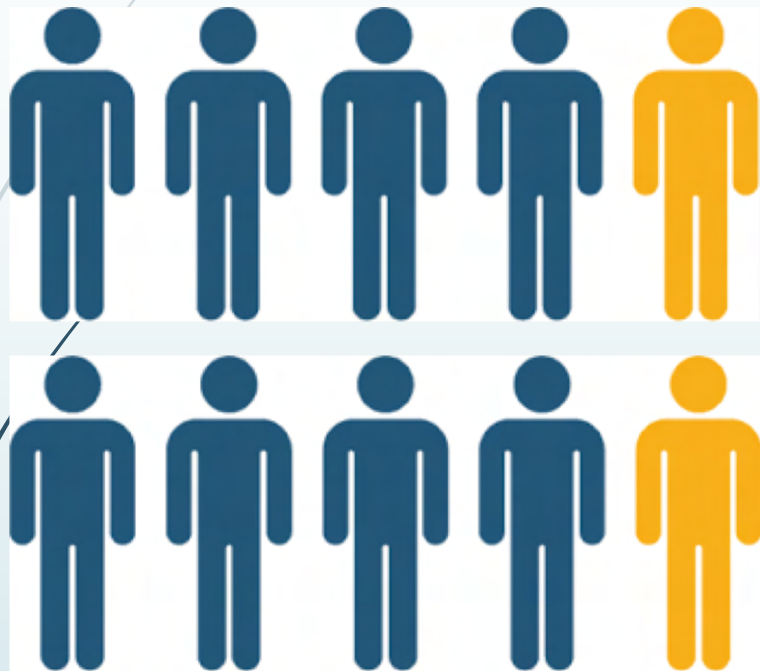
Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021



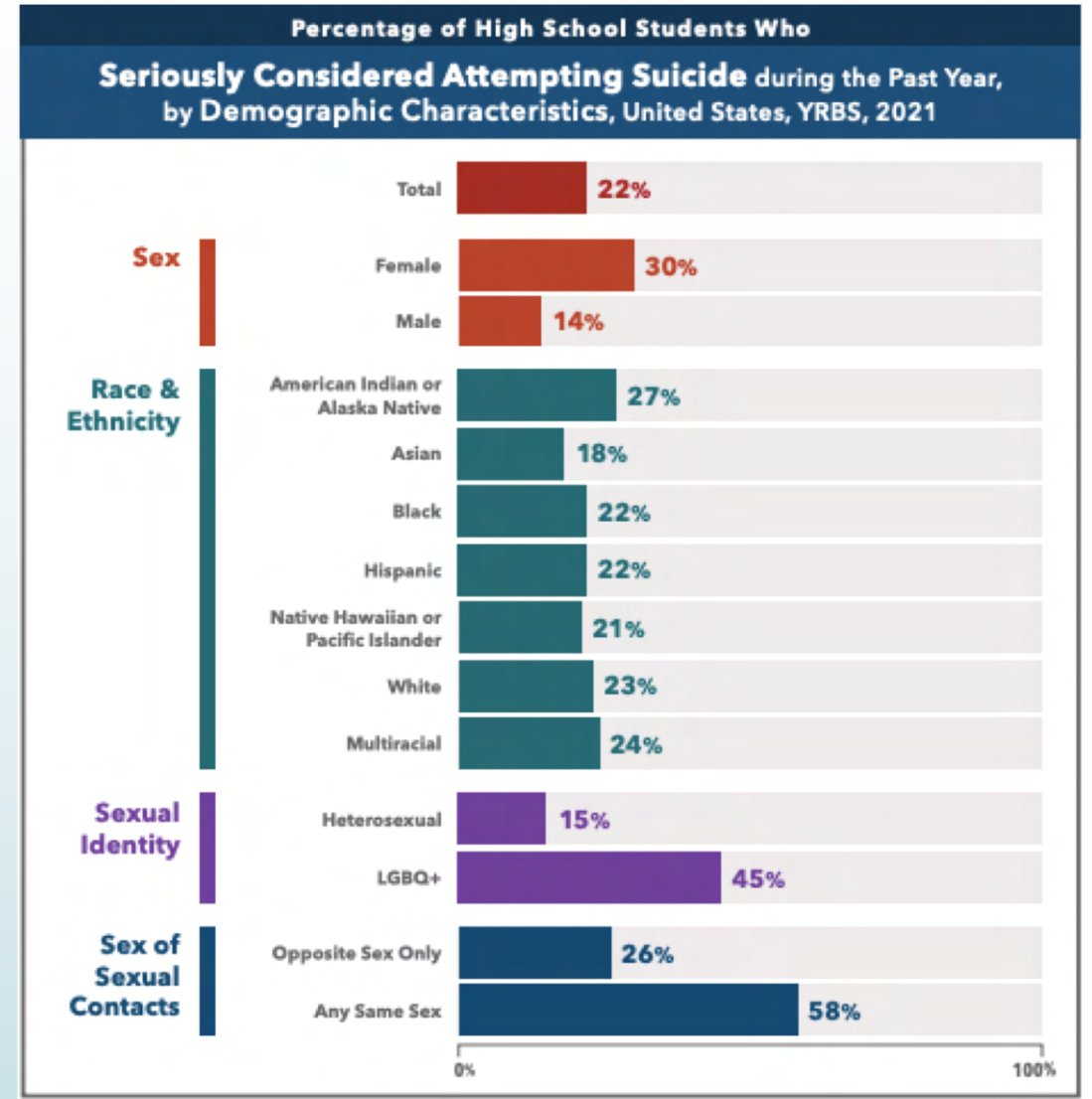
# Signs of depression

- Marked weight loss or gain
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Restlessness, lethargy or fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Cloudy or indecisive thinking
- A preoccupation with death, plans of suicide or an actual suicide attempt

# When the pain gets so bad...



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2021







# Depression and substance use

- May use substances to dull painful feelings and cope with constant negative thoughts
- Substances affect the reward centers of the brain — the same areas that are associated with depression — can make them **more** depressed when they're not using substances
- Alcohol use is especially damaging as it affects adolescents differently than it does adults. Instead of getting sedated with alcohol, teens get more energetic -- engage in more risky behavior, including self-harm



# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is diagnosed when a person has difficulty concentrating, paying attention, sitting still, following directions and controlling impulsive behavior.
- Signs and symptoms
  - Making careless mistakes
  - Being easily distracted and appearing to not listen when spoken to directly
  - Having trouble with organization and frequently losing things
  - Fidgeting
  - Excessive talking or interrupting, blurting out answer

# ADHD and substance use



**Structural and chemical brain differences associated with ADHD also make young people more responsive to a drug's effects and more likely to take drugs again.**

- Drawn to nicotine and marijuana
- May misuse medications
- Those with ODD may seek out pain medications or Xanax



# Bipolar disorder

- Teens and young adults with bipolar disorder will show signs of both depression and mania



# Signs of bipolar disorder

## Mania

- Drastic personality changes
- Excitability and irritability
- Inflated self-confidence
- Grandiose/delusional thinking
- Recklessness
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased talkativeness, racing thoughts and scattered attention
- Psychotic episodes, or breaks from reality

## Depression

- Loss of interest or pleasure in things once enjoyed
- Marked weight loss or gain
- Decreased or increased need for sleep
- Lethargy or fatigue
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness,
- Worthlessness
- Excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Preoccupation with death, plans of suicide or an actual suicide attempt



# Bipolar and substance use

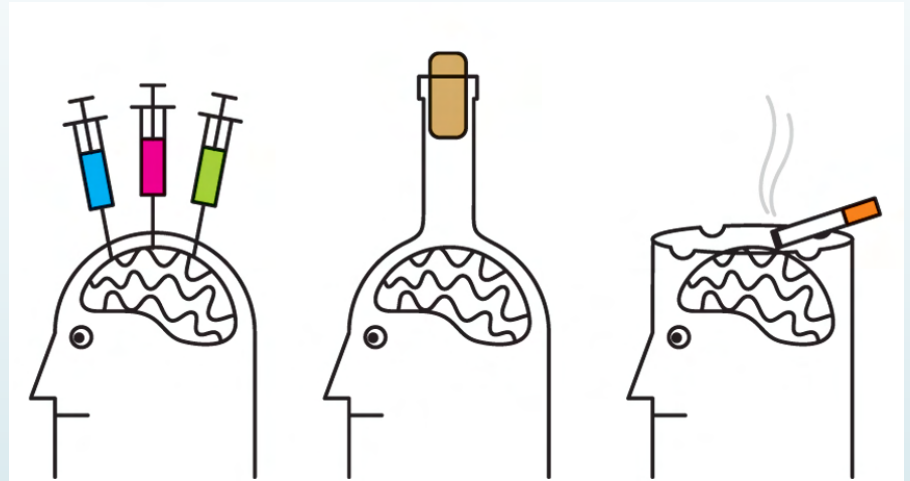
Nearly  
**60%**

individuals with **bipolar disorder** have a **co-occurring substance use disorder**



- Nicotine and alcohol
- Substance use can trigger a first manic episode
- Interfere with medication

# Substance use





# Substance Use Disorder

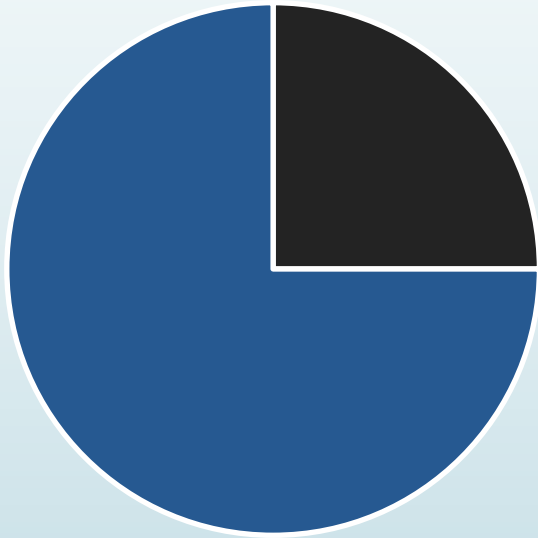
1. Using more for a longer period of time
2. Difficulty cutting back
3. Time spent getting, using and recovering
4. Intense cravings
5. Not handling responsibilities
6. Giving up interests
7. Relationship problems
8. Physically dangerous situations
9. Worsening physical and mental problems
10. Tolerance
11. Withdrawal

2-3 symptoms = Mild  
4-5 symptoms = Moderate  
6+ symptoms = Severe

# Adolescence is **the** critical period for addiction risk

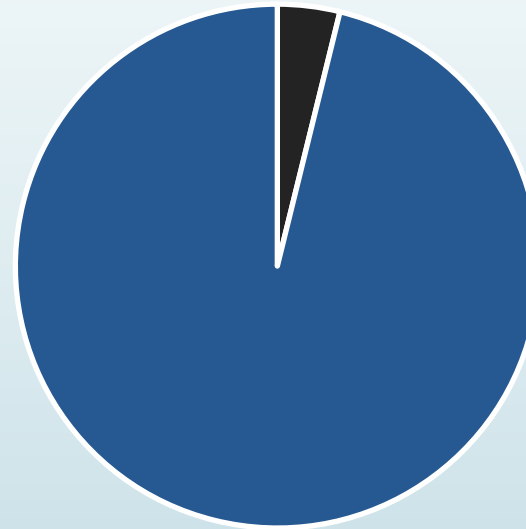
Use before age 18

1 in 4 chance of  
developing addiction



Use after age 21

1 in 25 chance of developing  
addiction



# 12<sup>th</sup> graders substance use in 2022



31%



52%



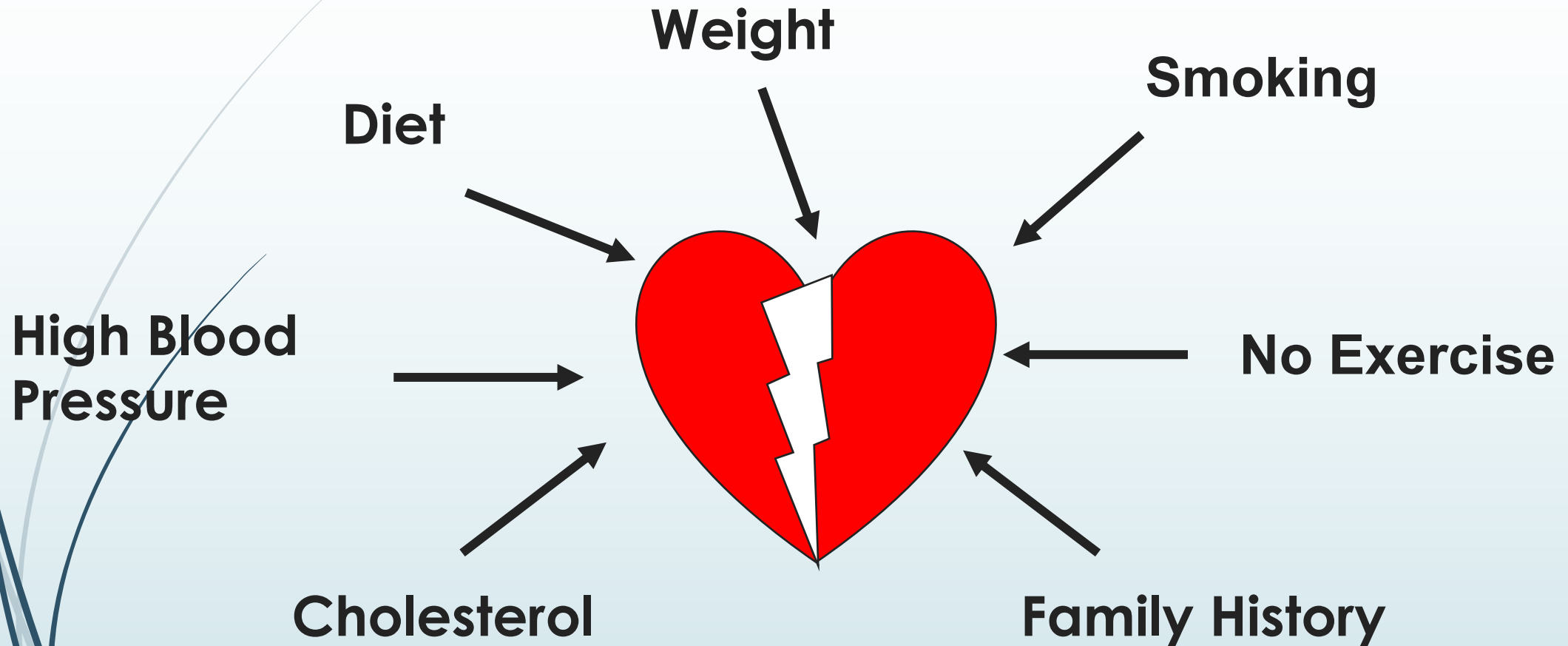
27%

Source: Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-2022: Secondary School Students



# Assessing Substance Use Risk

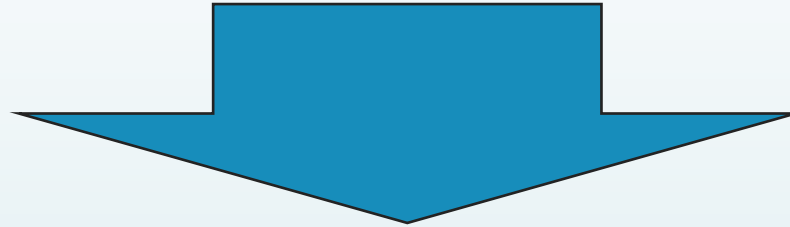
# Risk factors for heart disease



# Kaiser Permanente research



- 41,000+ teen health records
- Born between 1997 and 2000 with a link to mother's health record



- Factors that increase the risk of developing a substance use problem between ages 12 and 18

Self-harm  
5X

Trauma/Stress  
23%

ADHD  
71%

Headaches  
76%

Depression  
2.8X

Bipolar  
77%





# IS YOUR CHILD AT RISK?

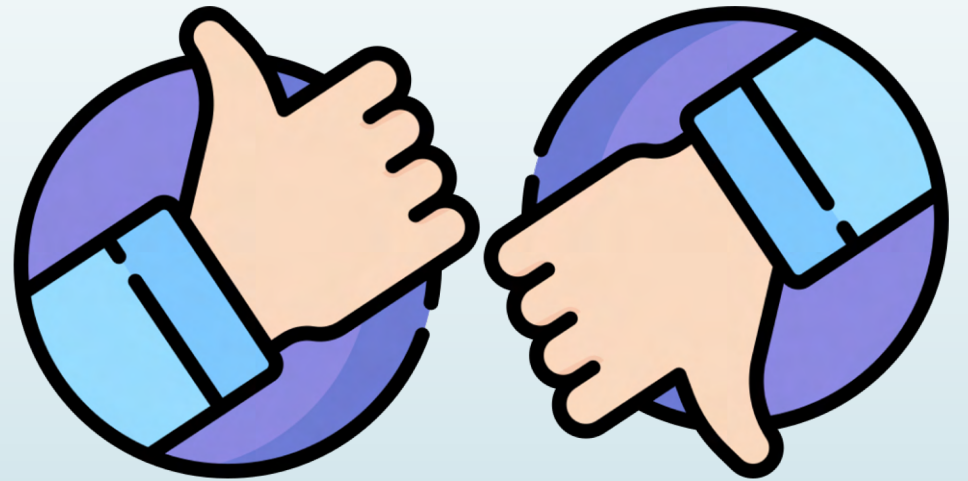
## A SUBSTANCE USE RISK ASSESSMENT

Survey: 5-6 minutes to complete

This risk assessment is designed to help you better understand the risks your child may face related to mental health, well-being, personality, family history, and their environment.

# Social media:

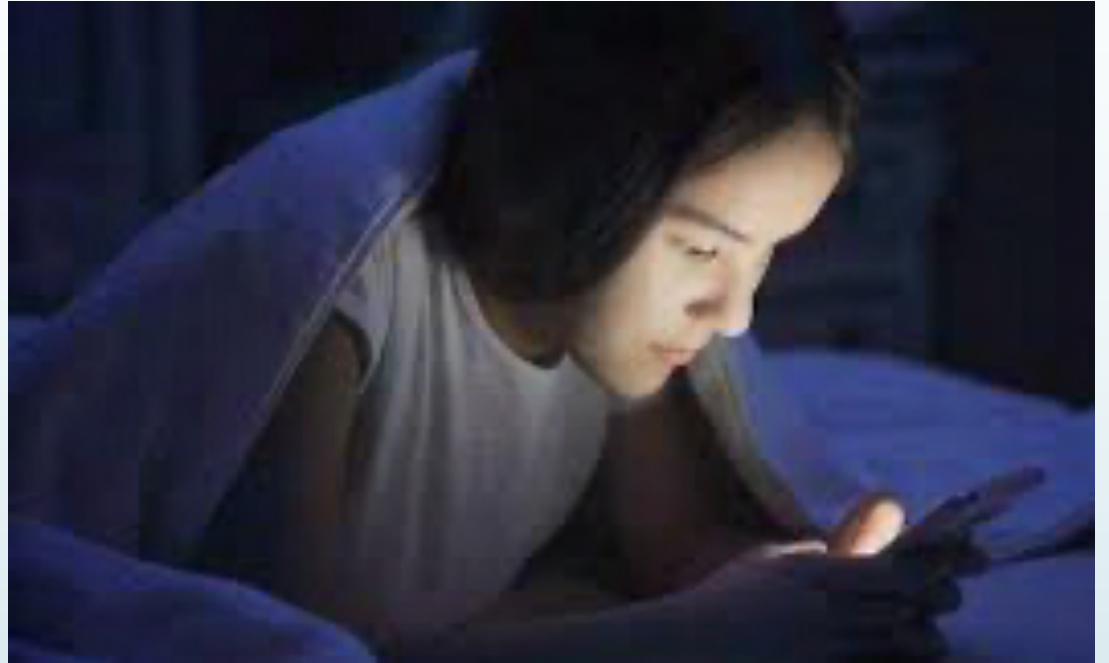
Impact on mental health and substance  
use



# The mall vs social media



Photo credit: John Deprisco for the WSJ



**Use of screen media is up 17% for tweens and teens since the start of the pandemic.**



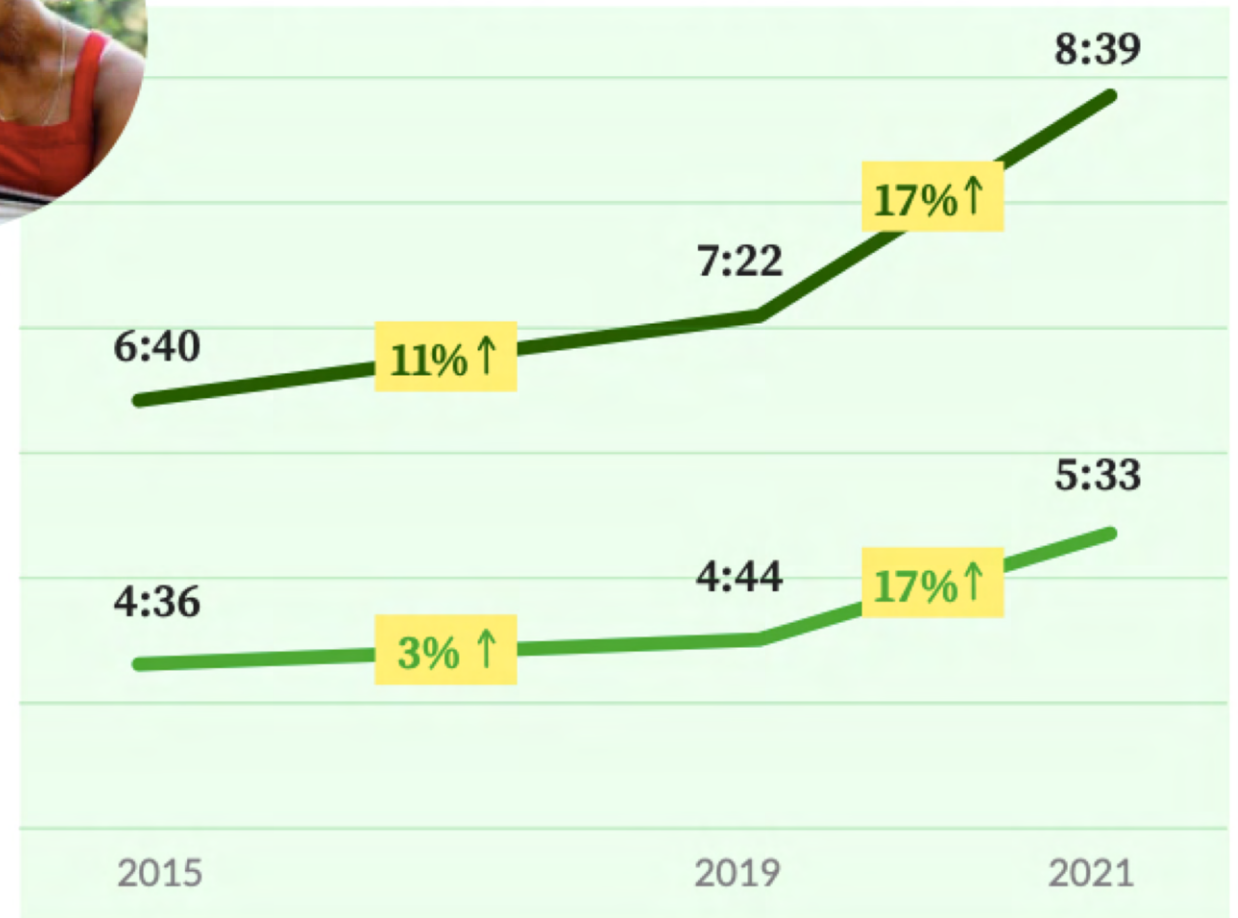
Media use grew faster in the last two years than it did in the four years prior to the pandemic.

Overall, boys use more screen media than girls.

Black and Hispanic/Latino children use screens more than White children.

And children in higher-income households use screens for entertainment less than children in middle- and lower-income households.

**Total entertainment screen use per day (average)**



Source: Common Sense Census, 2021

■ Tweens ■ Teens



# % of US teens that say social media makes them feel...

- More connected
- Showcase creativity
- Emotional support
- More accepted

## Teens who see social media as a positive for all teens more likely to report positive personal experiences

% of U.S. teens who say what they see on social media makes them feel *a lot (of) ...*

### Positive experiences

More connected to what's going on in their friends' lives

Among those who say social media has had a \_\_\_ effect on people their age



Positive -  
negative  
DIFF

+27

Like they have a place where they can show their creative side



+20

Like they have people who can support them through tough times



+19

More accepted

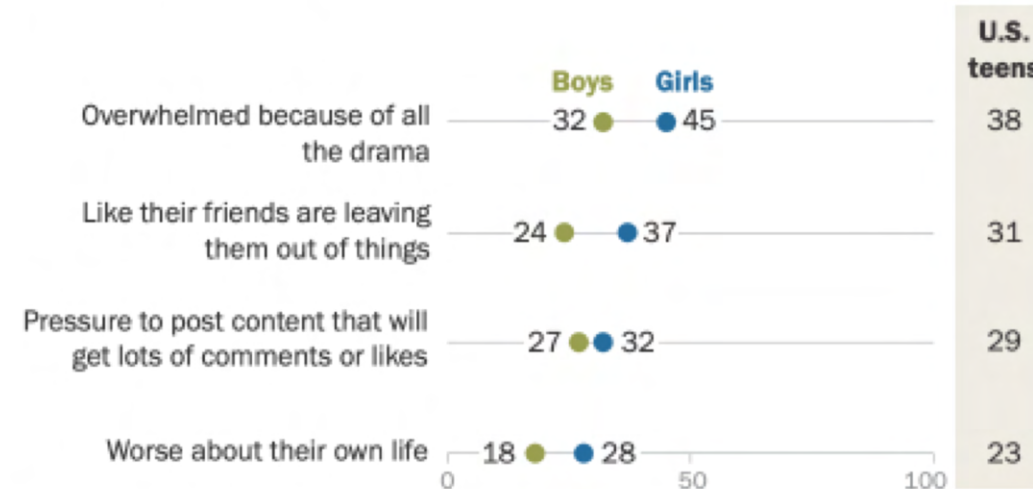


+19

# Social media is more challenging for girls...

## Teen girls more likely than teen boys to say social media has made them feel overwhelmed by drama, excluded by friends or worse about their life

*% of U.S. teens who say that in general, what they see on social media makes them feel **a lot or little** ...*



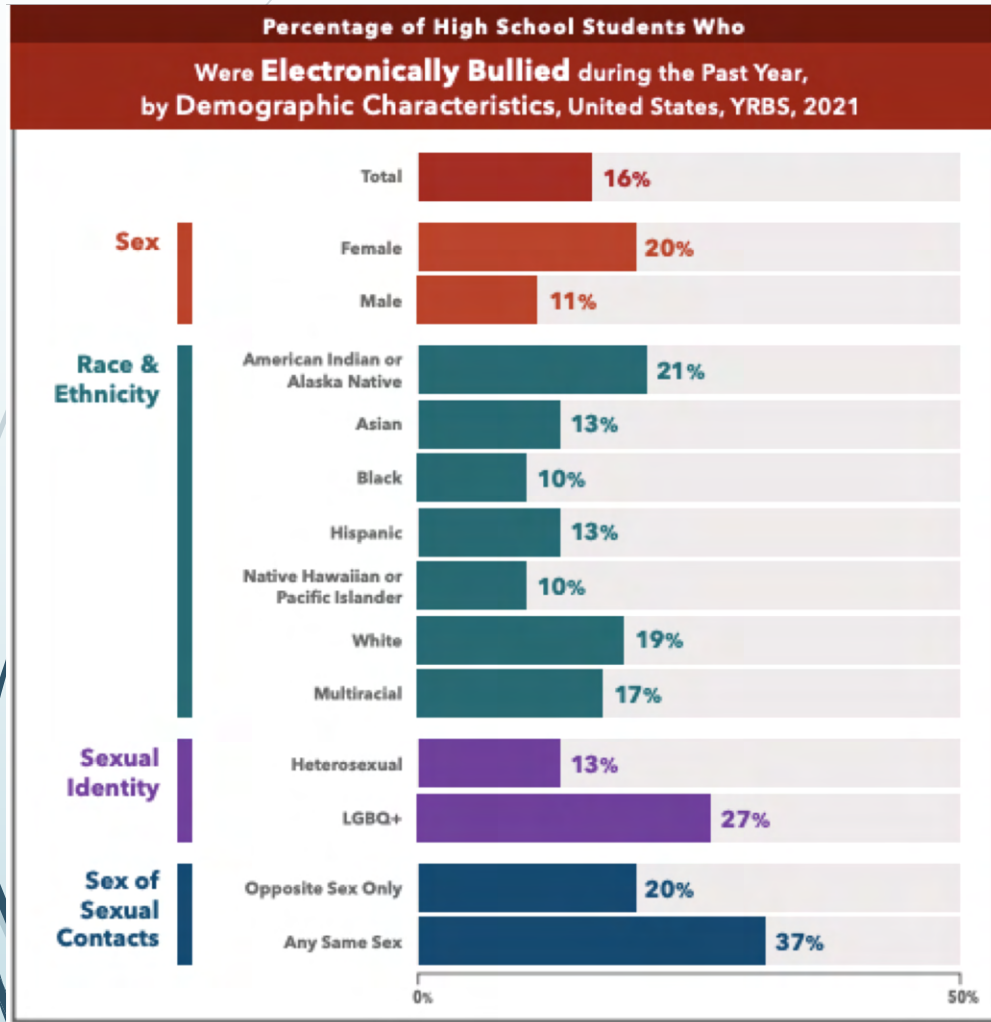
Note: Teens are those ages 13 to 17. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022.

"Connection, Creativity and Drama: Teen Life on Social Media in 2022"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# And online bullying continues...

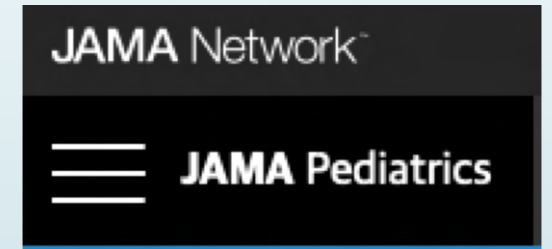


## ► Hannah, shares her story:

*I can feel their eyes on me as I walk to class. Everyone will have seen the pictures by now, and since they look real, no one believes that they that are digital creations. I can hear people whispering and snickering whenever I walk into a room. Text messages taunt me every day, and I think I know who is sending them, but without proof I feel helpless. The latest text says that I should expect more of the same if I don't do whatever they tell me to do. I'm scared to tell my parents because they might think the pictures are real, and I'm ashamed for them to find out what the other kids think of me.*

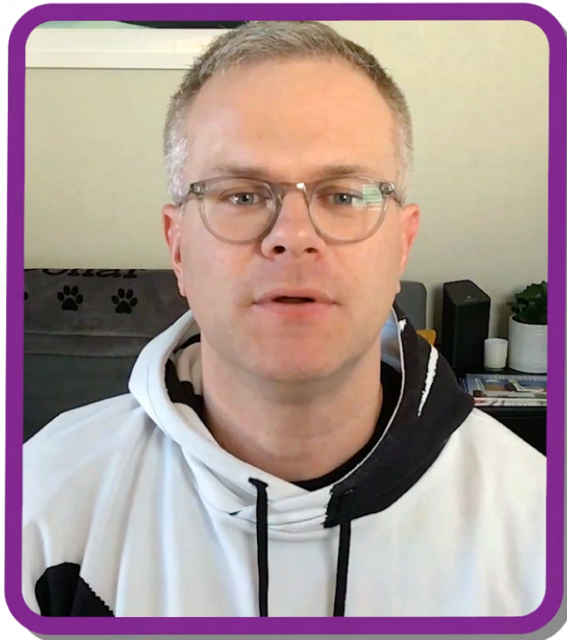
# Research about social media...

- Among teens who checked >3/day = poorer mental health
- Negative effects due to disrupted sleep, cyber bullying and lack of exercise
- Of teens who spent >3 hours on social media – heightened risk of mental health problems
- Particularly for internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, depression) as opposed to externalizing problems (e.g., being bullied, feeling distracted)





# Fact Check: Social media and substance use

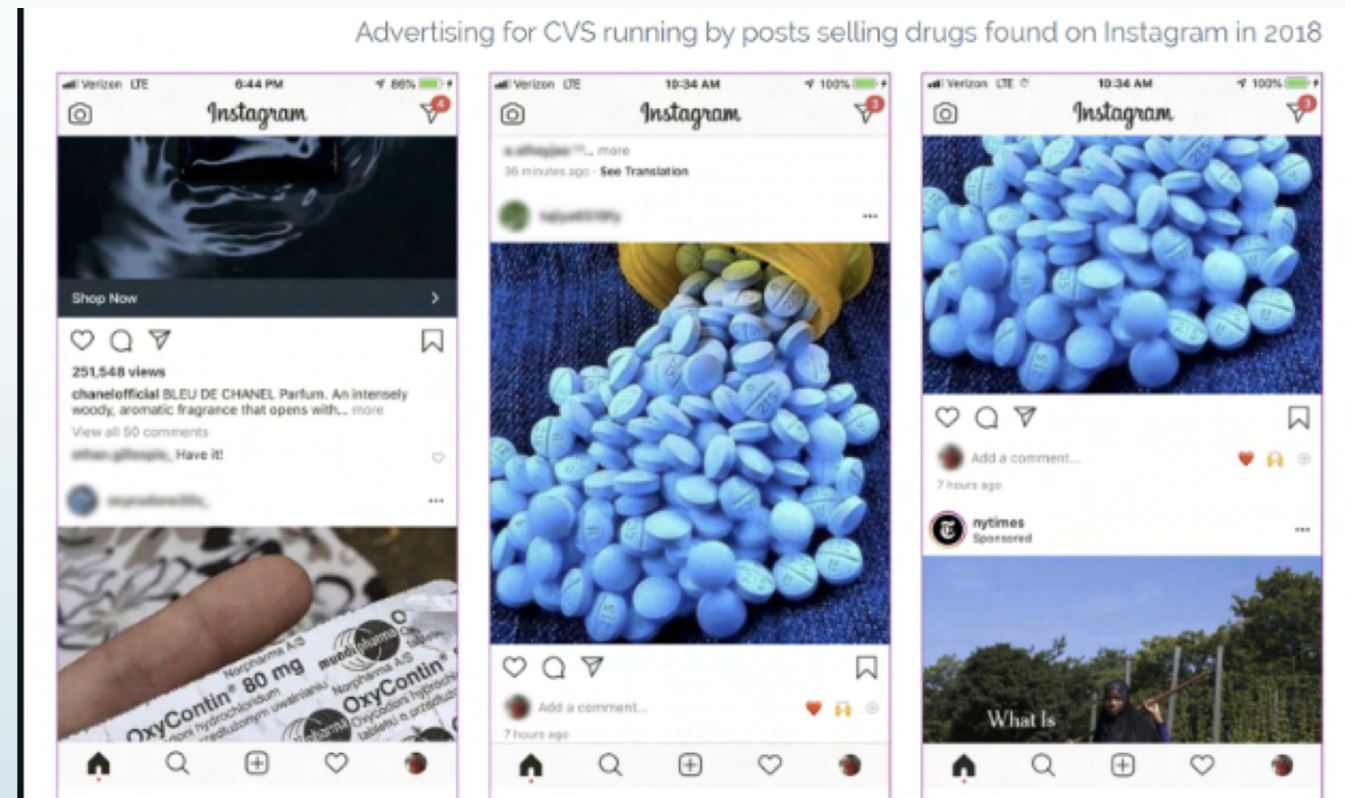


 **Partnership**  
to End Addiction

# Marketplace for substances



# Social media ads for prescription and illicit substances ... a game of Whack-a-mole



# Blackout Rage Gallon (BORG) TikTok Challenge





# What You Can Do

# Protective factors to promote mental well-being



- Positive physical development including diet, exercise and sleep
- Academic achievement/intellectual development
- High self-esteem
- Emotional self-regulation
- Good coping skills and problem-solving skills
- Connected in school, with peers, in athletics, employment, religion, and culture
- Positive role models and relationships with family members
- Clear expectations for values, behavior, and rules/limits



# If your child needs help

- Make an effort to see the matter from your child's point of view
- Determine what's important to your child and frame the conversation
- Do your homework and be ready with treatment options
- Use motivational “hooks”
- Practice what you want to say
- Consider alternatives if you get a flat refusal





# Differential diagnosis

- Mental health problems can mimic substance use problems and vice-versa
- Typical evaluation questions:
  - Is sadness related to a loss, or just out of the blue?
  - Is the adolescent using substances as a way of coping?
  - Is substance use a response to stressful life events?
  - Is impulsivity part of a child's personality, or tied to hyperactivity, or is it more manic and self-destructive?
  - Is the goal of substance use to seek excitement or to escape reality?





# Treatment Options

- Therapist
- Psychiatrist
- Medications
- Intensive Outpatient Programs
- Partial Hospitalization Programs
- Residential Treatment

# What to look for in treatment

- Integrated care
- Family involvement
- Programs that promote mentors, healthy activities and recovery community
- Continuing care/relapse prevention plan



# The family role

- Encourage treatment participation
- Provide emotional support and encouragement
- Attend individual and family counseling/programming
- Help with medication adherence
- Encourage abstinence
- Help establish structure and meaning
- Join family support groups (e.g., CHADD, NAMI, DBSA)
- Know the signs of relapse
- Engage in self-care



# What can parents/caregivers do?

- Have conversations...often
- Set clear expectations
- Role play resistance skills
- Monitor your child's activities
- Encourage pro-social activities
- Address mental health/trauma issues
- Help develop assertiveness skills



- Foster academic competence
- Pay attention to your child's behavior/mood changes
- Model healthy behaviors
- Collaborate on parenting
- Compare notes with other adults in your child's life
- Have naloxone/Narcan on hand
- Keep substances and medications secure

# Helpful messages for teens

- Don't fall for it. Don't let big businesses take advantage of you, ruin your health, make you dependent
- It's not cool to be addicted to and dependent on a drug
- Don't be fooled by celebrity and social media promotions. There's money behind them, not your best interests
- Make smart and healthy choices. Substance use is really dangerous for some people, and it's nearly impossible to know biologically how any individual will respond.
- You only have one brain and body and they're in pretty great condition right now – why risk your (name their goals, e.g., college, job, relationships, etc.)?



# Resources



# Child Mind Institute - NYC



Child Mind  
Institute

Care Education Science

About Us Get Involved  en Español



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## Family Resource Center

Find information to help you support children who are struggling with mental health, behavior or learning challenges.

Search for resources



Not sure where to start? Try our [Resource Finder](#)



Concerned about a child?  
**Try our Symptom Checker**



Wondering how to find help?  
**We answer common  
questions in Connect to  
Care**



# Crisis Text Line

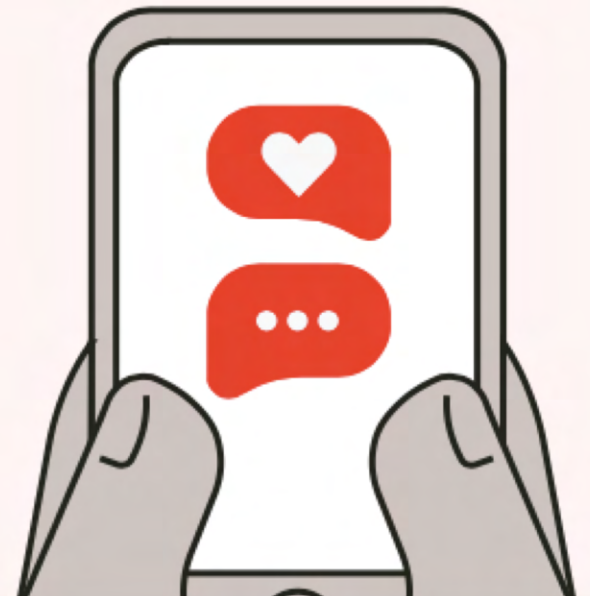
IN A CRISIS?

**Text HOME to 741741 to  
connect with a Crisis  
Counselor**

Free 24/7 support at your fingertips.

**Text Us**

[Or, message us on Facebook.](#)



# Common Sense Media



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Parents Need to Know

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## Parenting, Media, and Everything In Between

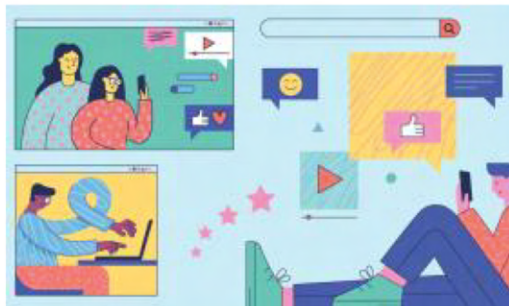
Teens

Follow this blog: 

### Screen Time in the Age of the Coronavirus

**Michael Robb** • January 12, 2022  
*Senior Director of Research | Dad of two*

• Categories: [Cellphone Parenting](#), [Coronavirus Support](#),  
[Healthy Media Habits](#), [Screen Time](#)



Parents and caregivers tend to think of guidelines for screen use as a daily maximum amount of time that's OK. But if you look closely at popular recommendations, such as the ones from the American... [read more](#)

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# IS YOUR CHILD AT RISK?

## A SUBSTANCE USE RISK ASSESSMENT

Survey: 5-6 minutes to complete

This risk assessment is designed to help you better understand the risks your child may face related to mental health, well-being, personality, family history, and their environment.



# Partnership to End Addiction's helpline



- Bilingual specialists provide support, guidance and resources
- Personalized plan for your family
- Schedule a call via email, text, Facebook Messenger

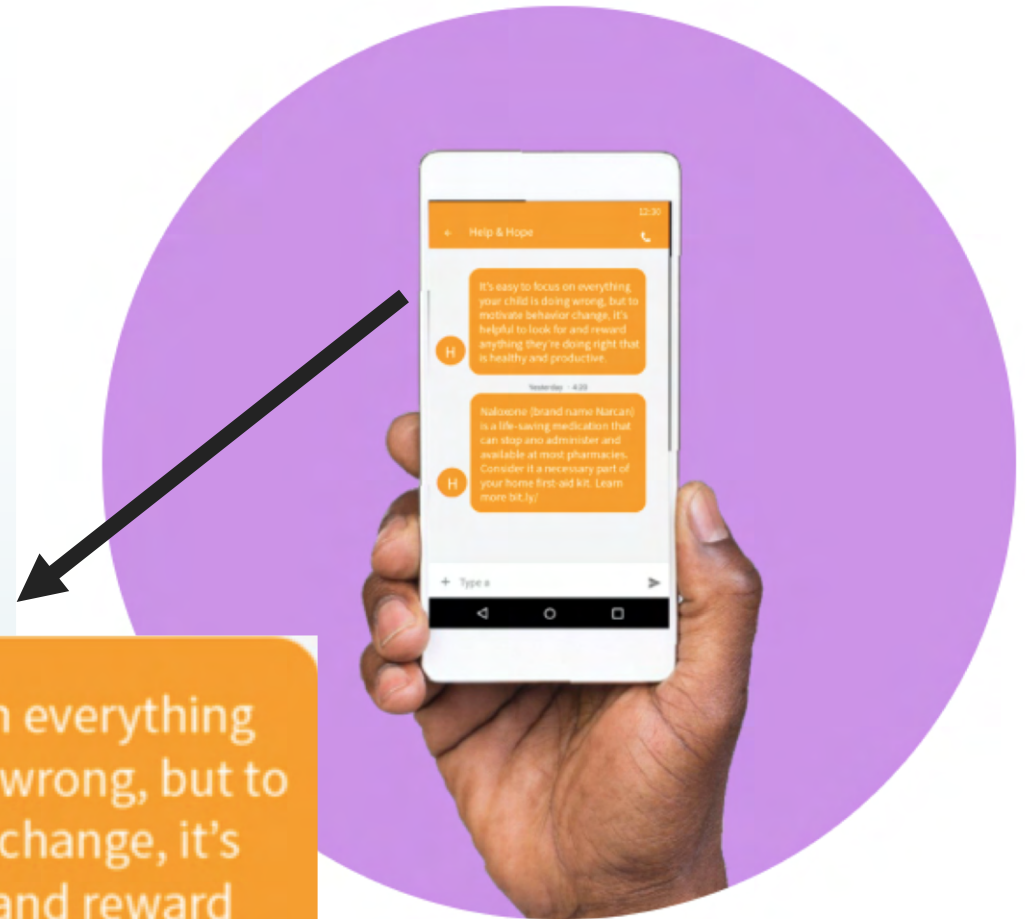


“You were a safety net when I felt like I was drowning. You had resources to suggest and knew just what to say. Thank you for being there.”

# Help & Hope

- **Text “join” to 55753**
- Answer a few questions
- Get messages of support, encouragement and resources
- Chat to reach helpline

It's easy to focus on everything your child is doing wrong, but to motivate behavior change, it's helpful to look for and reward anything they're doing right that is healthy and productive.



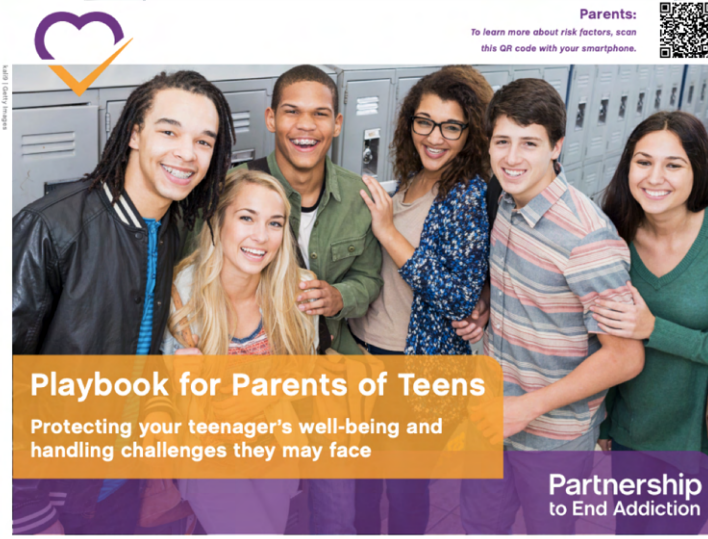
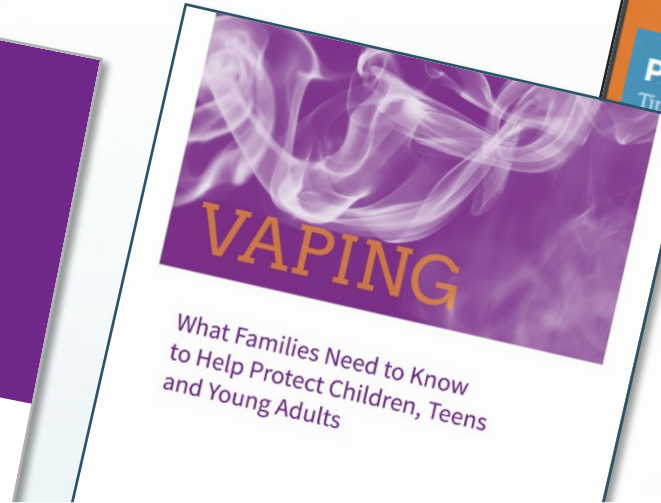
# Parenting Skills Program



- Ten 15-minute online lessons:
  - “Why”
  - Responding rather than reacting
  - Having good conversations
  - Encouraging healthy behaviors
  - Setting limits
  - Using consequences



drugfree.org



# Peer parent coaching

- Trained peer parent coach
- Five one-hour sessions
- Work on problems
- Develop skills
- Share resources



# Online Support Community



- Hour-long zoom meetings
- Led by peer parent coach
- Specific topics:
  - Understanding substance use
  - Communication skills
  - Self-care
  - Using rewards and consequences
  - Finding quality care





Recursos en Español

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# WELCOME. YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

So many other parents and families have gone through the same challenges you're facing now. We're here to help.

Ver página en español



Questions?



# Contact information

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