

Mental health takes toll on teens

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SPEND TIME
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FAMILY**

**THREE:
MAKE TIME TO
UNWIND**

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TAKE CARE
OF YOURSELF
PHYSICALLY**

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IN YOUR
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Olivia Bodner-Reporter

**Some names in this article have been changed due to requests to stay anonymous*

Mental health has become a rapidly increasing issue that has been popularized by the mainstream in light of COVID. According to polls from Adolescent Wellness Reading, cases of depression in teens 16-17 has risen 69% in the last year. In addition, between 2008-2017 the suicide rate among teens ages 18-19 has increased by 56%. These rates have become extremely alarming in medical professional's eyes, as these numbers are only expected to go up.

Junior Emma Torongeau knows too well the affects mental health can have. She realized her struggle with the situation when she was in the fifth grade, and was appointed a school therapist a year later. This experience, while still surprising, has become a reality for many young adults, as studies have shown that 50% of lifetime cases of mental illnesses begin at or a little before 14 years of age (Adolescent Wellness Reading). Torongeau has found that her dealing with this struggle has negatively impacted her mental health, both at school and at home.

"It makes it really hard to do my work. It makes me not want to do anything. And I think it's one of the reasons why I'm such a bad procrastinator. Because I don't have the mental energy to get up and do my school work," Torongeau said. "And It causes me not to speak to my family at home. And I end up holding myself up in my room a lot."

Many days, these students end up having a hard time finding motivation to do everyday activities that others find to be simple, everyday tasks. These symptoms, such as fatigue/lack of energy, concentration issues, anxiety and depression, appetite changes and losing interest in hobbies easily are just a few vague warning signs of mental illness in teens (Penn Medicine). The same study from 2008-2017 also found that feelings of anxiety and hopelessness have increased by 71% among people ages 17-25. It has also shown that 1-5 females ages 12-17 have experienced major depression throughout those years (Adolescent Wellness Academy). Torongeau is one of many students who has experienced these symptoms, which sometimes seems debilitating.

"I feel really tired. I don't want to get up and move and don't want to do my schoolwork," Torongeau said. "I just want to listen to music all day and not have to deal with anybody."

Another student, B. Fletcher, whose name has been changed due to requests to stay anonymous, has experienced similar circumstances during their depressive days.

"I'm really tired. I don't want to get up. I don't want to talk to anyone and I don't want to do anything. I have no energy to do anything. I get really depressed and negative towards everyone. I hate it too but I feel like I can't control it," Fletcher said.

Especially during this day and age of social media and pop culture influences, many adolescents have found that media influence and gender norms have exacerbated the disparity between lived reality and their perceptions of aspirations, and the future in general (World Health Organization). These influences, which seem to only showcase the high



points of peoples' lives, have severely damaged these teens' perspectives of reality. Statistically speaking, social media has become a breeding ground for harassment, which is one of the key factors to the decrease in mental health among teens. According to a survey from the University of Nevada in Reno, 1-6 teens have experienced one or more of the following: name calling (42%), spreading false rumors (32%), receiving unsolicited explicit images (25%), having their activities/whereabouts tracked by someone other than a parent (21%), someone making physical threats (16%) and having explicit images of them shared without their consent (7%). Fletcher has firsthand experience on how the media portrays society, as well as how harassment from others affects mental health.

"The stress social media has put on me is insane. I feel like I can't do anything anymore without either being judged, or being told how to act or how to dress. It sucks," Fletcher said. "I just want to accept myself for who I am but it feels like every turn I take, there's another person being glorified by society who I can't help but compare myself to."

Many teens, however, have found it hard to come forward about their mental health, either due to the dismissal or the disapproval of it. Dr. Rachel McCann, a pediatrician in Omaha,

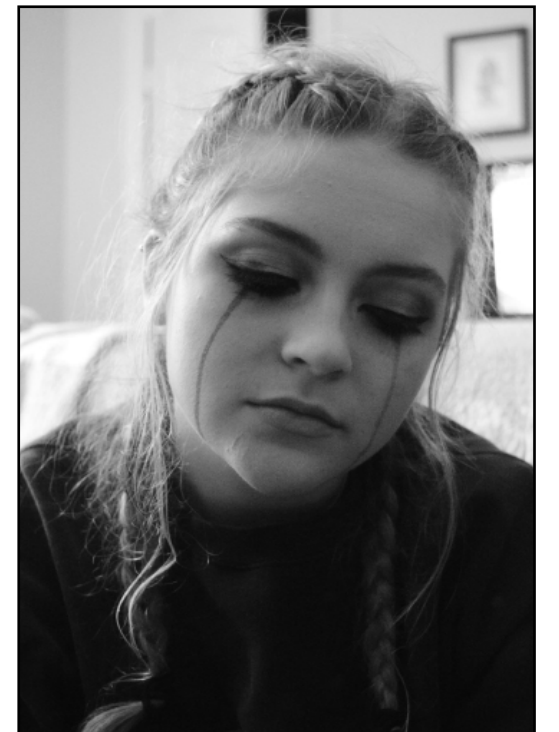


Photo Illustration by Olivia Bodner

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IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU GET THE HELP YOU NEED, USE HEALTHY COPING SKILLS, AND IF IT IS NEEDED, CONTACT THE CRISIS HOTLINES:

- NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE:

**1-800-273-TALK (8255) - ENGLISH
1-888-628-9454 - SPANISH**

- NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE:

**1-800-799-7233 OR
TEXT "LOVEIS" TO 22522**

- NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE:

**1-800-4ACHILD (4453) OR
TEXT 1-800-422-4453**

- NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE:

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

- VETERANS CRISIS LINE:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

- DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE:

**CALL OR TEXT 1-800-985-5990
(PRESS 2 FOR SPANISH)**

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911

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Nebraska, explained that only half of adolescents with depression actually get diagnosed before reaching adulthood. She stated that she wants adolescents to feel that they can answer completely and honestly when being screened. If they are answering in front of their parents, medical professionals might not get as true an answer as if they were allowed to do it on their own. Torongeau had her opinion on how the invalidation of her mental health makes her feel.

"The fact that when it comes to the symptoms of mental health whether it be not being able to do proper hygiene or clean their rooms, when they say that it's disgusting and there's no excuse for me to be lazy it genuinely affects the way you can live your life. And people saying it's just laziness really frustrates me," Torongeau said.

Fletcher also had their own opinion on how the invalidation impacts their mental health as well.

"I hate it when people say, 'Oh, it's just teen angst', or 'Yeah COVID has really messed up all of us', because it feels like they're invalidating my mental health," Fletcher said. "Like I completely understand that those things have affected people but it makes me feel like my mental health isn't important."

Especially during COVID, studies have shown mental health has decreased substantially. 9.7% of youth in the U.S. have been diagnosed with severe depression, compared to 9.2% in last year's data set (MHA National). In addition, from January-September 2020, 315,220 people took the anxiety screening test, which is a 95% increase to the 2019 total number of anxiety screens, and 534,484 people took the depression screen, a 62% increase (MHA National). Dr. Rachel McCann also explained how back in the day, mental health was usually chalked up to hormones, but now medical professionals have been taking it more seriously. Fletcher knows exactly how it feels to have COVID impact their mental health.

"COVID has made my mental health worse 100%. I feel like I have gone so downhill this past year not being able to hang out with people. Socializing helps distract me so now that I've had to be by myself for so long it's all piled up," Fletcher said.

Torongeau is also one of the many students that has had their mental health impacted by COVID.

"It has definitely made it 100 times worse. Not being able to have as much social interaction as I used to be able to have really messes with how I live my life," Torongeau said.

Coping is also something that teens struggle with in relation to mental health. Fletcher uses one of the many ways to cope when their mental health begins to decline.

"I try to listen to music, but it is hard to get the motivation to actually want to improve myself," Fletcher said.

Fletcher also adds some information about mental health for the friends and family of anyone struggling.

"Please check on your friends and family. Not everyone struggles on the outside," Fletcher said. "I know so many people that hide their emotions and put on a front so nobody worries. Everyone deals with things and copes differently, so please check up on your loved ones."

Junior places first in national competition for tuba solo

Tess Warren-Editor

Waiting the announcement of the winner, junior Noah Gewin held his breath as his name appeared on the top three list. Stunned to hear his name called out, Gewin never thought it would be him. He thinks back to all of the work that went into that one moment.

Gewin participated in the National Fine Arts Festival 2021 (NFAF) along with over 7,000 others. This annual competition for middle and high school students is put on by The Assemblies of God (AG) that consists of a regional and national competition. Gewin went with a group of around 40 students from his church – The Rock Family Worship Center – to regionals, and about 20 to nationals, who all competed as well.

NFAF aspires to be more than just a festival, but a discipleship tool of the AG Youth Ministries designed to help students discover, develop and deploy their ministry gifts and to learn about their God-given abilities and talents.

There are 80+ categories sorted into seven main divisions: Art, Communication, Dance, Drama, Instrumental, Vocal, and Writing. Gewin participated in six categories, including Brass Solo, in which he received the national Award of Merit – first place.

"Although I placed first in brass solo at regionals last year, due to COVID guidelines, the regional

competition was online and the national competition was canceled. It prevented me from finding out where I stood on a national scale," Gewin said. "This year, the rules with social distancing and masks were less strict, and we were able to get the 'full experience' of the festival."

Winning at nationals has inspired Gewin to continue in his pursuit of playing the tuba. He plans to play in the band through high school and college and continue to play as a hobby from then on. For the next two years, he plans on participating in NFAF since they only accept high school students. After that, he intends to compete in other high-level competitions as he progresses in his tuba playing.

"I am fairly self-motivated, so that really helps me to keep playing and practicing," Gewin said. "On top of my self-motivation to get better, I also really love music, and I don't want to let all of my potential for tuba playing go to waste."

Gewin started playing tuba in sixth grade with the band program at Monrovia Middle School, making this his sixth year playing. Over time, he developed a passion for the tuba

and the storytelling power of music.

"I really enjoy playing the tuba because it's unique, and not many people realize that a tuba is much more than a loud, bouncy bassline for a band. When played properly, the tuba can produce a beautiful sound that can't be produced by higher brass instruments," Gewin said. "It is one of my favorite ways

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