

# Healthy Young Minds

A free publication of the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)

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## Inside:

- Making a Difference ..... page 1
- Typical Adolescence? or Signs that Require Help? .....page 2
- Reactive vs. Risk Factors .....page 2
- Mental Health Policy in NY State .....page 3
- Legislative Awareness Day .....page 3
- Mental Health Facts for Teens .....page 4
- Resources .....page 4



## Making a difference: *Protective factors in a youth's life*

What causes one youth to struggle with addiction, mental health problems or risky behaviors and another seem to coast through high school unencumbered by anxiety, depression or substance abuse? We all know that there is a complex maze of factors such as genetics, family connections and community that impact each youth. Protective factors increase a young person's likelihood of success and risk factors increase the likelihood of mental health problems or substance abuse.

When students enter high school, they face social, emotional, and educational challenges. What's exciting is that schools, teachers and parents can improve student outcomes by increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors.

### ***Building a positive school culture***

A positive school culture is linked to improved academic and behavioral outcomes and helps create a sense of acceptance and attachment to school life. This shapes students' feelings and attitudes, which in turn impact on their academic performance and mental health.

To build a positive school culture, schools are encouraged to introduce or strengthen programs that provide opportunities for students and teachers to interact with one another on an informal basis and provide activities that promote positive peer bonding such as recess, clubs or school buddy programs. Schools should promote high academic expectations for their students and place more emphasis on mastery of a subject matter and less on competition and relative

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### ***Mental Health Matters Legislative Day March 9th, Albany, NY***

*Join us! Talk to policy-makers about the importance of mental health for our youth.*

**To register: [www.mhanys.org](http://www.mhanys.org)  
or call 518-434-0439**

A newsletter for educators, parents, and students about mental health in schools. This information is intended for reuse. Please give credit.



**Mental Health Association  
in New York State, Inc.**

# Typical Adolescence? or Signs that Require Help?

Adolescence is a time of change—change that prepares a young person for adult life. Young people begin to develop their own beliefs, cultural values and sexual identity, and begin thinking about the future. These changes can lead a youth to turn away from family and toward friends, to question authority and take risks. We also know that mental health problems often appear during adolescence. How do we distinguish between normal adolescent behavior and signs of serious mental health problems?

There are a number of signs and symptoms to look for. If a young person is experiencing several at one time and the symptoms are causing problems in their ability to study, work or relate to others, he or she should be seen by a mental health professional. Youth with suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming others need immediate attention.

**Some signs of potential problems:**

- o Social withdrawal, withdrawal from activities or a loss of interest in others
- o Problems with concentration, memory, speech or difficulty performing familiar tasks
- o Increased sensitivity to, or avoidance of, sounds, smells, touch, sights or stimulating situations
- o Apathy or feeling disconnected or a sense of unreality
- o Illogical thinking, exaggerated beliefs or magical thinking
- o Nervousness or fear or suspiciousness of others
- o Odd or unusual behavior
- o Dramatic sleep or appetite changes or a decline in personal care
- o Rapid or dramatic mood changes

**One half of all mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% begins by age 24.**

**Making a Difference: continued from page 1**

ability. A positive relationship with at least one adult who is not the parent, is a strong protective factor. Therefore, teachers who get to know their students can make a difference in their lives.

**Creating a protective school culture:**

- Encouraging a commitment to learning
- Praising achievements and accomplishments
- Acknowledging successes and abilities
- Asking students for opinions and solutions
- Modeling positive behavior and respect
- Encouraging student participation and helping
- Setting clear classroom rules and consequences
- Keeping the channels of communication open

Sources: [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca), [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov), [www.youth.gov](http://www.youth.gov)



Protective and Risk Factors		
Individual Level	Interpersonal Level	Community Level
<b>Risk Factors</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic predisposition</li> <li>• Lack of self-control</li> <li>• Insecure attachment</li> <li>• Poor problem-solving</li> <li>• Exposure to neurotoxins (lead or mercury)</li> <li>• Sexual orientation or gender identity issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Family history of mental illness or substance use</li> <li>• Stressful life changes</li> <li>• Lack of adult supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood poverty or violence</li> <li>• Peer rejection</li> <li>• Poor academic achievement</li> <li>• School failure</li> <li>• Availability of drugs</li> </ul>
<b>Protective Factors</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive self-image</li> <li>• Social skills</li> <li>• Ability to cope with adversity</li> <li>• Academic achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental involvement</li> <li>• Structured learning environment</li> <li>• Supportive relationships with family and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of mentors</li> <li>• Physical and psychological safety</li> <li>• Engagement in school activities, athletics, religion or culture</li> </ul>



New York State Senator Jesse Hamilton and Assemblymember Marcos Crespo introduced legislation to improve mental health literacy. January 2016

## Improving Mental Health Literacy in New York's Capitol

Mental health is a public health emergency. As the number of teen suicides continue to rise, New York policy makers are searching for ways to improve access to mental health information and services. The Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS) is promoting a campaign to increase mental health literacy. And in doing so, to improve understanding and access to services. Our campaign includes:

**Mental Health Education in Schools:** Legislation has been introduced to include mental health as part of the health education curriculum. (A.3887-A and S.6046).

**Mental Health Education for Teachers:** Legislation in the Senate would help teachers get access to information and resources to better understand mental health and support students learning about the subject. (S.6234-A)

**Funding Mental Health Literacy:** MHANYS is proposing additional funding in the New York State budget for training in Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid. This training helps adults understand what to do when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis or is showing signs of a mental health or addiction disorder. We are also proposing enhanced funding for school based mental health programs to support more school social workers and therapeutic after-school mental health services.

**Other legislative and budget priorities include:** Supporting legislation to raise the age of young people being sent to prison; providing mental health support to youth in the justice system; providing mental health workers employed by not-for-profit agencies with a living wage; supporting access to medications by providing service providers with a mechanism to override insurance restrictions in the best interest of the patient; and supporting funding for crisis intervention teams and services for veterans and military personnel.

### ***Register Now for Mental Health Matters Legislative Day March 9th in Albany New York***

*This year we are excited to support legislation to increase mental health literacy and provide adequate funding for mental health services. We are inviting families, students, teachers, mental health service providers, and all our friends to learn about these important issues and talk to policymakers about the importance of mental health for our youth.*

***Please join us in 2016. To register: [www.mhanys.org](http://www.mhanys.org). For more information call 518-434-0439***



## MHANYS

The Mental Health Association of New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) and its network of 26 local affiliates work to promote mental health and recovery, encourage empowerment in mental health service recipients, eliminate discrimination, raise public awareness, and advocate for equality and opportunity for all.

MHANYS works to ensure available and accessible mental health services for all New Yorkers.

### MHANYS

194 Washington Ave  
Suite 415  
Albany NY  
518-434-0439  
[www.mhanys.org](http://www.mhanys.org)

## Did you know?

### Eating Disorders Facts for Teens

- **Binge-eating disorder** is the most common eating disorder found in 3.5% of women and 2% percent of men. It is characterized by recurrent binge-eating episodes and a feeling of loss of control.
- **Anorexia nervosa** is found in .9% of women and .3% of men. It is characterized by deliberate self-starvation, emaciation, and a distorted self image.
- **Bulimia nervosa** found in 1.5% of women and .5% of men is characterized by frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food followed by purging such as vomiting, use of diuretics, or excessive exercise.
- People with eating disorders often have mood, anxiety, or substance use disorders and may attempt suicide. The median age for onset is 12 to 13 years.
- Over 50% of those with eating disorders reported receiving treatment for emotional problems, but less than 45% sought treatment for their eating disorder.

## RESOURCES

### MHANYS

We are proud to announce our new website. Find information about our statewide affiliate network, our projects and mental health resources.

[www.mhanys.org](http://www.mhanys.org)

### Youth in Transition

[www.youthnys.org](http://www.youthnys.org)

### NIMH

National Institute of Mental Health  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

### NEDA

National Eating Disorders Association  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

### NYASP

New York State Association of School Psychologists  
[www.nyasp.org](http://www.nyasp.org)

### Youth Power

[www.youthpowerny.org](http://www.youthpowerny.org)

## Transition Age Youth



[www.youthnys.org](http://www.youthnys.org) A new website for transition age youth and young adults, their families, friends and schools provides resources to support independence, improve overall well-being, support educational goals and community living for youth with mental health challenges. A project of MHANYS.