Healthy Young Minds

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

September 2016 * Issue 4

Inside:

- Pokémon Go.....page 1
- Back to School Stress.....page 2
- Mental Health in Schools: School Based Supports.....page 2
- Crisis Text Line ....page 3
- Pokémon Go Continued.....page 3
- OnTrackNY: Help for First Episode Psychosis.....page 4
- Sources of Strength: Suicide Prevention in Schools.....page 4
- Signs of Anxiety..... page 5
- Resources.....page 5

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

Pokémon Go: How is it affecting mental health?

Longtime fans and young children only discovering the Pokémon universe are all embracing the new mode in which Pikachu and his cohorts can be reached. Pokémon Go is an app downloadable on Android and iOS devices through which users can access an augmented reality overlaying their current location. Using the phone's camera and GPS abilities, the app allows Pokémon "trainers" (Pokémon Go players) to come across the creatures of the Pokémon universe in their own communities.

The game has been a roaring success since its release in the United States in July. According to GameSpot, the app has been downloaded globally over 75 million times, setting records in how quickly it reached and far surpassed the 50 million download mark.

Some are hailing the game as a fantastic tool to improve the mental health and wellness of its players. According to The Inqusitr, the game encourages exercise and time spent outdoors. The increased physical activity and exposure to vitamin D combined with creating incentives for social interaction with both strangers and friends lends to this unintended benefit.

Users who live with depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders agree that the game has helped to improve their health and experts are beginning to voice their opinion.

Continued on page 3

Back to School Stress

The carefree days of summer are now a fading memory and the school year is underway as we enter back into the world of academics. This comes with stress every year as students reorient to long since abandoned routines- homework, new faces, due dates, and exams. It can be especially stressful for students who might be starting high school or middle school or are entering a new school district entirely, which brings about other schemes of anxieties regarding making new friends and adjusting to different environments.

School introduces a stressor on kids that is not unlike the jobs and careers of the adult world. One article in Psychology Today described school to be a setting of "micromanagement" as kids are told "what to do, how to do it, and when to do it" and are under "constant… evaluation." It may be because of this that mental health disorders seem to worsen during the school year. After looking into the psychiatric emergency room visits of school aged kids at Connecticut Children's Mental Center in Hartford, Psychology Today found that visits noticeably increased throughout the school year and dropped off in the summer months. May specifically, a time for exams and final papers, sees especially high numbers in psychiatric emergency room visits of school-aged children.

It is important for parents and schools to keep in mind the importance of students' mental health during these times of stress and change. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health runs a blog that issued an article concerning back to school stress. Within this article, Allison Brill, Community Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Massachusetts Department of Public Health, provides tips for parents to help promote the mental health of their school aged children. We have placed the tips in the box below.

https://blog.mass.gov/publichealth/mental-wellness/back-to-school-mental-wellness-tips-for-parentscaregivers-of-teens/

1) *Reinforce good sleep habits*	2) *Be available to talk after school, either over the phone or in person*	3) *Stay connected and let students know they are not alone and you are willing to talk with them*	4) *Serve healthy food and encourage healthy eating habits*	5) *Encourage regular exercise*	6) *Reinforce positive coping strategies (e.g. journaling, listening to music)*

Mental Health in School: *School Based Supports*

There is a rise in school-aged individuals struggling with mental health problems and disorders. The jury is out as to why we've seen this rise, but some look to a seemingly increased willingness to reach out for help while others wonder if our culture could be contributing to the numbers. Regardless, the fact is one in five individuals in the United States has a mental health disorder and this includes students in our classrooms in schools across America. Some schools have found a new strategy to help these students thrive.

Comprehensive School-Based Adolescent Mental Health Programs are creating partnerships between schools and outside community behavioral health centers. An issue of Social Work Today writes, "Comprehensive school-based programs incorporate a team of behavioral health professionals from an outside organization, such as a community mental health provider, that partners with a school's staff. This approach is effective because it enables specialists to quickly identify student issues and immediately triage care based on the severity of circumstances." The article explains these partnerships can connect students to resources that schools themselves don't have the resources to provide, such as evidence-based treatment programs, crisis intervention methods, and services outside of school session and hours. With these collaborative programs, teachers can become better skilled in early detection and students in need of help can be quickly connected to accessible and local care.

In order for such a program to work, the article explains that parents, teachers, administrators, mental health professionals, and students must be involved and actively communicating with each other. This creates benefits across the board as the discussion can lead to an increased sense of awareness and promotion of mental health in the community as a whole. The existence of these collaborations between schools represents encouraging advancements in the movement for mental health and wellness.

It is important to note that such programs inevitably comes with challenges, such as funding, external and/or internal resistance, and confidentiality. As these programs continue, there is hope that standards will be developed so these programs can more easily be implemented.

Crisis Text Line: 741741

Teens and young adults are turning to new means in order to reach out for help in times of trouble and crisis. Nancy Lublin, former CEO of DoSomething.org, has created Crisis Text Line, the only free 24/7 crisis support line that operates solely through text messaging systems. According to an interview conducted by *Glamour* magazine, Lublin got the idea when "text blasts" sent out by DoSomething.org began getting responses from individuals in need of help. She realized the help needed to meet these individuals where they were at- on their phones. Texting creates a medium of communication that can be more comfortable for an individual who is caught in a situation in which finding a private space for a phone call isn't convenient or who is afraid of a conversation being overheard.

The *Glamour* magazine interview explained since the not-for-profit organization Crisis Text Line began in 2013 in two cities, it expanded faster than Facebook and became active in every area code in the United States just four months into its launch. Individuals can reach trained crisis counselors by texting a message to "741741." They will receive an automated message asking for a short description of what situation the texter is experiencing. A computer program then detects key words, connects the individual with the crisis counselor in less than 5 minutes, and with the key words highlighted by the computer program, the crisis counselors can have an idea of what the nature of the situation is. According to the organization's main page, all major cell phone plans support the short code that messages are sent with free of charge. Other plans support the line at standard rates, while prepaid plans are still unable to function using short codes.

Crisis Text Line is quick to point out they are not a replacement for therapy or ongoing treatment. Their principles outlined on the "About Us" page of their website explain that they aim to "move [people] from a hot moment to a cool calm, guiding [them] to create a plan to stay safe and healthy."

The organization is providing a unique opportunity to gather data on crisis situations. They have been able to compile information about what sort of situations individuals are dealing with most and when they are occurring. For example, the *Glamour* magazine interview reported that 30% of texts concern suicide and depression, and two-thirds of crises happen between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. The organization has been able to look into specific disorders and find peaks in crisis. For example, texts regarding issues with anxiety seem to come in between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., while texts concerning eating disorders seem to be received mostly on Sundays and Mondays. This sort of information can help guide future research and further intervention strategies.

Crisis Text Line has expanded its reach since its inception in 2013. It can now operate through the Facebook messaging system and is looking at plans to go international. To find out more about Crisis Text Line, how you can support the blossoming organization, or how to become involved in this innovative way to increase the mental health of our communities, visit the organization at www.crisistextline.org.

CRISIS TEXT LINE ™

Continued from Page 1- Pokémon Go: How is it affecting mental health?

Stephen Buckley, the Head of Information at Mind, the English charity for mental health, was quoted by the Independent as saying , "Getting regular contact with people is also helpful as it can reduce loneliness and boost self-esteem. It is important, however, that gaming does not replace or damage genuine social relationships."

This weary attitude is shared by various other individuals working to promote mental health and wellness. While the game provides fun and spontaneous interactions between players and does help users to venture outdoors, there are legitimate concerns regarding how a game that combines reality with fiction might become harmful for users who spend excessive amounts of time playing the game. Forbes magazine reports that Pokémon Go has increased the average amount of time people are spending on their mobile devices by 4.1%, and Android users in the United States reportedly spend an average of 75 minutes a day on the app specifically.

The app has found a niche in the market for augmented reality games. More franchises are sure to follow suit and release their own versions of games in which their universe's factitious characters can be encountered in the real world. Time will only tell the effects such games will have on the players; however, right now it appears to be doing well in a fandom that is treasuring this exciting and new opportunity to enjoy the world of Pokémon.

OnTrackNY: Help for First Episode Psychosis

OnTrackNY is an innovative treatment program for adolescents and young adults who have had unusual thoughts and behaviors or who have started hearing or seeing things that others don't. OnTrackNY helps people achieve their goals for school, work, and relationships.

Funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, the OnTrackNY Initiative has been providing Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) treatment to young people experiencing First Episode Psychosis (FEP) in New York State since 2013. The goal of OnTrackNY is to help young adults with newly emerged non-affective psychotic disorders achieve their goals for school, work, and social relationships. OnTrackNY treatment teams serve up to 35-50 individuals, age 16-30, and provide a range of treatment including: case management for social and community needs, supported employment and education, FEP-relevant psychotherapy, pharmacotherapy and primary care coordination, peer support, and family support and education. Principles of care include shared decision making, youth-friendly and welcoming environments, and flexible and accessible recovery oriented services.

Fourteen OnTrackNY programs are currently operating in New York State, with plans to open additional programs by the end of 2016.

To make a referral or to locate an OnTrackNY program nearest you, please contact a specific OnTrackNY team using the following link: http://ontrackny.org/Contact

SOURCES OF STRENGTH

Sources of Strength is a strength-based comprehensive wellness program that focuses on suicide prevention but impacts other issues such as substance abuse and violence. The program is based on a relational connections model that uses teams of peer leaders mentored by adult advisors to change peer social norms about help seeking and encourages students to individually assess and develop strengths in their life.

Sources of Strength is most often implemented as a school-based program in middle school, high school, or college; however, Sources of Strength is also often used in community, faith-based, and cultural settings. It promotes and focuses on connectivity, school bonding, peer-adult partnerships, and help seeking behaviors.

Trained peer leaders use their network of friends to:

- Have one-on-one conversations.
- Develop a Hope, Help, Strength poster and/or psa program using local faces and voices.
- Present peer to peer presentations.
- Develop video, internet, or texting messages.
- The program is often initiated as 3-6 month project, but is designed as a multi-year project with ongoing peer messaging and contacts growing over time.

Eight "sources of strength" that can function as protective factors to help prevent suicide among youth

Sources of Strength is the first suicide prevention program involving peer leaders to enhance protective factors associated with reducing suicide at the school population level. In 2010, Sources of Strength and the University of Rochester began a 6-year randomized trial using Sources of Strength with more than 40 high schools to measure the impact of 1,500 peer leaders on approximately 15,000 adolescents; this ongoing study is being funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as part of the National Peer Leadership Study.

For more information go to *https://sourcesofstrength.org/discover/contact/*

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

Did you know?

Signs of Anxiety

According to Mental Health First Aid USA

- **Cardiovascular:** Pounding heart, chest pain, rapid heart beat, flushing
- **Respiratory:** Hyperventilation, shortness of breath
- **Neurological:** Dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling, numbness
- **Gastrointestinal:** Choking, dry mouth, stomach pains, nausea, diarrhea
- **Musculoskeletal:** Muscle aches and pains, restlessness, tremors and shaking, inability to relax
- **Psychological:** Unrealistic or excessive fear and worry, racing thoughts, decreased concentration or memory, indecisiveness, irritability, impatience, anger, confusion, restlessness, feeling "on edge," tiredness, sleep disturbance, vivid dreams
- **Behavioral:** Avoidance of situations, obsessive or compulsive behavior, distress in social situations, phobic behavioral

To learn how to best handle and detect these signs of anxiety, find a Mental Health First Aid class near you in NYS by visiting www.mhanys.org

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

Youth in Transition
www.youthnys.org

NIMH
National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

NEDA
National Eating Disorders Association
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

NYASP
New York State Association of School Psychologists
www.nyasp.org

Youth Power
www.youthpowerny.org