

Mental Health awareness

by Jonathan Strohm

Literacy around mental health has increased, more public figures are talking about mental health and many people are sharing their experiences with mental health issues and depression. As more people come out and talk about their experiences, the feeling people have of suffering in silence or being alone through this struggle has started to fade, and people are starting to focus on self care and sharing experiences. More people have started to be vocal about their struggles and social media allows people to get help and for more people to be aware of this issue.

Effects of social media on mental well-being

Social media can make the brain release large amounts of dopamine which can affect attitudes and emotions impacting mental well being. Seeing other people online makes it easy to compare yourself to others which can damage people's self image and confidence leading to insecurities, and potentially more mental health issues. It is a common view that social media can cause anxiety, depression and other mental health related challenges. One of the more common issues on most social media apps is to compare ourselves to each other and that can make people view themselves in a negative light. Another way social media negatively affects people's mental health is that it is so easy to hate or be mean to each other online because there are no real repercussions for negative behavior online so people can be aggressive or hostile, shutting others down and insulting or even threatening them.

World events and impact on mental health

There is a general consensus that Covid has caused many problems including a decline in people's mental health since many people had to socially distance for a long time. There are also rising tensions globally and conflicts among countries do cause more stress and have begun impacting many people's mental health. Over the past several years many events have happened: the pandemic, ongoing racial trauma, and continuous fights for social justice. These events have propelled mental health to the forefront. The drastic shift in how we live our lives, with no end in sight, sparked many to seek therapy.

Lack of physical interaction

More and more people spending more time online instead of out in the world with other people can cause stress and a detachment from others, leading to a painfully lonely feeling and that affects mental health. Social trends in all facets of life have changed in the past 20 years; many remote workers haven't met their colleagues offline despite working together every day. Much of social communication has moved online too, and friends are more likely to text or call instead of planning a hang-out in person.

Importance of mental health resources in schools

Promoting mental health and well-being in schools improves student behavior and engagement along with allowing students to engage with their peers. Our school resources include the following:

- Counseling services for students with community counselors. This is available by referral from a teacher, guidance counselor, or parent.
- The national suicide and crisis hotline is available for 24 hour access to professional help by dialing 9-8-8.
- SaySomething Anonymous Reporting is available for all students 24/7 to reach out for help to self report or another student who needs assistance.
- We have a school resource officer on site that can help when needed.
- TeamMates Mentoring program helps students feel connected to an adult in the community and is available to any student. See a guidance counselor for more information.
- MHS Staff includes school counselors, a school psychologist, and school nurses.
- According to Jordan Lewis, our district participates in 1,184 juvenile services meetings with the County Attorney, Health and Human Services, probation, outside counseling services, Boys Town, school personnel, and law enforcement to discuss how to best help our students and to determine services that can be provided to students in need.

