



# You Can Help A Student

Recognizing when adolescent students are struggling and how to help them

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# After this workshop participants will be able to...

1. Describe the current landscape of youth mental health in this country
2. Identify signs of distress in youth
3. Describe how to respond when youth is in distress
4. Identify where to go when professional help is needed and know where to find additional resources

# Who is The Jed Foundation?

- JED is a nonprofit that protects emotional health and prevents suicide for our nation's teens and young adults.





# What is Mental Health?

**Mental health** is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

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# Mental Health in Youth (13-18 year olds)



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# Mental Health in Youth-Setting the Frame

- Developmental changes
- Peer to peer relationships
- Family dynamics
- Academic rigor
- School transitions
- COVID-19 pandemic & remote learning
- Challenges in Middle School & High School

# Mental Health in Youth

- Most mental illnesses present themselves before age 17
- Eating disorders will tend to emerge during this time
- Depression is the fourth leading cause of illness and disability among ages 15-19 and fifteenth for ages 10-14
  - Anxiety is the ninth leading cause for ages 15-19 and sixth for ages 10-14



# Mental Health in Youth

- The rate for adolescent suicide (ages 10-19) increased dramatically from 4.5 deaths per 100,000 in 2010 to 6.6 in 2019.
  - The suicide death rate is highest for American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents at nearly 2.5 times the rate for White adolescents. (NCHS 2021)
- The total number of deaths by suicide among 13-30 year olds in the U.S. in 2018 was 11,606. This amounts to 14.62 out of 100,000 people in this age range.
  - Ages 13-17: 1,649 deaths; 7.91/100,000 people (CDC 2017)
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds (WHO 2020)
- 35% of NY youth have felt sad/hopeless for 2 or more weeks in a row (CDC 2019)
- 8.5% of NY youth have attempted suicide in the past year (CDC 2019)

# The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Well-Being

- The effects of the pandemic may be felt years to come
- Social Isolation
- 46% of parents noticed signs of a new or worsening mental health condition in their teen
- 1 in 3 teen girls and 1 in 5 teen boys experienced new or worsening anxiety

# Signs of Distress



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# Categories

## The Big Categories

- Feeling
- Thinking
- Behavior

*These categories are not exclusive (just like you can have pain and fever). This is a way of organizing info to help you understand and articulate challenges more easily.*



# Signs to Notice

## Signs to Notice

Changes in:

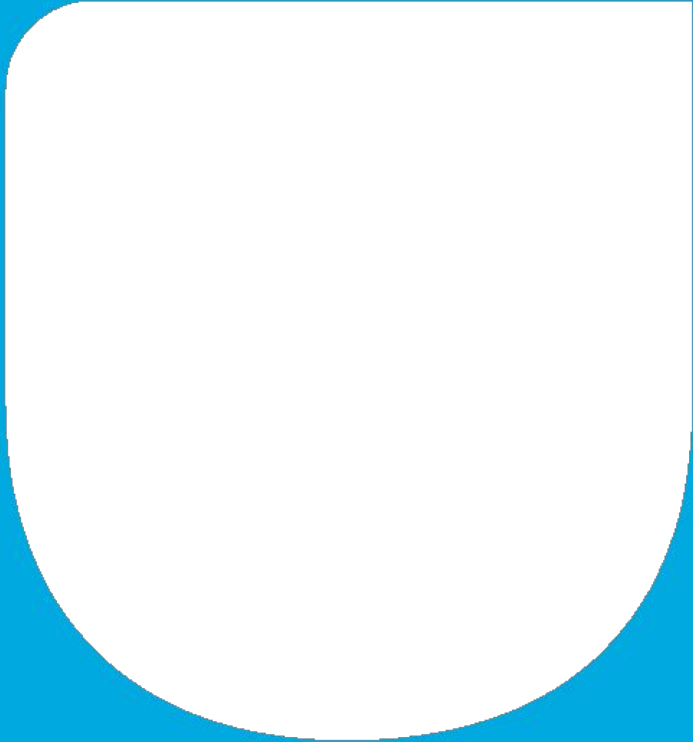
- Appearance
- Mood
- Speech
- Behavior
- Relationships
- Academic Performance

*You don't need to be an expert/clinician to notice! You just need to trust your observations.*

# Signs in a Digital Environment

- Posting comments such as “I hate myself,” “I suck at everything,” or “I want to die or kill myself”
- Writing posts or comments that show impulsive behavior, irritability, hostility, or indicate insomnia
- Posting dark poetry or quotes, disturbing songs or videos
- Using hashtags that are connected to worrisome trends
- Posting captions, hashtags, or emojis that are overtly sad or negative- they go beyond sarcastic jokes
- Liking posts or following accounts that promote negative behaviors– even if they aren’t sharing it to their feeds
- When they stop responding to your messages
- Posting about engaging in high-risk behavior





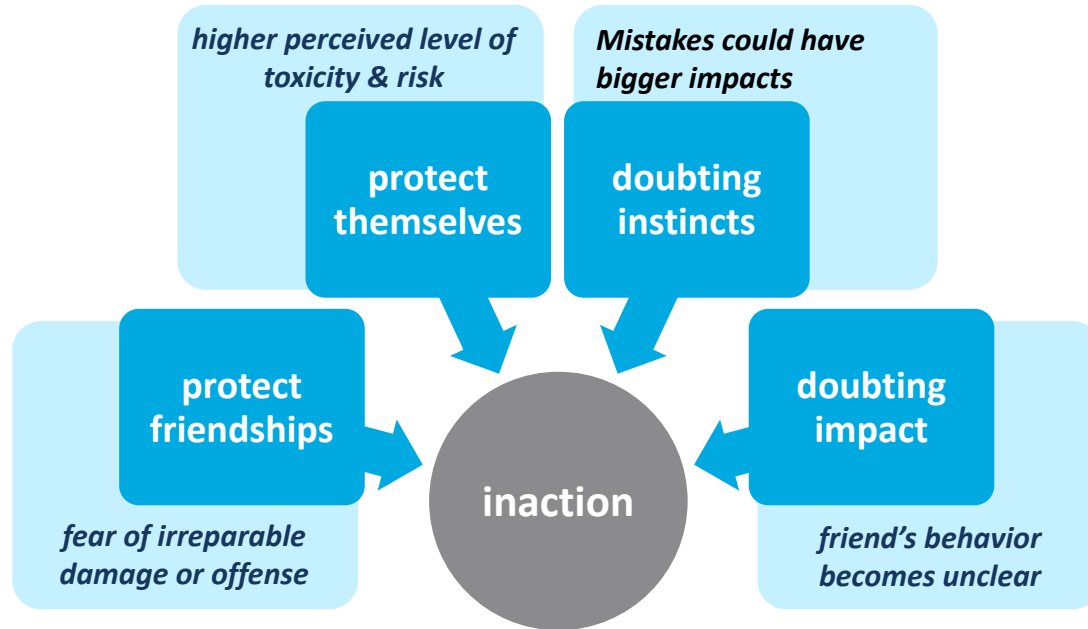
# **Barriers to Helping Someone in Distress**

# Barriers to Helping

- Fear of making it worse
  - Not knowing what to do/say
  - Risk of student getting mad at you
  - Not having personal experience in the matter
  - Sometimes you just DON'T KNOW, people hide it well
  - A fear that you could be overreacting
  - Don't feel it's your place to intercede
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# Despite their desire to help, with emotionally complex scenarios many people cite clear barriers to engaging



# These barriers lead to the ‘isolation conundrum’.

## At-Risk

**I want help but...**  
*I don't know how to ask*  
*I feel so isolated*  
*Nobody cares about me*  
*I don't want to be a burden*

## Friend

**I want TO help but...**  
*I don't really know what's going on*  
*I don't want them to get mad*  
*It's not my place*  
*I can't do anything about it anyway*  
*I have to protect myself*

Creating a vacuum of support exactly at the moment when at-risk folks need it the most.

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# Engaging Adolescents in Need



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# Engaging A Student in Need

## Engaging & Expressing Concern



- Explain why you are concerned (be specific, “You have been missing a lot of meetings, look sad all the time, falling asleep...”)
- Show compassion (“I am worried about you”)
- Listen (you don’t have to solve problems)
- Know your own limits (if it is requiring time, effort, concern on your part that feels beyond what you can do, you probably need to get others involved)

# Do's and Don'ts While Engaging Someone In Need

## Do

- Treat them normally, without judgement
- Be accepting of their struggle
- Use an understanding or empathetic tone
- Open up conversation, offer to listen
- Offer invitations, activities, social inclusion
- Keep checking in, make yourself available
- Set boundaries
- Show them that you care/value them
- Ask open-ended questions
- Take care of yourself
- Involve experts when necessary

## Don't

- Freak out about or make light of their situation
- Try to solve their problems
- Use an accusatory or condescending tone
- Demand conversation
- Make them feel like a burden
- Give them false praise
- Interrogate them
- Make it about you

# Engaging with Someone in Need

## Challenges in Expressing Concern



If someone isn't receptive.....

- They may not believe there is a problem
- They may be worried that facing the problem will make it worse or afraid to face the possibility that there might be a problem
- They may be worried about other consequences

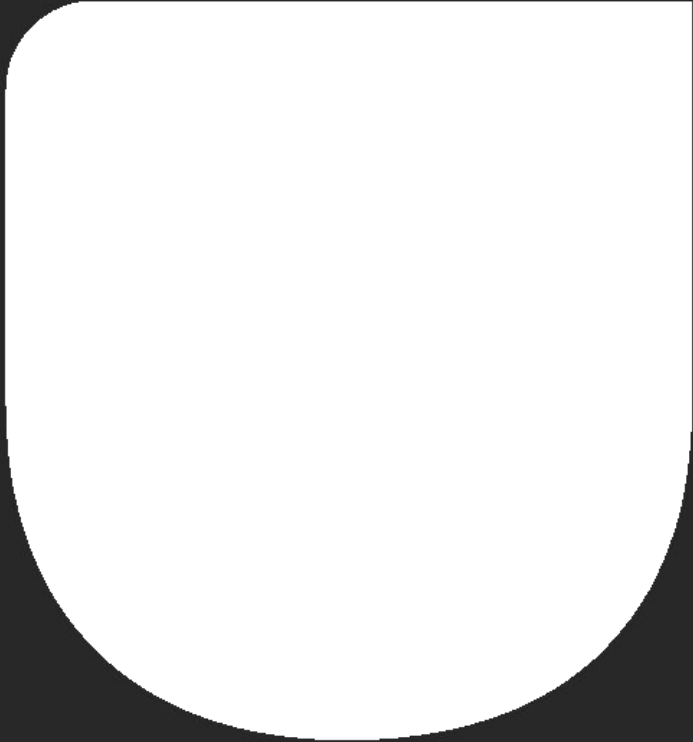
# Engaging with Someone in Need

## Challenges in Expressing Concern

If someone is *not* obviously or immediately in harm's way and won't accept your help:

- Try to keep the lines of communication open
- Make sure you check in with the appropriate person at the school to let them know you are concerned

If someone is having an **emergency** and refuses help, involve the appropriate and available staff member and/or **call 911**.



# **Concerned About Supporting Someone in a Severe Crisis?**



# Engaging with Someone in Need

## Facts About Suicide

- People who attempt suicide usually **do** give warning signs.  
*>80% of people who die by suicide gave verbal and/or nonverbal warning signs.*
- Mentioning suicide **will not** lead someone to attempt suicide.  
*>Asking someone about their suicidal feelings may make the person feel relieved that someone finally recognized their emotional pain.*

# Engaging with Someone in Need

## Facts About Suicide

- Most suicidal people **have not** decided they want to die, and there **are** things that can be done about it.
  - *Most suicidal people are ambivalent; that is, part of them is feeling, “I want to die,” but part of them is feeling, “I want to live.”*
- Most people who talk about suicide **are not** being manipulative or trying to get attention (and even if they are, they still need some kind of help).
  - *People who talk about suicide are genuinely distressed and should be taken seriously*

# Engaging with Someone in Need

## Signs to Notice

- Talking about wanting to end it all
- Giving away personal possessions
- Expressing guilt, hopelessness or desperation
- Withdrawal from everyday life
- Expressing intense anger
- Asking about or actively seeking access to deadly means
- Changes in use of substances
- Posting “goodbye” on social media

# Engaging with Someone in Need

## What to Do

### If someone mentions suicidal thoughts:

- Take them seriously
- Calmly get the information you need to get them help
- Get them connected to a mental health professional as soon as possible
- Your site should have a plan that is well known and easily implemented

# Your Role as a Help-Giver



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# The Order of Care

**YOU → OTHERS**



# Your Role as a Help-Giver

## Putting Things in Perspective

- Remember a time you didn't feel well physically?
- What did you do? Why?
- The unnoticed parallels between physical and mental health
- How our distorted image leads to misunderstanding and feeds stigma/anxiety

# Your Role as a Help-Giver



## What Can You Do?

- Know how to recognize a student or colleague in distress
- Know how to engage a student or colleague: what to say, how to follow up



# Your Role as a Help-Giver

## First Rules

- You don't need to know exactly what is wrong-just that there is a problem-and that is **intuitive**
- It is **courageous** and **sensible** to ask for (and offer) help when it is needed
- **Trust your gut**-if you think there is a something going on, good chance there is
- **Use your resources and contacts**-know your backup resources/system and use them/it
- **If concerned**, always consult



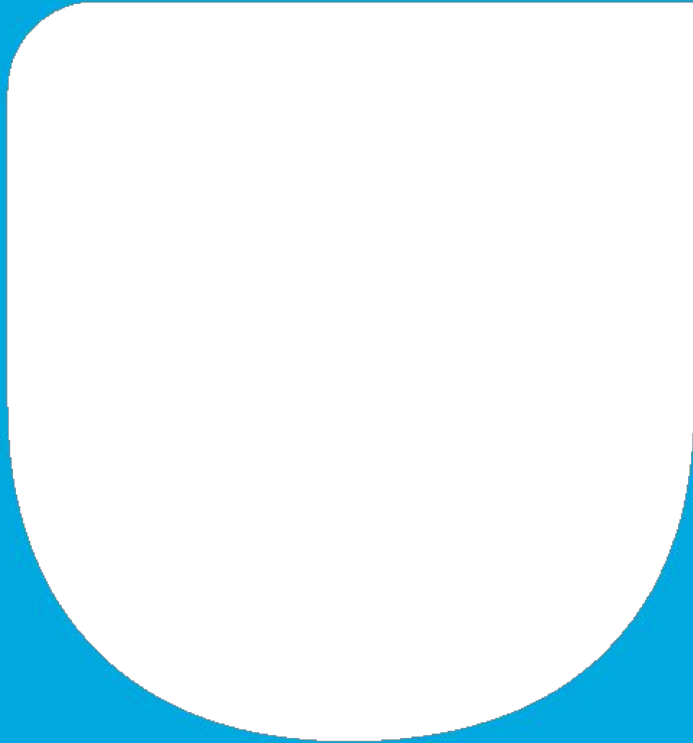
# Personal Reflection Questions

**How can we shift our culture so that people seek help?**

**How can we change our culture so that people lend help?**

**What guidance from this training could you apply in your life?**

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# What Are Your Resources?

# National Resources

- Crisis Text Line Text - Text START to 741-741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline call 1-800-273-8255(TALK)
- Trevor Project for LGBTQ+ call 1-866-488-7386
  - Text “Trevor” to 1-202-304-1200
- Trans Lifeline call 1-877-565-8860



# New York State & New York City Resources

- NY State Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-942-6906
- NY Project Hope Emotional Support Helpline:  
1-844-863-9314
- NYC Well hotline numbers
  - Call: 1-888-NYC-WELL
  - Text: “Well” to 65173





The Jed Foundation

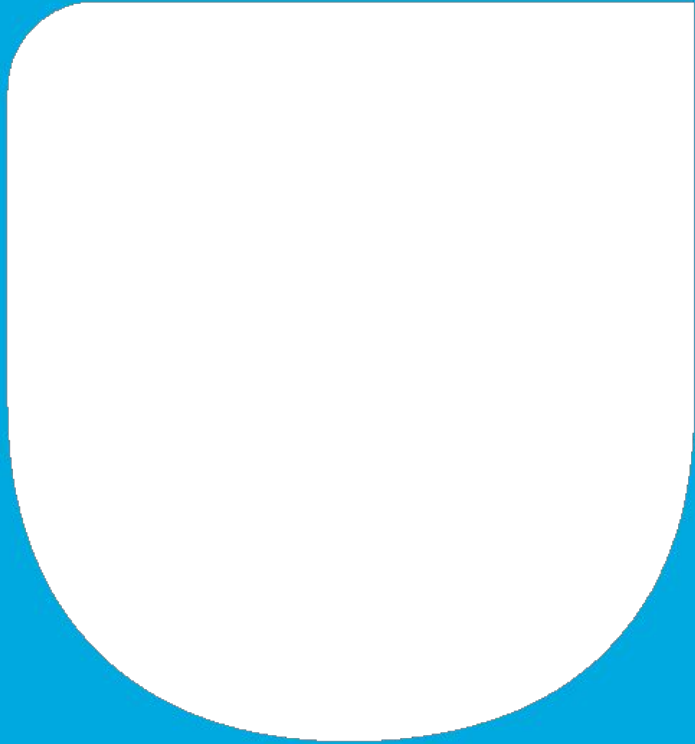
# JED Resources

- [JED Mental Health Resource Center for Teens and Young Adults](#)
  - [JED COVID-19 Resource Center for Parents & Families](#)
  - [JED's Resource Center for Families & Communities](#)
  - [Seize the Awkward - Coronavirus Edition](#)
  - [Set to Go For Families](#)
  - [Love is Louder Action Center](#)
  - [JED's Parent Conversation Guide](#)
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# You Can Make A Difference

- Stay aware
- Trust your instincts
- Reach out to others who appear distressed
- Know your resources for routine and crisis situations
- Spread the word to other people that you know – share these resources





**Questions?**



# Thank you.

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