



FOR CAREGIVERS

Tips for Supporting Teens' Mental Health This Fall

Teens heading back to school this fall are rebounding from a uniquely challenging time and reemerging into a new normal. Getting back into the swing of academic and social life may be daunting, especially as so many teens are still dealing with the mental health impacts of the pandemic.

Here are some suggestions for caregivers looking to help teens cope:

Be aware of common challenges

- Anxiety, including social anxiety
 - Depression
 - Academic loss or stress
 - Grief
 - Race- and identity-related trauma
 - Economic hardship
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Look out for big changes in behavior, mood and habits

If your teen suddenly seems different, take extra care to check in.

Watch for common signs of a mental health challenge like:

- School avoidance
 - Not wanting to see friends
 - Losing interest in things they used to enjoy
 - Changes in eating and sleeping habits
 - Disruptive behavior or aggression
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Keep the lines of communication open

Check in with your child regularly. Ask how they are, even when nothing seems wrong. Let them know you're there to talk if there ever is a problem.

Validate their emotions

When your child is upset, don't downplay their feelings or jump right into problem-solving mode. Instead, let them know that you hear them and that it's normal to feel sad, anxious or angry sometimes.

Prioritize social emotional support

Think creatively about ways that your child can meet academic demands without sacrificing their mental health. While academics are key, students may need additional support this year — put your child's emotional needs first and look for ways to support them when they hit rough spots trying to reengage with normal life.

Make space for grief

If your teen has lost a loved one, provide opportunities for them to talk about it. Mark milestones like birthdays and anniversaries together and share your own experiences with grief and loss.

Help teens reemerge with new routines

Teens may feel disconnected or struggle to engage with friends, school events and other parts of their pre-pandemic lives. Caregivers can help by suggesting new (or old!) routines and committing the family to supporting this structure.

Model self-care

Looking out for your own mental health is an important part of caring for your child. And when teens see you taking time for yourself, they learn to do the same.

Reach out for help

If you're worried about your child, you don't have to go it alone. Talk with a counselor or teacher at school, ask their doctor for advice, or connect with a local therapist.

Take action If you think your teen is considering suicide

Some people worry that talking about suicide makes it more likely, but the opposite is true. If you're worried or if your teen mentions self-harm or suicide, talk to them about your concerns in a calm, non-judgmental way. If you think your teen is in immediate danger, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

MORE RESOURCES

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

[Child Mind Institute: What Are the Symptoms of Depression in Teenagers?](#)

[Child Mind Institute: Symptom Checker](#)

[The Jed Foundation: Equipping Students to Seek and Give Help](#)

[The Jed Foundation: Mental Health Resource Center](#)

[The Steve Fund: Knowledge Center & Community Conversations Webinar Series](#)



The Morgan Stanley Alliance for Children's Mental Health combines the resources and reach of Morgan Stanley with the knowledge and experience of distinguished nonprofit partner organizations to help deliver positive, tangible impact on the critical challenges of stress, anxiety, and depression in children, adolescents and young people.



This document includes general suggestions of the Alliance nonprofit members; it is not intended to be a substitute for independent professional and/or medical advice.