



Dear Community Members,

Thank you for sharing our interest in supporting the mental health of young people. In the midst of these ongoing and intersecting pandemics, mental health has become a leading concern for us all.

During the 2021–2022 Academic Cycle, IBA’s Youth Development Program identified mental health as the key area they would like to focus on for community change. Our youth decided to explore and discuss how different school practices affect students’ well-being.

Throughout the year, our youth have shared personal stories about their experiences through discussion, writing, and visual art. We have included their pieces in this resource kit and encourage you to read, watch, and share them to amplify their voices and continue the conversation.

In collaboration with Tufts University and Harvard University student interns, we have also developed resources for students, teachers, and community members. These one-pagers offer the contact information of local mental health providers, suggestions for classroom teachers, as well as conversation starters and coping strategies anyone can use to support themselves and one another.

We believe advocating for policies and practices that support mental health will make a huge impact in the lives of our youth and broader community. Our hope is that this resource kit will inspire and equip you to join us in the discussion about mental health by sharing your own stories with your community.

If you would like to learn more, please reach out to Pedro Cruz, Director of the Youth Development Program, at pedro@ibaboston.org or 617-399-1957.

In solidarity,
Youth Development Program Team

¿Cómo estás, en verdad?

EMPEZANDO UNA CONVERSACION SOBRE LA SALUD MENTAL

Hablar sobre nuestra salud mental no siempre es fácil- pero podemos facilitarlo. Aquí hay algunas maneras de cuidar a un amigo - a parte de solo preguntar '¿cómo estás?'

- Pregunta dos veces - ¿cómo estás, realmente? - A veces, un espacio seguro para hablar es exactamente lo que necesita un amigo.
- Intenta "¿Hay algo de qué quieres hablar?"
- Permíteles espacio a hablar sobre cosas que pasan: "¿Hay algo que estes pasando en que te pueda ayudar?"
- "¿Hay algo en tu vida en este momento que desearias cambiar?"
- "¿Cual ha sido el reto más difícil que has afrontado recientemente?"

CONSEJOS PARA LLEVAR UNA BUENA CONVERSACION!

- **Hora y lugar:** Piensa en cómo crear un espacio dónde alguien se sentiría cómodo a compartir o comunicarse. Intenta encontrar un lugar privado y estable, dónde esten solos y sin distracciones!
- **Haga un acercamiento delicado:** Tenga en cuenta que la salud mental puede ser difícil y un tema sensible. Aunque está bien ser directo, intente pensar en la percepción de las cosas que diga. Trate de hacer preguntas amplias y abiertas y prestese a escuchar las respuestas.
- **No gires la conversacion hacia ti:** Aunque está bien proyectar que entiendes, la otra persona debe comunicar 80% de la conversacion! No acapares la conversacion con tus propias experiencias porque puede hacer a tu amigo menos probable a compartir.
- **Dar atención completamente:** Durante el tiempo de la conversación, guarda el teléfono. La persona debe percibir que tu atención esta completa y totalmente dirigida a ellos.

ESTAR PRESENTE UTILIZANDO LOS 5 SENTIDOS

Use aceites esenciales como:

- lavanda
- menta
- citrico
- vainilla

en un difusor de aire, en sus muñecas, o detrás de las orejas son estrategias que pueden calmar y mantenernos presentes

OLFATO



TACTO



Herramientas de textura como:

- imanes
- fidget spinners
- fidget cubes

son maneras accesibles para devolverte al aqui y ahora. Plantar las plantas de los pies en el suelo también puede ayudar.

Algunos colores que se ha demostrado que reducen el estrés son los colores azules y verdes. Si deseas crear un espacio seguro para ti mismo como para los demás, libre de estrés y ansiedad, considere pintar las paredes con estos colores o vestirse con estos colores calmantes.

VISTA



AUDICION



Investigadores han descubierto que algunos sonidos, especialmente la música clásica y los sonidos de la lluvia, pueden tener el mismo efecto que muchos medicamentos. Ultimamente, escoger la música que mas disfruta puede tener un impacto grande en su humor.

- El chocolate oscuro
- Cocinar
- Te caliente
- Goma de mascar

pueden ayudar con la ansiedad. Puede usar estas estrategias como herramientas de practica para mantenerle en el presente y ser mas consciente a través del placer que pueden traerte.

GUSTO



GROUNDING USING THE 5 SENSES

Using essential oils like:

- lavender
- citrus
- peppermint
- vanilla

in an air diffuser, on your wrists, or behind your ears can calm you down and ground you in the present moment.

SMELL



TOUCH



Texture tools such as:

- magnets
- fidget spinners
- fidget cubes

are accessible ways to bring yourself back to the here and now. Planting your soles of your feet on the ground can also help.

Colors that have been shown to reduce stress are blues and greens. If you want to create a safe space for yourself and others from stress and anxiety, consider painting the walls these colors or otherwise dressing in these calming colors.

SIGHT



HEAR



Researchers have found that sounds, especially classical music and rain sounds, can have the same effect as many medications. Ultimately, choosing the music you enjoy the most can have a profound impact on your mood.

- Bit of dark chocolate
- Hot tea
- Cooking
- Chewing gum

can help ease anxiety. You can use these as tools to practice staying in the moment and becoming more mindful through the enjoyment they may bring you.

TASTE





YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

I B A

CENTROS DE Salud Mental

EN LOS COMUNIDADES DE BOSTON

SOUTH END

South End Community
Health Center (Hass Center)
400 Shawmut Avenue
Boston, MA 02118

617-587-1900

Massachusetts Behavioral
Health Partnership
1000 Washington St, Ste 310
Boston, MA 02118

1-800-495-0086

Boston Community
Pediatrics
527 Albany St, Suite 200
Boston, MA 02118

617-934-6009

DORCHESTER

Dorchester Outpatient
and Community Behavioral
Health Clinic
415 Neponset Avenue, 3rd fl.
Dorchester, MA 02122
508-421-2200

Commonwealth: Mental
Health & Wellness Center
895 Blue Hill Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02124
617-506-8188

MISSION HILL

Massachusetts Mental Health
Center
75 Fenwood Road
Boston, MA 02111

617-626-9300

CHINATOWN

Tufts Medical Center
800 Washington St,
Pratt Building, 2nd floor
Boston, MA 02111

617-636-0219

ROSLINDALE

Greater Roslindale Medical
and Dental Center
4199 Washington St
Roslindale, MA 02131

617-323-4440

The Leggett Group
Roslindale
895 Blue Hill Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02124

857-273-2124

ROXBURY

Roxbury Multi-Service Center
321 Blue Hill Avenue
Boston, MA 02121

617-332-5777

Children's Services of Roxbury
520 Dudley St
Boston, MA 02119

617-445-6655

Casa Esperanza
301 Eutis St
Boston, MA 02119

617-445-1123





CENTERS FOR Mental Health BY BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD

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Apoyo al bienestar mental en el salón para los maestros

Sea un modelo de buenas prácticas de bienestar mental

- Ser un modelo de buena salud mental y autocuidado para tus alumnos como alguien a quien admiran les formentará a tomarse en serio su propia salud mental.
- [Haga clic aquí](#) para obtener consejos sobre mejorando su propia salud mental.

Ofrezca a los estudiantes flexibilidad en los cursos cuando lo necesiten

- Muchas veces la escuela/trabajo escolar es un principal factor de estrés para los estudiantes, además de las dificultades que ocurren en casa.
- Considere la posibilidad de dar a los estudiantes flexibilidad en las fechas de sus tareas y descansos durante la clase.

Haga revisiones periódicas con cada uno de los estudiantes

- Venir a sus estudiantes a hacer un revisión en vez de esperar a que ellos vengan a usted puede ser beneficioso
- [Aquí](#) hay un listado de preguntas que pueden presentarse en el revisión en sus salones de clase

Sepa las señales que indican un empeoramiento del bienestar mental

- Hay varias señales indirectas que indican que la salud mental de sus estudiantes podría mejorar.
- Una lista de posibles señales de que sus estudiantes necesitan una revisión se destaca [AQUÍ](#).

Escuche activamente las preocupaciones de los estudiantes

- Cuando los estudiantes comunican las preocupaciones sobre sus clases, interacciones con sus compañeros o preocupaciones en casa, permítales expresar estas cosas abiertamente a usted y ayude en la situación si es necesario.

Obtenga comentarios sobre las mejores formas de apoyar a los estudiantes como su profesor

- Ofrezca un espacio seguro para que los estudiantes dejen sus comentarios de forma anónima, como notas adhesivas o un Google Form.



Supporting Mental Wellness in the Classroom for Teachers

Be a model for good mental wellness practices

- Modeling good mental health and self-care for your students as someone they look up to encourages them to take their own mental health seriously.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for tips on improving your own mental health.

Provide course flexibility to students when needed

- Many times school/schoolwork is a top stressor for students, in addition to any hardships happening at home.
- Consider giving students flexibility on due dates and breaks during class if they need them.

Perform periodic check-ins with individual students

- Coming to your students with a check-in rather than them coming to you can be very helpful.
- [HERE](#) is a list of check-in prompts you can use in your classroom.



Know the signs indicating worsening mental wellness

- There are several indirect signs that your students' mental health could be improved.
- A list of possible signs that your students need a check-in is highlighted [HERE](#).

Actively listen to students' concerns

- When students bring up concerns about their classes, interactions with their peers, or concerns at home, allow them to express these things openly to you and assist in the situation if necessary.

Get feedback about the best ways you can support students as their teacher

- Provide a safe space for students to anonymously leave feedback, like Post-It notes collected in a jar or an anonymous Google Form.



YDP Mental Health Writing Pieces

In this PDF, you will find poetry, creative writing pieces, and autobiographical accounts of 20 youths' experiences with mental health.

Our youth were given the following questions to prompt their thinking and writing. The pieces that follow are their responses to these prompts:

What do you do when you feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or depressed?

What are some healthy coping strategies that you know of? Have you tried them?

What works for you? How are mental health issues addressed at your school? What

have you learned about mental health at school? Are there any ways any of your

teachers or your school supports your mental health or healing? What could

teachers or schools do to better support your mental health or healing?

Coping

By Adelina R.

What do you do when you are overwhelmed or stressed? There are lots of different coping techniques that everyone uses; here are mine. When I'm feeling overwhelmed or stressed I take hot baths to soothe my body. When I am under stress I tend to get headaches, so taking baths helps me to reset my brain and focus on one thing at a time. Once I take a bath I sit in my room, and I listen to some of my songs. My favorite artists are Lucky Daye, Summer Walker, Jhene Aiko, and Drake. These artists make music that I can relate to, so they help me relax. Listening to music helps me forget everything that is stressing me out in the moment. Listening to music makes me feel like I'm sitting on a beach on a hot summer day with a nice cold pina colada in my hand. A couple of months ago I tried bullet journaling. Bullet journaling is when you write down your thoughts and feelings into a journal that you carry around with you, and at the end of your day, you go back and read what you felt. It helps to keep track of your moods throughout your day so you can understand why you are feeling the way you are. Doing this helps you to understand the way you feel about things in your life so you know how to handle certain situations. Bullet journaling helped with my mental health tremendously. I believe everyone should try bullet journaling if they are struggling with their feelings. Whenever I get home and have time to sit back and relax I would reflect on my day, so I could understand why I was feeling the way I was. Having a strong support system is a really important factor in someone's mental health as well. When I would get to school I sometimes read my journal to my school counselor about what I wrote the day before. My school has been very helpful when it comes to my mental health, but I know it's different for everyone. I am nothing but thankful to have the support system that I have. It's always important to remind ourselves that everyone is different, and there's always new things to try, like bullet journaling, to prioritize your mental health. Find what works best for you.



Distraction, Distress, Disorder

By Adriana A.

A soft melody played throughout the room. The girl, with her head snuggled into her pillow, let out a sigh. She let the music slowly lull her. Her body melted into the bed below her, sleep ready to take over.

The stress from having to pick up other people's shifts at work to help pay bills and the anxiety toll from grades coming out flowing off her body with each breath.

Suddenly there was a knock at her door.

Confused, she let her head turn to it. Should she open it? She had locked it for a reason. After a long stressful week of work and school, she just needed at least an hour to herself.

She decided she didn't want to be bothered, grabbing the remote to her speaker and highering the volume two notches.

She tried to get back into the music, but her thoughts didn't give her any chance to.

Who was at the door? What did they want? What if it's really important?

No, she thought, I just want to relax, they can wait.

Then loud bangs sounded throughout the room.

She sat up quickly, she could feel her heart pumping against her chest. Her head started to spin, the noises all together mixing into what can only be called chaos.

Bang Bang Bang

Tears pricked her eyes.



Bang Bang Bang

'I just want to be alone..' Her lips started to quiver.

Bang Bang Bang

'I'm tired..'

Bang Bang Bang

She slowly got up. Putting one foot after the other she dragged her feet across the floor. She didn't understand what was going on and why the person wasn't just leaving her alone.

When she opened the door she was faced with an outstretched hand holding a paper and her mother's angry expression.

She looked down at the paper.

A report card with all Fs.

She finally let the tears fall.

-

Honestly this all could have been avoided though, if the school system realized that students have a life outside of just tests and homework. If the school system saw that she had more on her plate and paid attention to how she always slept in class because she just had a 10pm -5 am shift hours before.

Teachers Need to Chill

By Alanis S.

A really stressful situation I experienced in school was when one day I was walking to my second period with math and I had to use the bathroom but I decided to go to class first because I didn't want to be marked up late. When I got to class I asked the teacher if I was able to go to the bathroom and she said no because it was the first 10 minutes of class and I said can I please go as an emergency because I really had to go and she said no again that she would put me into the list as the first person to go to the bathroom. At that moment I was already mad because I was not playing and I really needed to use the bathroom and she wasn't letting me. Then I waited 10 minutes and she didn't say anything so I was like, I'm going to the bathroom and she said "no you can't go". I was like, why did you tell me I could go after 10 minutes? Then she never told me why she did not let me go and when I took the bathroom board – she had a boy before me. That's when I really got mad because she said after the 10 minutes I was going to be able to go. I needed to wait 10 more minutes plus the 10 minutes she told me I had to wait at the beginning of class. Nothing really would've helped me calm down because I haven't gotten so mad in days. I don't really think anything would have supported it but something that would've helped me was that she did what she said about letting me go in the first 10 minutes of class.

Something she could've done better was understanding that I had an emergency and I really needed to use the bathroom. She should've let me go to the bathroom without any problem because I didn't give her no reason to act how she did, she should've respected the fact that I needed to go to the bathroom.



The Cycle

By Alvani B.

When I'm overwhelmed or upset, the first thing I do is attempt to forget about whatever is hurting me. One of the main ways I achieve this is by putting on music. Listening to music gives me a feeling of relaxation. This is one of the few methods I use to clear my thoughts, and it works well. Overall, mental health isn't very well addressed at my school. I've noticed that a lot of kids just hide it, and you can obviously tell when they're not at their best because they usually have their head down or are just sleeping. You could ask them, but they would just say they're tired. Which is true but not physically. Kids are mentally tired. At my school there's a wellness center, but kids don't go because they really aren't any help. For example, you could go and they would probably call your parents and tell them about it and that might be exactly what you don't want. It's also a place that is supposed to be quiet but in reality it's constantly flooded with other kids. A lot of people go there for a cozy, warm and quiet place, but in reality it's just as loud as the classroom you just left. I feel like mental health shouldn't require a wellness center to be talked about, there should be a class that focuses on just mental health. Everyone has mental health, so it shouldn't be hidden like it doesn't exist.



The One Sided Coin

By Brandon R.

Mental issues at school aren't recognized enough. Out of all the assemblies that we've had, I don't recall any of them being towards mental health issues or just how kids feel from all the work, projects, and homework. Most of the things I've learned about mental health have been outside of school. Since I've never heard my school focus on mental health awareness, like how students feel and how they could fix some of the moods of the other students, and even though there is a school counselor I don't think they ever really mention them properly. What schools could definitely do to bring awareness for mental health could be hanging posters around the schools. They could also take some time to plan out something and do it during assembly. One of my teachers that kind of touches the health issues would be my geometry teacher because in every HW assignment that she gives us, she has two questions at the end asking how our week was and if the assignment she gave us was easy or hard to do. All of this makes me feel a little awkward because I would've probably expected a private school to address the mental health issues and for them to be addressed correctly. I would encourage them to do all of this because of all the work and assignments some teachers leave and some of them are not even aware of the fact that we have other classes and give us all this work. They also seem to be unaware of the fact that we have lives and that we have other important things to do, but since some teachers don't care they end up giving us 4 quizzes and 2 projects in the same week.



The Mental State of a Young Teen Boy

By Carlos G.

When I feel stressed or anxious, I sit and try to calm down or isolate. That's all I can think of, but I know I can do other healthier strategies like telling someone who is very close to me to help me figure out why I'm stressed. I think there is always a better way to cope with mental health. It's possible I could make better habits when I'm stressed. What I've learned not to do when I'm stressed is to isolate myself for too long. It's not very healthy, but it makes me feel good to stay away from people. Why? It just makes me feel safe. Some people take weeks of isolation which surprises me. Their mental health has to be worse than mine. Dr Hawkley, the principal research scientist of Ohio State University, points to evidence "linking perceived social isolation with adverse health consequences including depression, poor sleep quality, impaired executive function, accelerating cognitive decline, poor cardiovascular function and impaired immunity at every stage of life." This is why I am making this for people who have mental problems or who are just having a bad day and need someone to relate to. Another thing I can do to help my mental health is talk about my problems more to people which would help me feel better. The people I talk to are my friends and my parents. I think that a lot of people should do this. It will help your mental state improve as well as your mood and your day. Another way I could help my mental health is to go outside more in the sunshine and the warm weather. These habits help your mood and cause you to have less dark thoughts in your head, more happiness, health improvement and body feeling more energized. Trust me, try to talk to someone or you'll feel lonely and feel like there's no one to help.

The Influence of School on Young People's Mental Health

By Inalyz B.

Something I do when I feel overwhelmed, stressed or anxious, especially with school, is that I like to write down everything I have to do. For example if I have a lot of assignments due I will write them all down on a notepad in order of their due dates. I found that this helps me with visualizing the things I have to do. It also helps me with separating and dividing my assignments. Something I have been trying to do when I feel depressed or just have not had the best day is I try to look at the positives of my day, even if it is just the slightest thing such as someone making me laugh or a good meal I ate. I find this really helps because when a person is sad they usually only think about the negative that they are going through but I believe people should try and look at some positive things as well.

Although there are some times when I feel so overwhelmed with the things I have to do that these strategies don't work out. Sometimes I just feel so overwhelmed that I just lose all motivation to do anything at all. At these times I just put my airpods on, blast my music and put my head down, maybe trying to escape the world for just a brief moment, expecting things to maybe miraculously disappear. But, In reality, time just passes by leaving me and my assignments behind. Now, I feel even more overwhelmed and stressed than before from all the time I wasted. Oh how I wish things could have just miraculously disappeared. I go to get some snacks to maybe motivate me a little bit. Then I opened tiktok. Time passes and it goes from 9:00 pm to almost 11:00 pm. Why did I have to procrastinate? Why couldn't I just get it done and over with? This is a constant cycle for me that doesn't seem to end. I just keep falling into the same actions and restarting the same cycle. I don't know why I lose motivation so often or why I overthink so much. However, I am a teenage highschool student, and this is the reality for many teenagers and students my age and even adults sometimes as well. Yeah, healthy coping strategies are nice of course, but most of the time they can be hard to do without motivation or the desire to get things done. Sometimes, without explanation, us teengaeers just lose motivation and our ways of coping often just make things worse. Anxiety, stress, or depression are disorders that teenagers deal with every single day. Every single one is valid, and should not be overlooked.



The statistics of a student having any kind of depression is approximately 30%. This does not even include those who are not getting treated. An estimate of approximately 31.9% of teens are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. More than 1 in 3 high school students had experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40 percent increase since 2009. In 2019, approximately 1 in 6 youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year, a 44% increase since 2009. Research demonstrates that students who receive social–emotional and mental and behavioral health support achieve better academically. School climate, classroom behavior, engagement in learning, and students' sense of connectedness and well–being all improve as well. School plays a big role in the well–being or lack of in youth. So, with this, If you see a person really having a hard time or struggling with school, check up on them. You never know how much that could mean to a person. Your words can stick with them forever.

It Feels Unworkable

By Jasmine L.

When I feel overwhelmed or stressed, I like to remind myself that my life will not disintegrate in the palms of my hands. I like to think about breathing and pretending nothing happened; if not, I'll dissolve into my own heartbeat, anger, distress. I want to weep myself into bed and let my tears overflow, drowning me in a place of comfort. When I am depressed... I can't find a place where I fit, a place where I feel beautiful. I put myself in a boiling shower; seeing the condensation on the walls reminds me of the tears of guilt and hatred flowing down my body and down the drain. Will the walls cry with me? Will it make me feel better that I'm not the only one crying? When I feel anxious, I can not breathe until it's over or fixed. My mind reminds my body that it can't breathe until my brain is fine. Everybody stares at me, but only sees a smile and hears a laugh; it's the way I cope.

I heard that having a hobby or activity to take time is a good coping strategy. I tried them, but stopped because I was obsessed over it. It makes me feel a high that no drug will be able to compare with. My fingers become blistered, eyes become restless, and my back aches; but I will still continue in order to distract a brain that seems to indulge in its own disorder. I eat, sleep, and listen to music to cope; something as easy as a life necessity will help me turn back into a human.

Mental health issues are addressed very poorly at my school. They claim to care about the students, but they only care about their reputation. I found out that mental health does not matter as long as your grades are fine, but also when grades are bad. "Everyone feels a little anxious sometimes." I like to think the teachers at my school actually say the truth when they say "you can trust us." They let us have 5 minute walks, or a 5 minute break at a comfortable spot, or a 50 packet worksheet that will show us "que no son facil." There's no way they can help us with mental health healing because none of us are healed, nor are we going to try to be. I believe that putting more breaks throughout the day, having more counselors than police officers, and treating us like our age, and letting us have mental health days will improve our mental health and being.



Here's What Helps Me

By Javian L.

When I feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or depressed I usually talk to my older brother, listen to music, or play some video games. I tried these and they helped me a lot when I am depressed or stressed. The thing I use the most is listening to music to calm myself down and refocus. I listen to old rock, new rock and a little bit of classical music for my stress or when I'm anxious. The second strategy I use is talking to my older brother. Throughout my life I talk to my older brother when I'm having a bad day or sad or overwhelmed – he talks to me and gives me pointers on people who've made my day bad, tells me jokes to cheer me up and gives me older brother attention. My brother has helped me when a family member passed. He gave me advice that helped me accept it. When you're feeling sad or depressed, always reach out to someone because they may make your day better.

My school addresses mental health problems of the people who need help in the school. What the school does is to talk to said person and ask them what they need help with and if they talk with their parents. The thing I learned in school about mental health is that it is hard to deal with when you're feeling anxious or depressed and that many people need help with it. Overall my school is very helpful for people and their problems. The support at school is helpful especially when I was depressed when my grandmother passed; I was not happy at all. The teachers knew that I did less of my work and that I was sad. Those who best support kids who have lost a family better check up on them regularly until they feel better. Something the school can improve on is not forcing a kid to do their work when they are feeling depressed or had a change in their life which they can not change anymore. What I hope is that schools give less work because they don't know how students are feeling at the time.



Unheard Cry

By Joline B.

I need help! I yell
I scream until my face turns red
Until my throat hurts
Until my head explodes
Until I pull my hair
Until I bury my nails into my naked palm
Until my salty tears roll down my wounded face because I scratched it a little too hard with my long nails.
Until my hope vanishes
Until there's no faith
Until I stop trying to be heard
The irritating echo is the only response I get
My desperate cry for help is forgotten in the four wall room I call my safe space.

I stare at my naked body in front of my worst enemy
Wait, is it the mirror or is it my mind?
Is it society or is it the food?
Gosh I cannot think through!
Fat!
Ugly!
Unworthy!
Gross!
I howl with disgust while touching my bare bones

Thumb and index finger imitate the perfect slim shape of the 25 cent coin my weak arms are supposed to emulate
Food replaced with gum
Dresses replaced with oversized clothes
The scale says 25 pounds but my brain instantly adds zeros to the right



Fooling my eyes

My fooled eyes fooling my self-esteem making me overthink

Am I worthy?

Why can't I just be the beauty standard social media has planted on my brain?

Why are my thighs so thick and my stomach so bloated?

Will I ever be enough for them?

Therapy session number one:

"Hello there, what can I help you with?"

"I think I'm depressed; I don't eat, and I still believe I'm obese. I harm myself, but the pain of the cuts is nothing compared to the weight of their words. I don't sleep. Black bags surround my dark coffee eyes as you can see. Please don't judge me- I've always been judged. I try, but it's never enough. My grades are low, and my parents choose to insult instead of empathize.

I have social anxiety, so people believe I'm rude. Honestly I've learned to shrink so well they don't even bother to look. I hate myself, and I hate them for making me hate myself but they hate me, so that means the problem is me. Please help me, I want to be saved!."

"Blah blah blah take these antidepressants, and you will be fine. We all know you just want attention, stop acting so hard."

Twenty minutes later I arrive to my house

I sit down at the living room floor with sobbing eyes

Open up the door of my vulnerable soul to the people supposed to be my home

But my sincere words appear to be so tedious, their lack of attention is continuous.

dragging on the walls

I decide to please their desires one last time as I head to my safe place

Staring at my nude body in the mirror once again

"I will see your true face on the other side. I am sorry for being so unkind." I said

Antidepressants fill up my hand

I look down and smile genuinely

I will finally be free, happy, worthy, enough

I won't need to crawl



I immediately digest them all.

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The 5 footsteps of death
Angry like the walls of hell
9.5 magnitude earthquake-
the house a rattlesnake

BOOM-BOOM! BOOM-BOOM!

Heart pounding like roaring drums
Body a flowing river of sweat
(heavy breathing)
Lungs racing like a predator in the hunt of its prey

BANG!

The door collapses
Twin towers replica
Death is approaching
The nightmare is eternal

His hands invading my body
like the colonizing Europe

stealing my land

my dignity

my hope

it happens again



the bottle refills itself

it never ends

the escape has failed

there's no saving left



Unspoken Words

By Juan R.

Here's my unspoken words
The words you've never heard
Never heard from me
Because the real Me is who you don't see

The me you see got used to the danger
I keep in all of my anger
The only thing stranger
Are strangers
But people think I'm dangerous
Truth is you don't know what danger is

They say I should keep my true self hidden
But if I open up my heart ends up bitten
Because I love to say the words that are forbidden
Because I just love spittin

Blood drippin to the floor
Skin rippin, askin for more
It's what we sippin, cause we try not to endure
My life slowly slippin as my body gets more sore

But still they call me hysterical
Just cause I decide I wanna get lyrical
They'll ask a question and say it's rhetorical
OH MY GOD it's a fuckin miracle

But I can't say that no
Because it's all sunshines and rainbows
As if you somehow do know
So you tell me let it go



You tell me to let go of ones that are close
Because you're not the one I chose
But you know how this goes
So I'm just gonna make these flows

But here's my problem
See now society
Is the #1 priority
Rather than my anxiety
Because I don't have the authority
But I still need integrity
Cause you don't have the dignity
To obtain the ability
To have sympathy
And that's just fucked up ain't it
But if the hat fits wear it
Fuck it. I'm just gonna quit
Because you're thinking "oh this is lit"
While I'm spittin the real shit

So as Death is blowing me a kiss
My mind continues to twist
As I got spat on with black Mist
I remember the ones I truly missed

Because few have seen the real me
The me that wants to put a bullet to his head
Shoot him dead, in the grave is where I'll be
Make sure to paint the walls red, Don't worry, I'll pay the fee
But I'm still the one that bled, I guess, to a certain degree

You don't see that I'm shy
That I just want to be held tight
You don't see that all I wanna do is cry
Fun Fact: I do that every night



My Perspective

By Junior L.

I'm a very anxious or cautious person that always goes straight into over-thinking. There's many scenarios that cause me to overthink such as presenting something, walking past a group of teens talking, or if a cop stops me to ask me a question. When the security knocked on our door to speak to my mom I was extremely nervous in my head thinking "What if they saw me do something?", "But I didn't even go outside all week -there's no way it's about me". It turns out they were just warning my parents that there were suspicious individuals walking around. And scenarios like those cause me to get panic attacks and put me into the wrong state of mind. I try to think about the positive things, but sometimes it takes over my mind and either makes me really upset or extremely stressed. Here are some healthy coping methods that I have tried and actually helped me, such as playing with my dog or just chilling with her while watching a random video on youtube. My dog has been with me for over 10 years and has helped me through some bad times. The second coping method that I try when I'm either upset or anxious is to take a warm shower or bath. I prefer baths as they calm me down, and it's like a mini getaway from life. The third coping method is just playing video games and calling my friend as he makes me laugh a lot, and I don't know what I would do without him since he's always real and chill with me about everything.

At home I can enjoy the privacy and peacefulness in my home but It isn't very similar at school. You always gotta worry about the work you did not do. And the students who never pay attention in school throw objects like pencils or erasers at you. There's no teacher that cares about mental health as much as my coach does. Once every week he brings a person in for mental awareness month, but they only help younger kids that are dealing with serious bad things at home. I only know one person in the school who is there permanently and actually takes it seriously, and it's my gym teacher. He cares about it so much that he made the whole school research about mental diseases, gathering info about it and presenting it. He always makes sure everyone is okay, and it is fine, but overall other teachers in school to my knowledge do not address mental health like that except the two nurses in the school. All my other teachers are chill and understand that students



have lives and respect that, except for one that assigns way too much work and only gives people about a day to finish it. I learned that there's some mental illnesses that are less severe but still very hard to recover from and ones that are very dangerous and little to impossible to recover from. Overall I've learned that people's minds can get very ill. And there's one common method that's used to treat people with severe depression is to work out. It takes your mind off of what caused your depression and it's proven to work well. According to the Mayo Clinic, exercising releases feel good endorphins, natural cannabis-like brain chemicals and other brain chemicals that can enhance your sense of well being.



It's Okay To Ask For Help

By Kelizmar "Kelly" O.

Being overwhelmed/stressed/anxious/depressed can be different for each person, When they get it or how they get it. For me it really depends on my surroundings and what's going on around me. For example, being around a lot of people who I don't know can cause me to feel overwhelmed or stressed. This is because I don't always know what they are thinking or what they might be looking at. When something impacts me I tend to get distant due to the fact that I feel that no one will understand me.

Relationships can also cause you to feel these emotions. Relationships can be both good and bad. For example: arguing, lying, trust issues and more can cause you to go into a deeper state of depression or stress etc. When I think of relationships, taking space to think about what you really want can help you better understand each other.

Traumatic experiences can also cause these emotions. Every person deals with experiences differently. For example most people deal with rape, witnessing death, abuse at a very young age. Trauma can later on be the reason they are who they are. Most times this isn't a bad thing because most people come out to be very successful due to those traumas. In other cases people lose trust, view the world as a bad place and so much more. I think having someone you can lean on can show you that you're not alone through those tough times. Facing what you've been through is a very important part of the healing process.

There's so much to feel overwhelmed/stressed/anxious/depressed but at the end of the day there's always a solution. Some people just need time to decide when they want help. Everyone needs help once and a while, and it's okay to ask for it.



Chicken Soup for the Soul: Mental Health

By Kira T.

When I feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or depressed I like to talk to friends or go out and try to clear my head to get into a different mental space. Another coping strategy that I know of is deep breathing. I feel like that's what most people tell you to do, but personally I don't find it very effective. I don't think it's that effective because after you're done breathing then what? All the same problems are still there. Writing your feelings down is another coping strategy I know of. I know that a lot of people do this and a lot of therapists recommend it, but it's not my cup of tea. But what works for me is reaching out to friends or some sort of distraction. This works for me because I work through things better when I hear them out loud. It's like I'm clearing my head and hearing other people's thoughts about the situation makes me feel less alone, almost like I know I'm heard and less alone so I don't go through it by myself. I have support. I have people there for me.

I feel like mental health isn't really addressed in my school. Maybe you'll see a couple posters on the walls around the school, but that's not unless there's a traumatic event at the school then the subject of mental health will come up. I've also learned very little about mental health from the school system. My school does very little to support students' mental health. If you go to a counselor and tell them you might need help they will send you to a school therapist though that's not that much support because you get less than 30mins with someone which in my opinion is not enough time to really talk about what's bothering the person. I think some ways that schools could support students' mental health is to teach us more about it and do more check-ins with the students. I think it would ideally be once a week possibly during advisory class.

Night

By Nicholas "Nick" F.

When it's getting late, and I'm getting tired, the Darkness falls in. It's what I've truly desired. Everyday I feel the 'toxic masculinity'. I try to do things to the best of my ability. I feel so alone yet I sense its presence, I shut them out with my thoughts, as they get high, they pray for my downfall, I "pray" for their demise, fake smiles fill the room and the red signs say "this way, there are better days" that road ahead is unpleasant like antidepressants. I once knew more about brighter days, brighter than luminescence, but now it's the scent of cigs and whatever gives off that car exhaust.

To my days; it has been a nightmare, no wonder why I feel a bit scared by the people around me and it's just getting worse. Friends or home, I wonder why I feel so alone when I'm in a giant crowd. This is a hex that I have to bless. I get that people call me a pessimist. I'd say I'm more of a realist because all of the fake people don't know what real is. Everyone is too talkative, I'd rather sit in my silence. When I feel the presence of the anger I swallow, the sadness I wallow, oh how my ocean is shallow. I'm sorry for this, but it's very hollow. I'm an emotional mess who can't get out of my head, always thinking 'will I be alright?' I can't ever get any rest.

Can I be honest with you for a minute? I'm getting really sick of it, all of the overthinking, and how they pray "Let his demons out of him" I'm my own devil. I want to overcome these queues; all my colors began to hue.

Anyways, I'm done with the rambling. I'm sick of the gambling with my sleep schedule. I wish I had a body double to take my headaches, but I think that's a mistake. That may be worse, I swear it's a curse, I would let a therapist or a nurse help with my issue, but I think their words will be like a needle that pierce my tissues, I'll go back into my shadow.

I Feel

By Omar H.

One of the world's biggest issues: School.

sit in a stool and waste your life away for 8 hours and not gain anything that will actually help you in life.

If you tell me a good reason as to why I should ruin my mental health, I'll give you my life and a wife of your sweet dreams.

If you can back up that school can actually help teenagers blossom, I'll treat you to dinner and sip some good old wine.

If you tell me why I should come to school to deal with more problems than just school? Do you know how it feels?

to feel anxious, I feel

to feel like you don't belong, I feel

to feel like you're getting clowned on by your peers just for living? I feel.

I feel like I'm tired.

I'm tired of the thoughts of my personal issues collapsing on my train of thought for school, I feel like a fool

I'm tired of getting called dirty just because I use Primark shoes.

I'm tired of the lousy noises of negativity and darkness, the darkness of the lost, the place which brings a huge cost; the cost of your life.



Suicide Prevention: 800-273-8255

By Paul L.

In school, mental health issues like depression are addressed with the nurse, and the gym teacher shows students how serious mental health is by showing the students documentaries on people who struggle with mental health issues. I think it's crazy that only 2 adults in the whole building deal with this and one of them isn't even related to mental health and is just the gym teacher. Mental health issues can change people's behavior. It affects how people act and feel and what's on their mind. If they are depressed they will feel and act down and upset, and will always be thinking about what makes them depressed. Depression causes people to avoid their family, their friends and their daily activities. It's difficult to find out if someone is suffering from depression. Although it's sometimes noticeable it's not always the case. There are reasons that victims are afraid to seek help such as they are afraid to be stigmatized. There are many reasons why people get depressed, from family problems to addictive drug use. Schools don't do anything at all to stop it. It doesn't matter if people have friends or a loving family or a stable childhood, they don't think of the good and think about what's making them depressed. So that gets them to do worse, causing tragedies for their loved ones. I think it's crazy that only 2 adults in the whole building deal with this and one of them isn't even related to mental health, just the gym teacher. According to a report studies show that in 2005 20% to 30% percent of students suffer from depression before adulthood. They are just too afraid to seek help. Nurses do nothing because even though they get the training and everything they aren't mainly trained to deal with mental health and instead just heal wounds on the body. Even if they were trained wouldn't they forget throughout the time?

If you are depressed, reach out for help. You are not alone. There are people who will listen to you and help you with what you're struggling with – don't forget that you have many more years to come. Just think about what would happen to your loved ones if you weren't with them anymore. You only have one life and you have to make it count. Change the world, become famous, explore places and much more. There's more to life and suicide isn't the way to go because once you end it there's no coming back.



There are ways to cope with depression such as
Notice good things in life – there are many things you are lucky for
Eat healthy foods – Try new things in life and appreciate
Exercise – Focus on a Goal and become healthy.

800-273-8255
Suicide prevention



School Pressure

By Raymond M.

What I do when I feel anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed during the school day would be to listen to music. School would sometimes be nerve-wracking, for me it has put a lot of stress on me, especially in math class. I would sometimes feel like I'm drowning in anxiety due to the quantity of classwork I receive. The amount of work that school gives me makes me feel uneasy. Schools nowadays are trying to help out with mental health, but they haven't quite focused on that topic (they treat it like something unnatural). They also have offered different things like after school support or therapy during school hours but never try to reduce the cause of the stress, a.k.a too much coursework. The amount of classwork they give is like a limited paper overload of work. During school, I would feel a sense of pressure when I get a glimpse at my grades knowing that colleges are looking at them too. What I do to make myself feel better would be watching YouTube videos because it's a distraction from the real world. Something else I'll do would be going out with my friends during the weekends. Hanging out with my friends is quite the stress relief because I am able to communicate my problems with them. I also try to talk to my older sister about how I feel. When I have nothing to do during the week I'll go to the beach and let all my worries drop like apples falling from a tree. The wind would make me feel like SpongeBob in that one episode, in which air flows through his body. That type of feeling will always bring me joy.

Mental health is addressed in my school as a problem but they don't make it seem like a big deal. My school does provide help by offering one on ones (1:1) with teachers to make sure we as students are doing better. What I think my school can do better would be announcing every month the resources that they offer around mental wellness and getting someone that is much more prepared and knowledgeable than the teachers themselves.

617-635-9676

Call the BHS hotline to speak with a BPS school psychologist and/or social worker