

Beautiful Mind: Parent Resources

Mental
Health

Mental Mind Games

Everyone struggles with the battle of the mind. . .whether it's thoughts, feelings, moods or relating to others. This struggle doesn't make you 'less' of a Christian. The key is adjusting the focus from the guilt to the gift. The gift of living in a community that loves you and being created by a God that adores you. No one escapes the results of living in a broken world.

"In the past few months, a series of television commercials have appeared on tv wherein celebrities are encouraging viewers to discuss their mental health with their physicians the next time they go in for a physical exam. This is good advice for parents, as well. Be proactive. . .ask your children on a regular basis about the highs and lows of their days. Know the typical range of their emotional expressions, and do something if they start dangling off the emotional edge. Depression, anxiety and related disorders cause millions of children and adolescents to live life only hitting on four or five of their eight cylinders. Don't let that be a description of your precious gift from God. Help them learn to be ALL God created them to be: mind, body and soul. Model for them how to talk about their feelings. Teach them how to ask for help and find appropriate resources for assistance with mental health issues."

- Dr. Steve Allison
The Hills Church, Pastoral Care Minister
steve.allison@thehills.org

Conversation Starters:

- *What's the hardest thing you deal with each day?*
- *What causes you the most stress?*
- *What would make things less stressful for you?*
- *How do you think social media impacts the way you think about or treat yourself?*
Do you become more stressed after scrolling? What are some healthy boundaries we could set for that?
- *Is there anything you'd like to tell me or talk about that I haven't asked?*

More on Mental Health:

<https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/watch-your-words-why-mental-health-awareness>

<https://www.pinterest.org/mental-health-awareness-blog>

<https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-Young-Adults/How-to-Help-a-Friend>

Anger

An Angle On Anger

Anger isn't a bad, but any emotion left unchecked can get out of control and be dangerous for the mind. Having open conversations with teens about methods to control anger, how it signals the brain and what to do when feeling overwhelmed is a great start. Check out this personal story shared about anger. *

"I have a few very vivid memories of my childhood. From vacations, birthdays and family dinners. But also - a few moments that are less joyful. My mom worked nights at the hospital on the weekends; this meant my dad was in charge which usually boiled down to yard work. He would send my brothers outside to rake leaves and mow the yard while I was instructed to clean up the kitchen and get lunch ready for all of us. I loved this arrangement because I got to be inside and it was quiet. This particular weekend my dad needed to run an errand so he gave us our assignments and reminded us to get along. We began working but soon enough my brothers were inside getting water, going to the bathroom and generally stalling. Naturally, this drove me bananas so when they finally went back outside, I locked our glass back door. Moments later, my brother came back wanting inside. I told him no. After a series of back and forth, he lost his marbles and punched the glass window. We watched in what felt like slow motion as it shattered all over the floor. This moment is one of many I could share where anger was not controlled and things got out of hand."

* This story was shared with permission

Three Anger Management Tips:

1. *Talk It Out:*
Learning healthy communication skills helps deal with anger
2. *Change The Thoughts:*
Changing the way you think and find different ways to process and react to anger.
3. *Breathe:*
Relax. Take a deep breath and even consider a simple countdown to help release tension and soothe the mind and body.

Conversation Starters:

- Are there moments when your anger feels out of control? When or where does that seem to happen most?
- What are some ways I could help you be better prepared for those situations?
(could we have a phrase or signal that reminds you to take a deep breath?)
- Is there anything you wish I knew about this? (feelings, triggers, etc.)

More on Anger:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20045434>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control>

Addiction

Breaking Up With Addiction

The term 'addiction' typically takes our minds to things like drugs or alcohol, but we want to challenge students to think about the way they view their phones and video games. These devices can be equally addictive and mind altering. Check out the clip below from the popular TV show Parks and Recreation. In this clip, you'll see how time outside for a character without his phone impacts his thinking.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWFJgZOqeBk&list=RDRcVPPjQciCY&start_radio=1

THE HILLS STUDENTS

Addiction

Conversation Starters:

- What are some things that stress you out? What can I do to help?
- What is the hardest thing about being a kid?
- Have you ever considered how Instagram (or any other app/video game) could be addicting?
- Are you ever curious about drugs or alcohol? Do you want to experiment with them?
- Has anyone ever offered you drugs? How did you handle that situation?
- What are some of the consequences of using e-cigs and/or drugs (including marijuana and alcohol)?
Do these consequences apply only to young people?
- What are some of the consequences of using technology in unhealthy ways?
- What can we do to set healthy boundaries with technology?
- If you saw drugs or alcohol being used at school, what would you think/do?
- Do you trust me and what can I do to help you trust me more?

More on Addiction:

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/news/20190410/parents-desperate-fight-vs-teen-screen-addiction>

<https://www.rehabspot.com/drugs/who-addiction-affects/teenage-drug-addiction>

Anxiety

The Struggle Is Real

A recent survey of 56 students at The Hills was conducted:

1. Anger was mentioned 14 times
2. Addiction was mentioned 5 times
3. Anxiety was mentioned 33 times
4. Depression was mentioned 15 times
5. Self Esteem was mentioned 17 times
6. 27 people wrote down more than one struggle
7. Over half of the students who replied wrote down anxiety as one of their struggles.

"In teens, the mental disorders most closely linked to suicide risk are major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, conduct disorder, substance use disorder and eating disorders. While in some cases these disorders may be precipitated by environmental stressors, they can also occur as a result of changes in brain chemistry, even in the absence of an identifiable or obvious "reason." Traumatic experiences (such as prolonged bullying) can precipitate depression, anxiety, abuse of alcohol or drugs or another mental disorder - which can increase suicide risk. Recent losses are major contributors to adolescent depression and anxiety. These may include the death of a relative, a family divorce or break up with a girlfriend or boyfriend. Other common contributors are social isolation, drug or alcohol abuse and/or exposure to violence in the home or social environment.

It is imperative to educate ourselves and our children about the realities of mental health issues and to work toward ending the daily negative stigmas surrounding our kids. Creating a safe and non-threatening environment for all children is one of the important stages to begin with. Encourage adolescents to talk about and express their feelings. Provide a listening ear and be a support so they can visit with you about how they feel. Adolescents deal much better with tough circumstances when they have at least one person who believes in them."

- Hannah Hughes, LMSW
Brewer High School, Counselor

More on Anxiety:

<https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-in-teens>

Depression

Gray Skies Ahead

“Gray. All I felt was gray. And all I wanted to do was play Cooking Fever. But I couldn’t stay awake. For the days that followed, I was a shadow of myself. I didn’t eat; I couldn’t stay awake during the day; I couldn’t fall asleep at night. I faked it pretty fine for most of my friends, but Eliza knew. My roommate, Amanda, knew. I felt like a person I didn’t even know. I had never felt so tired. And no matter what I did, I couldn’t shake it. I couldn’t take enough naps or sleep in enough days to counteract whatever was going on in my body. That is what scared me, I think. It wasn’t that I was having all these negative sad thoughts. It’s not like I was crying myself to sleep. I wasn’t doing that at all, actually. Instead, it was more like my body folded in and simply gave up.”

- Excerpt from Remember God by Annie Downs, pages 77-78

This story is just one example of what depression can be like for those experiencing it. As Annie writes, her body simply shut down and nothing she did could make it better. One of the things we hope our students will understand is that depression happens. There’s nothing wrong with feeling depressed and it’s important to invite people in to help. Students must be reminded that there’s a huge difference between feeling down and clinical depression.

Conversation Starters When A Change In Demeanor Occurs:

- Are you sleeping more or less than you normally do?
- Are you eating more or less than you normally do?
- Are you tasting your food when you eat?
- Do you feel tired no matter how much you sleep?
- Are you capable of enjoying things right now?
- Is it hard for you to do personal grooming?
- Are you having thoughts of your own death?

As always, we hope these resources will help you and your family navigate conversations on mental health in a way that draws you closer to the Creator.

More On Depression:

<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/December-2018/5-Things-You-Can-Do-to-Help-Your-Child-with-Depres>

Self-Esteem

Who’s That In The Mirror?

One of the best questions we can ask ourselves in the midst of a low self-esteem moment is *“What would change if you viewed yourself truly as a beloved child of God?”* Teens need to be reminded that they are deeply loved. God doesn’t need us to manage appearances or worry about how others view us.

More On Self Esteem:

<https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/self-esteem-and-teenagers>