Mental Health Topics Guide:

Tools and Resources for Students, Parents, and Staff



Chicago Public Schools
STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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Introduction

Welcome to The Mental Health Topics Guide! This guide was designed to provide students, staff, and caregivers an overview of a wide variety of mental health concerns and conditions. The purpose of this resource is to assist with the search for mental health definitions, resources, and information via thorough systematic reviews and research. Each topic includes a definition, potential signs and symptoms, any relevant statistics, tips on how to manage challenges, and information on how to access mental and behavioral health care. In addition, each topic includes a "Learn More" section with links to relevant articles, videos, podcasts, and resources for those who are interested in doing further research. Additional topics will be added and information will be adjusted in the guide as needed.

The topics in this guide were selected based on trends and identified needs of the Chicago Public Schools community, and the information provided was put together with feedback from some of our very own students and staff. Based on student and staff recommendations, here is a list of topics that are in progress: Community Violence Grief and Loss, Role Models and Trusted Adults, Advocating for Your Student, Mental Health Support for Marginalized Communities, and more.

It is our hope that this guide is used as a tool to spark important conversations about mental health, discover resources and support, and improve the well-being of our students, staff, and families. If you have any questions or comments, you have suggestions, you notice a link is broken, or you see information that needs to be updated, please feel free to contact the Office of Student Health and Wellness' Mental Health Team at mentalhealth@cps.edu.



Disclaimer: This guide is an educational resource only and is not meant to be used as a substitute for mental health treatment or as a diagnostic method for yourself or others. Only a licensed professional can provide a formal, actionable diagnosis. This guide was designed to provide information about mental health and to explore different resources to support the wellbeing of students, staff, and families.

Fostering Mental Health

Taking care of your mental wellbeing is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Your mental health can influence many aspects of your life, such as your mood, thoughts, self-esteem, relationships, and more. Mental health is a crucial part of your overall wellbeing. One simple way you can prioritize your mental health is by talking about your feelings with loved ones and encouraging them to do the same. This kind of open communication can not only make you feel better, but it also destigmatizes mental health struggles and makes it easier for everyone to reach out for support if they need it.

Statistics:

- Adequate sleep, a healthy diet, self-care, and regular exercise are all activities that can promote better mental health.
- Having a positive connection with friends, family, or trusted adults can help youth build resilience, feel safe, and reduce stress.
- Research shows that emotional suppression often leads to physical and emotional health problems, and can also harm relationships. Alternatively, processing and expressing emotions can help you feel more connected to others and improve your physical and mental wellbeing.
    - According to the 2023 CPS High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, only about 32% of students feel comfortable talking to an adult about their feelings.
    - Nearly 20% of non-LGBTQ+ students and 48% of LGBTQ+ students reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Self-Care and Mental Health
- ➢ How to Identify and Talk About Your Feelings
- ➢ Why Mental Health is so Important

Videos:

- ➢ 10 Habits That Boost Your Emotional Well-being
- ➢ Supporting Teen Mental Health



Fostering Mental Health: Students

Taking care of your health includes your mental health. Your mental wellbeing can make a big impact on your mood, behavior, thoughts, and relationships, so it is very important that you prioritize activities that have a positive influence on your mental health. If you want to maintain or better manage your wellbeing, there are many healthy habits you can add into your normal routine. Here are some recommendations:

- **Reach out to others.** Having supportive relationships with loved ones can help you feel less lonely, improve your mood, and strengthen community. Talking to, laughing with, or even just sharing space with friends and family is good for your mental health and ensures that your loved ones are receiving the support they need too.

- **Talk about your feelings.** It is normal and healthy to experience a wide range of emotions. Talking about your feelings can make you feel less alone, while keeping all your emotions inside can lead to negative effects on your health. While it may seem awkward at first, talking about your experiences and feelings with a loved one can improve your mental wellbeing. The more you practice it, the easier it gets. Feel free to use a feelings wheel to help get you started!

- **Try journaling.** Maybe you aren't quite ready to talk about your feelings out loud, and that's okay. While you build up the courage to express your feelings, you can try writing them out in the meantime. You can use a journal, a notes app, or your computer to write out your thoughts. If you want to vent about a rough day, express how an upcoming event is making you nervous, or you want to practice how you plan on talking about your concerns, writing it down can help you.

- **Practice self-care.** Doing hobbies that you enjoy can help you relax after a stressful day. Taking time to do an activity that makes you feel calm or happy at least once a day can have a significant positive influence on your mental and emotional wellbeing. Some ideas you could try include making art, playing sports, or reading. Visit our Self-Care page to learn more.

- **Ask for help.** If you are struggling, don't be afraid to reach out for professional mental health support. You can reach out to your school counselor or social worker, you can look into tele-mental health, or try in-person therapy options. Mental health professionals can help you talk through your feelings and figure out healthy ways to feel better. If you don't know where to start, talk to your teacher or another trusted adult at school and they will help you.

Learn More:

Articles:
- ➢ 8 Ways to Lower Stress in High School
- ➢ 3 Steps to Make It Easier to Ask for Mental Health Support

Videos:
- ➢ Mental health: What it is and why it matters | CBC Kids News
- ➢ 8 Things You Can Do To Improve Your Mental Health

Podcast:
- ➢ How do I start a conversation about mental health?



Fostering Mental Health: Parents and Caregivers

Promoting your child's mental health can positively impact many areas of their life, including their academics, social life, habits, and behaviors. When they learn how to take care of their mental well-being, it sets them up for success as they grow and encounter new challenges.

Here are some ways you can help foster your child's mental health:

- **Start the conversation**. Normalize checking in with your child about how they feel, and model emotional expression by talking to them about your own feelings. These check-ins can be as simple as asking about the highlights and lowlights of the day. By normalizing these kinds of conversations, it will help make it easier for your child to talk about their feelings and reach out for support if they need it.

- **Create a safe place**. Having a safe place for your child to express their thoughts and feelings is vital to their mental health. To promote trust and openness, it is essential to be an active, non-judgmental listener while allowing them to freely express themselves.

- **Encourage other healthy habits.** Promote less screen time, consistent sleep, healthy food choices, and regular exercise. Encouraging healthy habits such as walking, running, stretching, playing a sport, or other self-care activities like journaling or making art can also boost wellbeing.

- **Recognize when to seek help.** Watch for sudden or excessive behavior changes and social withdrawal. If you are worried about your child's mental health, connect with a school counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, or other mental health professional. If you're not sure how to connect with a professional, reach out to your child's teacher or principal and they will help you. Visit our Seeking Mental Health Care page to learn more about the resources that are available to you and your family.

Learn More:

Articles:

- How To Nurture your Child's Mental Health
- Taking Care of Yourself

Videos:

- How the entire family can support a child…
- The Single Most Important Parenting Str…
- School Counselors Discuss Youth Mental Health: Tips for Parents



Fostering Mental Health: School Staff

Supporting students' mental health is critical in setting them up for success both in and out of the classroom. Excellent classroom instruction is just one piece of the puzzle; sometimes students have external stressors that make it hard for them to perform their best. Even though you cannot control everything happening in your students' lives outside of school, you can still support them by using these tips and suggestions:

- **Create a positive environment.** Start every day with a warm greeting so your students feel welcome. You can even start off the class with daily affirmations or a quick check-in. Another tip is to set up classroom norms in which it is expected that everyone's questions and input will be respected and encouraged.

- **Take brain breaks.** Students are in school for long hours and can become tired after digesting information and remaining sedentary for long periods of time. You can try using a quick brain break as a way to get kids feeling energized again. Do stretches, put on music, lead a breathing exercise, or any other activity that gives students a quick break from classwork.

- **Mental health check-ins.** Simple, regular check-ins can be a good way to form trust between you and your students. You can have students write down how they are doing in a journal and then ask if anyone would like to share with the class. If students are comfortable sharing, this activity will give them an opportunity to talk about their mental health and connect with their classmates.

- **Be a trusted adult.** If a student comes to you with a mental health concern or you read a response to a mental health check-in that makes you feel worried, reach out to a school clinician, such as a school social worker, for support. To promote trust and open communication, tell the student that you will be informing the school clinician of this concern because you want them to get support.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Second Step - Free Activities and Resources
- ➢ Be a Trusted Adult for Young People in Your Life

Videos:

- ➢ What is CICO? (Check-In/Check-Out)
- ➢ Social and Emotional Learning Videos

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Definition: ADHD, previously known as ADD, involves ongoing patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with daily functioning.

ADHD can present itself in three different ways:

- Inattentive: An individual who has difficulty staying organized and paying attention, and can be easily distracted or forgetful.
- Hyperactive-Impulsive: An individual who has difficulty staying still for prolonged periods of time, fidgets frequently, often feels restless, and may have difficulty controlling impulsive behaviors.
- Combined Presentation: Both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms are present.

ADHD Statistics:

- The median age of ADHD onset is 6 years old.
- ADHD is often first identified in children, typically when it leads to disruption in the classroom.
- Boys (14.5%) were more likely than girls (8.0%) to have ADHD
- While boys are more commonly diagnosed with ADHD, this does not mean that boys are more likely to have ADHD than girls. Boys are more likely to be diagnosed because they typically present more external symptoms, such as hyperactivity.

Signs and Symptoms in Youth:

- Daydreams frequently
- Fidgets or has difficulty staying still
- Easily gives in to impulsive behaviors
- Forgetful or easily distracted
- Has difficulty finishing tasks
- Frequently interrupts others
- Has difficulty waiting their turn
- Makes careless mistakes or takes unnecessary risks

Learn More

Articles:

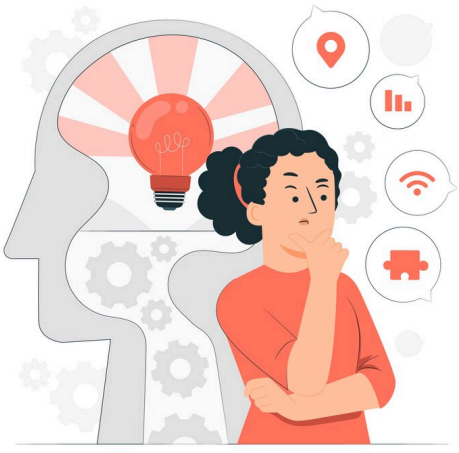
- What is ADHD?
- ADHD Support

Videos

- What is ADHD?
- Failing at Normal: An ADHD Success Story

Podcasts:

- 10 Podcasts to Listen to If You Have ADHD



ADHD: Students

ADHD can look like having a hard time staying focused, getting distracted easily, or feeling restless during class. Being a kid and teenager comes with many challenges, and these challenges can feel harder when dealing with symptoms of ADHD. However, there are skills you can learn to help you succeed! If you have been diagnosed with ADHD or you just struggle with staying focused, here are some tips you can use:

- **Talk to a trusted adult.** Tell a parent, teacher, school counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, or another trusted adult that you think you may have ADHD. Work with them to schedule an appointment with a professional in order to receive an assessment. **Do not** self-diagnose; only a doctor or clinician can diagnose you with ADHD. If you are diagnosed with ADHD, you and your family can work with your school to implement strategies to help you succeed.
- **Your school can help.** There are accommodations that your school can provide to support you. This might include extra time to finish tasks, movement breaks, seating in an area of the room with limited distractions, being allowed to use a fidget, and more. If you feel that these strategies might be helpful, you and your family can contact your school.
- **Limit distractions.** When in class, ask to sit in an area of the room where it may be less distracting. Turn off your phone during class time and when you are studying, or use a fidget while trying to focus on a task.
- **Exercise.** Try to exercise daily. This can help you feel less restless by getting rid of pent-up energy. Exercise can also help improve your attention and mood!
- **Take breaks.** If you start to feel restless while studying or doing classwork, take a break to stretch, walk around, doodle, or focus on another activity for a few minutes. This can help you refocus when you come back to the task at hand. If you're at school, remember to ask your teacher if it is okay to take a quick break before you take one.
- **Stick to a routine.** If you're having a hard time staying on top of tasks, put together a routine for yourself to help manage your time better. Have a set time for homework, studying, activities, and going to sleep. You can set reminders on your phone or use an app to help you track your tasks.

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ ADHD: Tips to Try
- ➢ Organizing Your Schoolwork



Videos:

- ➢ ADHD and Motivation
- ➢ How to Give Your Brain the Stimulation It Needs
- ➢ Strategies to Support Students with ADHD

ADHD: Parents and Caregivers

We understand that parenting can be challenging when it seems like your student is often distracted, when it appears that they aren't listening to you, or when you see them struggling to finish the tasks you set before them. If you believe your student is displaying signs of ADHD, please see a healthcare professional in order to schedule a proper assessment, and work with your student's school to set up any necessary accommodations. If your student has been diagnosed with ADHD, there are many tools you can use to help them succeed. Here are some things you can do at home to help:

- **Establish a routine.** Keep your child on a structured routine, even on weekends. Include times for homework, outdoor play, and indoor activities. Keep the schedule on the refrigerator or a bulletin board, and write changes on the schedule as far in advance as possible.
- **Stay organized.** Have a place for everything (such as clothing, backpacks, and toys), and keep everything in its place.
    - Use a calendar for scheduling events, tasks, and assignments. Make sure the calendar is in an area where your child can see it daily.
    - Break down large tasks into more manageable, smaller steps so that completing each part of the task provides a sense of accomplishment and encouragement.
    - Help your child use a planner, agenda, or notebook organizer. Stress to your child the importance of writing down assignments and bringing home any books they will need to do their work.
- **Be clear and consistent.** When establishing rules, children with ADHD need consistent rules that they can understand and follow, remember to give praise when rules are followed and tasks are completed. Children with ADHD often receive and expect criticism. Look for good behavior and praise it to encourage further good behavior.
- **Collaboration.** Collaborate with your child's case manager, school nurse, social worker, counselor, and/or psychologist to determine if your child would benefit from more formalized and individualized support through a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program.

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ School Success Kit for Kids With ADHD
- ➢ ADHD and Your Teens

Videos:

- ➢ Simple Ways to Support a Child with ADHD | …
- ➢ How Parents Can Help a Child With ADHD - F…

Podcast:

- ➢ Podcasts For Parenting ADHD



ADHD: School Staff

If you believe that a student may have ADHD, consult with school clinicians to discuss ways you can support your student in the classroom. Children with ADHD can benefit from study skills instruction, changes to the classroom setup, and alternative teaching techniques. Helpful interventions may include behavior management plans for teaching organizational or study skills, and some accommodations may include preferential seating in the classroom, reduced classwork load, or extended time on tests and exams. The school may provide accommodations through a 504 Plan or, for children who qualify for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Here are some tips you can use in the classroom:

- **Classroom setup**. Some students with ADHD may benefit from sitting in the front of the classroom or away from distractions.
- **Alternative teaching techniques**. Recite instructions clearly and more than once, make sure instructions are visible and easy to read, allow breaks and extra time on assignments when appropriate, or break larger projects into smaller assignments with clear deadlines.
- **Make the class agenda visible**. Writing instructions and the class schedule on the board may help children become less impulsive if they are aware of expectations.
- **Make learning fun**. Make up songs to help children remember lesson content, include movement in lessons when possible, and include sensory objects in lessons.
- **Collaborate.** Work with the student's family and school staff to support their educational and behavioral needs. Teachers should also consult with the student to see what works best for them.



Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ Recognizing ADHD in the Classroom
- ➢ 8 Simple Strategies for Students With ADHD
- ➢ ADHD in the Classroom: Helping Children Succeed in School

Videos:

- ➢ To the Teachers of ADHD Students (How Can I Help?)
- ➢ Understanding and Supporting Your Student With ADHD

Professional Development

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series

Anxiety

Definition: Anxiety can consist of feelings of tension, worried thoughts, dread, uneasiness, or fear that may lead to physical reactions such as sweat or rapid heartbeat. Anxiety is normal if experienced during stressful situations, but if these feelings become very frequent or interfere with a person's day-to-day life, then these feelings may be categorized as an anxiety disorder.

Common Types of Anxiety Disorders:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Overwhelming and persistent feelings of worry or dread that go beyond regular stressors and interfere with day-to-day activities.
- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** Feeling intense anxiety and fear in social situations where they could be judged negatively. Tasks such as meeting new people or talking to a cashier may be very difficult.
- **Panic Disorder:** Experiencing frequent and sudden panic attacks, and worrying about when the next panic attack will occur. Panic attacks are feelings of intense fear and a loss of control, and include physical symptoms such as trembling and rapid heartbeat.



Statistics:

- 6.8 million adults in the US are facing general anxiety.
- Even though anxiety can have a huge impact on someone's daily life, only around 1 in 4 of people who have an anxiety disorder actually receive treatment for it.
- In 2023, 28% of CPS high school students and 22% of CPS middle school students reported that their mental health was not good most or all of the time in the 30 days before the survey, including experiences of stress, anxiety, or depression.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Pounding or racing heart
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Worrying excessively
- Restlessness and trouble relaxing
- Withdrawal from social activities

Symptoms in Young Children

- Frequently crying
- Extreme clinginess
- Reluctant to be alone
- Consistent complaints of physical symptoms such as tummy aches, headaches, and feeling unwell

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ What are Anxiety Disorders?
- ➢ Strategies to Manage Anxiety

Videos:

- ➢ What is anxiety? | APA
- ➢ How to cope with anxiety

Anxiety: Students

Anxiety can mean worried thoughts and feeling uneasy in a way that sometimes interferes with your day-to-day life. Anxiety is normal and everyone experiences it—you are not alone when you're feeling anxious. However, if these worries take up a lot of your time, make you avoid certain situations, or cause you physical discomfort, it can be a sign that you need to reach out for support.

The following tips may be helpful when approaching these conversations:

- **Talk to a trusted adult.** Advocate for yourself by discussing your anxiety with your family, teacher, school counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, or another trusted adult. Together, you can explore accommodations, find support, and address any challenges impacting your schoolwork, social life, and overall well-being. If you feel anxious about speaking to a staff member, you can also send them an email, write them a letter, or ask to meet after class.

- **Talk to friends.** You are not alone, and sharing what makes you feel anxious could be a great way to feel supported and connect with others who may be feeling the same way. If you choose to talk to friends about your anxiety, let them know how they can support you. For example, if you feel anxious talking to a teacher, ask a friend to accompany you to meet with your teacher after class.

- **Try coping skills for anxiety.** Anxiety can look different for every person, and the amount of anxiety you feel can vary depending on the situation. However, there are still ways to manage anxiety, even when it feels out of control. Coping skills can include counting to 10 slowly and repeating until you feel more calm, or you can try breathing techniques such as box breathing, grounding exercises, or progressive muscle relaxation.

- **Reach out for professional help**. If you find yourself feeling anxious very frequently, consider reaching out to a mental health professional. They can help you figure out your type of anxiety as well as common triggers, and they can develop a treatment plan to reduce symptoms.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Talking About Your Anxiety/OCD
- ➢ How to Help a Friend or Loved One with Anxiety
- ➢ 5 Ways to Cope With Anxiety

Videos:

- ➢ All About Anxiety: What Teens and Young Adults Should Know
- ➢ 6 Tips To Overcome Social Anxiety (Affects Our Everyday Life)



Anxiety: Parents and Caregivers

It's normal for children to sometimes worry about going to school or making new friends. However, it may be time to seek further help if you notice that these worries are persistent or interfering with your child's day-to-day life. There are several types of anxiety disorders, which may look different across different ages, and it isn't always easy to spot potential signs or symptoms. Anxiety can even include physical symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches. Figuring out how to best help your child with anxiety can be difficult, but there are resources and mental health professionals available to support you.

Anxiety in teens is not always as apparent because teens have the ability to mask or disguise their thoughts and feelings, so it is important to stay aware of concerning behaviors.

How Parents Can Help:

- **Open communication.** Talk with your child about what is worrying them. Refrain from judgment and try to see the world the way they do in order to help them find ways to cope.
- **Be mindful of your expectations.** High academic expectations can help children reach their potential, but can be harmful if they are unrealistic. Remember that kids need time to relax, play, and be with friends—all of which are crucial for their mental and physical health. Too much academic pressure can increase feelings of anxiety.
- **Monitor social media use**. Overusing social media can take a toll on wellbeing, and has been linked to anxiety, depression, and stress. So remind your child to take breaks from social media and to be wary of the type of media they are viewing.
- **Build healthy sleeping habits**. Youth between the ages of 6-12 should be getting 9-12 hours of sleep, and teens ages 13-17 should be getting 8-10 hours of sleep. Feeling well rested can reduce feelings of anxiety during the day.
- **Advocate for your child.** Make sure you are aware of the accommodations that are available in your child's school by connecting with your child's school counselor or social worker. Talk to teachers and staff about how they can best support your child.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ 10 Tips for Parenting Anxious Kids
- ➢ How Anxiety Affects Teenagers

Videos:

- ➢ How To Help Your Child Deal with Anxiety | C…
- ➢ How to Help Children with Anxiety

Podcasts:

- ➢ Helping Kids Navigate Anxiety Disorder
- ➢ Calming Techniques for Anxious Children



Anxiety: School Staff

Due to the importance of structured learning in school, it can be difficult for staff to determine how exactly to help individual students overcome their anxiety and succeed both inside and outside of the classroom. However, there are still practices that can be implemented in order to provide assistance to the students that need it. Here are some strategies you can use:

- **Planning.** Read and learn about how anxiety can present in both children and adolescents. Make sure that you are aware of what school-based resources students have access to (as well as some resources outside of school).
- **Build relationships with students.** By building trusting relationships with your students, they may be more comfortable reaching out to you for help. Building relationships with your students will also help you recognize behavioral changes, which may potentially indicate a concern.
- **Test anxiety.** Testing and academic performance can contribute to a lot of anxiety for students, especially in high school when performance may contribute to college acceptance or being able to attain a job. Talking through students' anxiety with them or even practicing some breathing exercises prior to a test can be helpful.
- **Teach academic strategies.** Help students learn about various study methods to help them choose strategies that work for their own learning style and academic needs. Instilling a growth mindset can also teach students that despite how they perform on a test, a score doesn't define them and that there is always room for improvement.
- **Collaborate with your school's BHT.** Reach out to your school's social worker, counselor, or nurse in order to learn about strategies and accommodations you can implement for your student.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Teaching Strategies for Students With Anxiety
- ➢ How to Talk to Your Students
- ➢ How Does Anxiety Affect Kids in School?

Videos:

- ➢ Anxiety in children: Tips For Teachers : …
- ➢ Test Anxiety Strategies For Kids | Tips-C…

Professional Development

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Autism Spectrum Disorder

Definition: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, learn, and behave. It is a spectrum disorder due to there being a wide variation in the type and intensity of symptoms people can experience. ASD has no single cause, and there is also no link between vaccines and ASD. Additionally, not everyone with autism will have the same symptoms, interests, or behaviors. Even though people with ASD may share similar characteristics, they are all individuals with a unique personality just like everyone else.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Having difficulties with the back-and-forth of conversation
- Often talking at length about a favorite subject
- Trouble understanding another person's perspective
- Difficulties adjusting behaviors to social situations
- Repeating certain behaviors, words, or phrases
- Becoming upset by changes in a routine and transitions between activities
- Sensitivity to sensory input, such as light, sound, clothing, or temperature



People with ASD can have many strengths, including, but not limited to:

- Being able to learn things in detail
- Remember detailed information for long periods of time
- Being strong visual and auditory learners
- Excelling in math, science, music, or art

Statistics:

- In the U.S., about 1 in 31 children have been identified with ASD.
- ASD is diagnosed amongst all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ASD Overview
- Information on Autism Spectrum Disorder for Families

Videos:

- Autism Spectrum: Atypical Minds in a Stereotypical World
- What we can learn from people with autism | Chanel Matil Lodik | TEDxAmsterdamWo…

Podcasts:

- Autism spectrum disorder: Mayo Clinic Radio

Autism: Students

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a condition that involves the way people interact with others and how sensory information (like light, sound, clothing, or temperature) is processed. There is a reason that the term spectrum is used, as there are many different experiences that people with autism have. It is important to be understanding of everyone's differences because everyone is unique! If you have ASD, here are some tips that may help you navigate school and relationships:

- **Advocate for yourself.** Acknowledging what makes you comfortable and uncomfortable can help you identify when you need support. It can be helpful to talk to your teachers and other school staff about how you learn best and when you might need to use tools (like changing seating arrangements or using a fidget toy) to have the best experience at school. They may even be able to help create an individualized plan that can help you accomplish your full potential at school.
- **Build a support network**. Support systems are important, and reaching out to trusted family, friends, and school staff is a great way to build a circle of people that you can turn to whenever you need help or have concerns.
- **Find other ways to communicate.** Being a good listener and communicating with others is an important part of navigating school and friendships. If something doesn't make sense, ask your teacher for clarification or ask your friends for help with explaining what someone meant. Communicating through writing or art can be another way to build meaningful relationships and friendships. Remember that support is here for you, and if you are experiencing bullying in any way, it is important to speak to a trusted adult so that they can help you.
- **Consider counseling.** School can be overwhelming for everyone, and reaching out to your school counselor or social worker can help reduce anxiety and help you feel more confident about navigating life. They might be able to help you create effective strategies to make social life, schoolwork, and building relationships easier and more comfortable. If you need help connecting with your school counselor or social worker, talk to a teacher and they will help you.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ASD - For Teens
- Making Friends: Answers for Teens With Autism
- Autism Understood

Videos:

- What is Autism? | APA
- Amazing Things Happen!
- What it's really like to have autism | Ethan Lisi



Autism: Parents and Caregivers

If you believe your child may have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or they have received an autism diagnosis, you may be experiencing many different feelings, such as concern or uncertainty. It is normal for you to feel a variety of emotions, but rest assured that there are many resources available that can help support your child's needs. Here are some steps you can take:

- **Talk to your child's doctor.** If you believe your child may have autism, speak with your child's doctor and ask about getting an autism evaluation done. **Do not** self-diagnose; only a clinical professional can provide a diagnosis.
- **Reach out for school support.** Get in contact with your school's Behavioral Health Team (BHT). This team may consist of a school counselor, nurse, social worker, or psychologist. They can provide an evaluation to determine your child's educational needs and help you put together an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan. If you don't know how to contact this team, reach out to your child's teacher or principal and they will help you.
- **Collaborate with teachers.** Work with your child's teachers to help determine helpful classroom accommodations. This can include altering seating arrangements, allowing sensory tools like fidget toys, and/or using noise reduction headphones in school.
- **Advocate for your student.** Parents/guardians of students with disabilities have rights safeguarded by law, including the right to meaningfully participate in meetings regarding the identification, evaluation, eligibility, and educational placement of their student.
- **Explore available therapies.** There are a variety of supports and therapies available for children with autism. Some of these therapies may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, and more. Discuss options with your child's doctor or with a professional that specializes in autism care to find the most suitable option for them.
- **Remember to take care of you.** Taking care of a student with special needs is not always easy. Remember to take care of yourself and do things that can help you relax. If possible, lean on your support system and reach out to friends or family for help when you need to take a break.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Information on ASD for Families
- ➢ How to Know If You're Getting Good ABA
- ➢ Parenting Hacks for Special Needs Kids

Videos:

- ➢ What you should know about raising an autistic …
- ➢ Easy-to-Use Calming Strategies for Autism



Autism: School Staff

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause social, communication, and behavioral challenges. Some students with ASD may have trouble in some areas while excelling in others, and sometimes they may require some extra support to make sure they are on track and meeting their milestones. If you have students with ASD, here are some ways to help them excel in your classroom:

- **Understand the spectrum**: Each student with ASD is unique, and IEPs and 504 Plans should be tailored to each student's specific educational needs. If you have concerns about one of your students, reach out to school clinicians and/or related service providers for more information and support.
- **Maintain structures:** Establish clear and consistent expectations and classroom schedules. Students with ASD thrive if they have an established routine. Set structures can also reduce stress for educators!
- **Create a calming environment**: Incorporate brain breaks in between lessons to allow students a quick intermission before transitioning to a new topic. Additionally, you can try to designate a calming and sensory area in your classroom or building that is quiet, safe, and conducive to behavioral regulation in the event that a student becomes overstimulated or stressed.
- **Stay informed:** Stay up-to-date with CPS policies and procedures as it relates to students with disabilities. Participate in ongoing training and professional development opportunities to keep up with local and national standards. You can also get the latest updates from the CPS Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) by joining their newsletter.
- **Collaborate:** Work with your colleagues and your student's family to share updates, strategies, and goals regularly. Working together will help make sure student needs are being met and ensure a smooth transition from home to school.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ 4 Teaching Strategies for Students with Autism
- ➢ Information on ASD for Educators

Videos:

- ➢ Autism Spectrum: Tips For Teach…
- ➢ The Sensory Room: Helping Stud…

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Depression

Definition: Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious mood disorder that can include prolonged feelings of sadness and/or hopelessness, as well as negatively affect how you feel, think, act, and perceive the world. Symptoms of depression can vary from mild to severe and can appear differently in each person.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Persistent feelings of sadness, irritability, and/or hopelessness
- Losing interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- A significant change in appetite
- Decreased energy or increased tiredness or fatigue
- Feeling worthless or excessively guilty
- Withdrawing socially from family and friends
- Talking about or engaging in self-harming or impulsive behaviors
- Thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempts



➢ Asking someone if they have thoughts of suicide does NOT increase someone's risk for suicide. It may actually encourage them to talk about what they are going through and prevent them from engaging in acts of suicidality that have higher rates of lethality.

➢ If you or someone you know may be contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or text HOME to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line. In emergencies, call 911 or seek care from a local hospital.

Statistics:

- According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), nearly **41%** of CPS high school students reported that they felt sad or hopeless for more than two weeks and among LGBTQ+ students, this statistic was at more than **62%**

Learn More:

Articles:

➢ How to Ask Someone If They Are Thinking About Suicide

➢ Depression at Different Ages

➢ Mental Health Care in Marginalized Communities



Videos:

➢ Brené Brown on Empathy

➢ What is depression? - Helen M. Farrell

➢ Physical Symptoms of Depression

Depression: Students

Life can be stressful, and it is normal to experience moments of sadness or feeling down. However, if you start to have these feelings for a long time or for no apparent reason, it can be a sign to reach out for support. Depression can show up in different ways, but it often looks like losing interest in things you used to enjoy, or feeling sad, irritated, or empty for a long time.
If you think you might be dealing with depression, here are some tips that could help:

- **Monitor your mood.** Using a mood tracker or journaling about your feelings can help you notice the changes in your emotions. If it feels like these moods last for a long time and don't have a specific cause, reach out for more support.
- **Reach out for support.** Stay connected to friends and family and reach out to your school counselor, social worker, nurse, or psychologist. If you aren't sure how to connect with them, ask your teacher and they will help you. A mental health professional can work with you to figure out a plan to help you feel better.
- **Practice self-care.** Practicing stress-management and coping skills can help you feel better. Staying in touch with friends or family, doing your hobbies, listening to music, exercising, journaling, and practicing mindful meditation or breathing exercises can help boost your mood.
- **Act in an emergency.** If you are having thoughts about self-harm or ending your life, contact a hotline or reach out to a loved one **immediately** for help.
    - The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential services 24/7.
    - You can connect with a crisis counselor 24/7 by texting HOME to 741741 or by calling the National Youth Crisis Hotline at 1-800-448-3000.
    - In emergencies, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital immediately.
- **Remember You Are Not Alone.** Support is here for you, and feeling better is possible. Even problems that feel hopeless have solutions.

Learn More

Articles:

- 5 Ways to Help Your Depression
- How Can I Help a Friend?
- Talking to Parents About Depression

Videos:

- Understanding Depression: What Teens Should Know
- 10 Warning Signs of Depression in Teenagers
- 7 Things to Say to Someone With Depression



Podcast:

- On Our Minds: Depression

Depression: Parents and Caregivers

As a parent or caregiver, it can be scary to realize that your child is struggling. You may notice that your child pushes you away whenever you try to help, or you may struggle to figure out the best way to approach this sensitive situation. Here are some things to consider if you suspect that your child may be struggling with depression:

- **Show love and support.** Regularly remind your child that you love and care for them. Tell them that you will always be there to support them, and approach them with empathy and understanding.
- **Start the conversation:** You can start by saying, "I've noticed you've been having a hard time. I care about you and I am here if you want to talk."
- **Communicate openly.** Ask open-ended questions and allow your child to lead the discussion, and encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings. Let them know that their emotions are valid and that it is okay to express themselves.
    - Avoid saying things like, "You're a kid. Kids don't have anything to be depressed about." This could make them hesitate to confide in you in the future.
- **Listen without judgment.** Actively pay attention and show an interest in what your student is saying. Even if you don't agree with their perspective, refrain from showing judgment. This will show that you care about what they have to say.
- **Be patient**. Sometimes young people don't want to talk about what they're going through. Try not to insist that they talk to you—this could make them withdraw even more. Instead, let them know that you will be there to talk to them when they are ready.
- **Know when to intervene.** When several symptoms of depression are present and persistent for a prolonged period of time, it may be time to reach out to a mental health professional.
- **Reach out for support.** Connect with your child's school counselor, social worker, nurse, or psychologist. They can help provide brief counseling interventions or help connect your child to long-term therapy options. If you don't know how to reach them, contact your child's teacher or principal and they can help connect you.

Learn More:

Articles

- ➢ What to Do if You Think Your Teenager Is Depressed
- ➢ How You Can Help Your Child with Depression

Videos

- ➢ What's the Difference Between Depression and N…
- ➢ How To Support a Depressed Teenager | Child Mi…

Podcasts

- ➢ A Parent's Journey: Child With Anxiety and Depression



Depression: School Staff

Depression is not uncommon among students, but it can go unrecognized or undiagnosed, and many students with depression don't receive the care they need due to various barriers to care. You can help by being informed and able to identify the signs of depression. The more you know about depression, the better you will be at guiding students toward care while being a source of support and encouragement.

Common Signs of Depression Among Students:

- Seem sad or irritable more often
- Seem tired or lack energy
- Put little effort into schoolwork
- Have trouble concentrating in class
- Withdraw from friends or activities
- Seem not to enjoy things
- Have experienced trauma or adversity
- Risky behaviors (Examples: recklessness, self-harm, using alcohol/drugs)
- Talk about death or suicide

Strategies for support:

- **Collaborate with your colleagues.** Work with related service providers (social workers, counselors, psychologists, and nurses) and your school's Behavioral Health Team to see what best works for your student.
- **Make reasonable classroom allowances**. Large homework loads from other classes can pile up and become overwhelming for students. When appropriate, allow for more time on exams or assignments, or check in with your students about how their other classes are going in order to avoid setting too many competing deadlines.
- **Provide classroom help-seeking activities**. Incorporate peer work and study groups so students can connect with their classmates and help each other through classwork.
- **Promote help-seeking behaviors.** Make sure your students are aware of all the resources they can access when in need. Provide consistent reminders that mental health is important and let your students know who they can reach out to for mental health support in the school building.
- **Make your school/classroom a safe place.** Create and maintain an environment where all students can feel safe and included. Check in with your students if you are concerned, and let them know that you are available to support them if they need it.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Depression Factsheet (for Schools)
- ➢ Ways to Help Students Who Struggle with Emotions or Behavior

Videos

- ➢ Depressive Symptoms : Tips For Teachers
- ➢ Coping Skills For Low & Depressed Mood



Supporting The Mental Health Of Our Staff

Our teachers and staff are the hearts of the schools they serve, so it is critical that we not only empower them to support the mental health needs of their students but also provide resources to meet their own needs. In light of the constantly evolving needs of our school communities, teachers and staff have displayed incredible commitment and resilience for their students, but feelings of burnout that chip away at their mental health are inevitable. Chicago Public Schools is eager to implement many of the best practices to ensure every educator and staff member in every school feels seen, heard, and recognized for their incredible work.

Be Well - Employee Wellness Program

CPS is reimagining employee wellness. The new Be Well Employee Wellness Program is designed to help all employees prioritize well-being and connect with health and wellness resources to thrive professionally and personally. Be Well will assist employees in all areas of holistic wellness, including Physical, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, Financial, Environmental, Occupational, and Social Support. Check out the Be Well program website cps.edu/bewell with information on wellness events and resources. Employees who need additional support in accessing these resources can reach out to the Employee Wellness Team at bewell@cps.edu.

Through your CPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you and your household members can receive up to 5 free counseling sessions - per member, per topic, per calendar year. In addition, members can receive unlimited support for work/life balance challenges and legal counsel assistance. at no cost to you. Access your ComPsych account by using the Web ID: **BCBSIL** or calling 1-800-890-1213.



Learn More:

Articles:

- How to recognise teacher burnout
- Teacher Depression & Anxiety
- Mental Health Guide for CPS Employees
- CPS Health and Benefits Approved Vendor Guide

Videos

- Brain Breaks for Teachers - Teacher Wellness Tips
- Teacher Talk: Depression in the Classroom

Podcasts:

- Teachers Off Duty
- The Resilient Teacher

Professional Development

- Be Well - Live Calendar of Events SY…
- Mental Health Webinar Series

Eating Disorders

Definition: Eating disorders consist of behavioral conditions characterized by severe and persistent disturbance in eating behaviors and associated distressing thoughts and emotions. Eating disorders can be very serious conditions that affect physical, psychological, and social function.

Three common types of eating disorders:

- **Anorexia nervosa:** Condition characterized by self-starvation, strict food restriction, or eating very small quantities of food.
- **Bulimia nervosa:** A condition characterized by eating very large amounts of food, while feeling a loss of control over their eating, and then trying to purge the food to compensate for overeating.
    - Purging may include forced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, or excessive exercise.
- **Binge-eating:** A condition in which someone frequently consumes large amounts of food and feels unable to stop or experiences a loss of control over their eating.

Eating Disorder Statistics:

- 26% of CPS middle school students and 24% of CPS high school students have tried to lose weight or prevent weight gain by not eating for 24 hours or more; taking diet pills, powders, or liquids; vomiting or taking laxatives; smoking cigarettes; or skipping meals.

Signs and Symptoms in Youth: ***Vary by type of eating disorder and age*

Taking extreme measures to achieve weight loss, such as excessive exercise, self-induced vomiting, or taking weight loss supplements. Other symptoms may include:

- The idolization of extremely thin public figures
- Extreme thinness and unwillingness to maintain healthy weight (anorexia)
- Eating unusually large amounts of food (binge-eating)
- Self-esteem heavily influenced by perceptions of body weight or body shape
- Restricted eating or skipping meals

Learn More

Articles:

- National Eating Disorder Association
- What is an Eating Disorder

Videos:

- Why are eating disorders so hard to treat? - Anees Bahji
- Eating and Body Dysmorphic Disorders: Crash Course Ps…
- Signs of an Eating Disorder



Podcast:

- Feed your brain: Eating disorders

Eating Disorders: Students

Changes to your body are a normal part of puberty and adolescence. When these changes happen, it may be difficult to adjust to your appearance, especially due to unrealistic beauty standards in our society. Whether other people have made you feel ashamed for the way that you look, you have a complicated relationship with food, or eating is causing you distress, you deserve to feel confident about yourself and nourished by the food that you eat. If you have been diagnosed with an eating disorder or your relationship to food feels difficult, here are some tips you can use:

- **Talk to a trusted adult**. Disordered eating can lead to very serious health risks, such as low blood pressure, feeling weak, and other harmful health concerns. Therefore, it is important to let an adult know **right away** if you are experiencing difficulties around food and eating. You can reach out to a school counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, teacher, or family member so they can help you access care.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Eating disorders don't have one single cause, and disordered eating is not just about food. Family history, life experiences, and emotional distress can all have an impact. Remember to practice self-care as you learn more about available support and resources.
- **Find trustworthy information.** When looking for information on eating disorders or support with recovery, it's important to use trustworthy sources like the National Eating Disorder Association or the Nemours Children's Health website. Social media can sometimes give unreliable or harmful information, so always double-check facts from reliable sources. Knowing where to find accurate information and help is really important.
- **Stay connected to support.** Stay connected with trusted family members, friends, and other social circles. Remember to do things for yourself that bring you joy, like your favorite hobbies!

Learn More

Articles:

- Eating Disorders (for Teens)
- How to Help a Friend with An Eating Disorder

Videos:

- An Eating Disorder isn't Just a Girl Thinking She Looks Fat
- 5 Signs of an Eating Disorder & W…

Podcast:

- Eating Disorder Recovery Stories



Eating Disorders: Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers can be a crucial support system for children working through the various challenges of eating disorders or poor body image. While each disorder may be different, parents can often be the first to notice changes in children's eating habits or observe changes in mood that might indicate emotional distress. When parents provide an environment that is supportive and open, they can be advocates for their children at school and encourage them to seek treatment. By being a pillar of support throughout the recovery process, parents can help children feel like they are not alone when undergoing recovery. Here are some things parents can do at home to help:

- **Educate yourself.** There can be lots of misinformation out there, so learn more about eating disorders from trusted sources like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA).
- **Create a safe space.** Set up a safe place for you and your child to talk about their struggles with eating or their body image in a non-judgmental manner. Remember to avoid making negative comments about your own or others' weight and body image.
- **Sharing your concerns.** Avoid using accusatory language such as, "You aren't taking care of yourself." Instead, phrase your concerns like, "I've noticed you are eating less" or "I'm concerned when I notice you skip meals"
- **Model healthy eating habits at home.** Avoid restricting or moralizing foods, and instead aim for a healthy balance.
- **Seek professional help.** Make an appointment with your child's physician for a physical evaluation. Ask about different treatment options to determine the best type and level of care and include your child in the treatment planning process.
- **Keep open lines of communication.** Reach out to your child's school's Behavioral Health Team to ask for support. Work closely with your child and necessary school staff to maintain all treatment efforts.

Learn More

Articles:

- NEDA Parent Toolkit
- Eating Disorder Resources Help a Loved One
- Parenting a Child with an Eating Disorder



Videos:

- How To Help My Teen // Eating Disorders
- #LetsTalkAboutIt: How to Help Someon…

Podcasts:

- Recognizing Eating Disorders in Children
- How Parents Can Play an Active Role in Recovery

Eating Disorders: School Staff

School staff are vital to fostering a positive and safe school environment where students can feel comfortable reaching out for support and resources. By being informed on conditions such as eating disorders, staff can advocate for students and help implement school-wide programs on body image, nutrition, and mental health to empower students to seek support if they need it. By collaborating with parents, staff can serve as liaisons between students and other trusted resources to help coordinate care that meets the health and educational needs of students with eating disorders.

Here are some things staff can do to help:

- **Become Aware.** Stay informed and share resources with your staff and/or colleagues on identifying, preventing, and supporting students with eating disorders.
- **Spread Awareness.** The typical age of onset for eating disorders is from ages 12-25, making adolescence a crucial time for students to learn about the importance of nutrition, healthy amounts of physical activity, and overall positive self-image.
- **Create a safe school culture.** Update school policies to ensure that materials distributed represent inclusivity and showcase all body types, and create a school culture that prioritizes mental health and wellbeing. A way to put this into practice could be by teaching your students about positive self-talk or encouraging them to try daily affirmations as a self-care practice.
- **Refer students and families.** Eating disorders are a very serious condition. If you believe that a student could be dealing with an eating disorder, please connect the student to your school's Behavioral Health Team for an evaluation.

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ NEDA Educator Toolkit
- ➢ NEDA Coach & Athletic Trainer Toolkit
- ➢ How Educators and Coaches Can Help

Videos:

- ➢ What are eating disorders? | APA
- ➢ Back to School Tips: Helping Student…

Professional Development

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Emotional Dysregulation and Escalated Behaviors

Definition: Emotional dysregulation refers to having trouble managing emotions and behavior when experiencing difficult or stressful feelings.

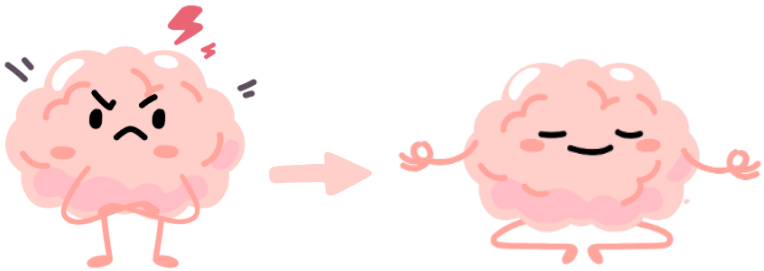
Different parts of the brain are responsible for helping us regulate our emotions, and as we get older and our brain develops, we become more capable of problem-solving and reflective thinking. For children, whose prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for rational thinking) is not fully developed, it can be more difficult to deal with situations that might be perceived as threatening. Our bodies go into a "fight-or-flight" response when we perceive a situation as threatening. For children, stress may activate this fight-or-flight response and lead to aggressive behavior or a meltdown. While older teens may benefit from discipline and logical reasoning, younger children may need help with de-escalating and regulating their emotions during a stressful situation.

Statistics:

- About 50% of children with ADHD may present with symptoms of emotional dysregulation.
- In a 2023 survey, around 56% of teachers indicated that there has been a rise in student misconduct that has led to disruptions in the classroom.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Frequent frustration or aggression
- Severe tantrums and meltdowns
- Behavior that causes injury to others
- Extreme mood swings
- Refusal to participate in activities
- Extreme response to certain stimulus



Learn More:

Articles:

- What Emotional Dysregulation Looks Like
- What is Co-Regulation?
- Practicing Emotional Awareness

Videos

- Feeling Really Overwhelmed? Discover the Scie…
- Emotion Regulation Hacks: Two Powerful Calmi…



Emotional Dysregulation: Students

School work, social life, family, and other stressors can be challenging, and it is completely normal to have days when you feel overwhelmed and struggle to feel calm. Sometimes you may feel dysregulated, which means you have difficulty controlling your emotions or behavior when something upsets you. If you find yourself feeling at a loss of control of your feelings, please reach out to a mental health professional for support. If you need want to learn techniques to calm your emotions, these tips may help:

- **Practice mindfulness.** It can help to have a personal space where you can calm down if you feel stressed or overwhelmed. This can be a space in your home like your bedroom, a quiet place in your classroom, or another room like the counselor's office. Just being in a quiet space may help you feel better, but you can also use strategies like relaxing your muscles or practicing deep breathing exercises to calm your body and mind.

- **Reframe your thoughts.** If you catch yourself over-thinking or feeling overwhelmed by a challenge, it can be helpful to reframe the problem in a positive way. This can give you the confidence that you are capable of facing your challenges. If you find yourself struggling to do this on your own, talking to a trusted adult or reaching out to a school counselor, social worker, or psychologist can help as they can talk you through your challenges and may be able to teach you coping strategies.

- **Develop healthy habits.** Our moods are very connected to the rest of our health! It's incredibly important to get enough sleep, eat healthy food, and move regularly. Taking care of our overall well-being can give us the strength to overcome the issues we're facing.

- **Practice coping skills.** Make a plan for when you feel dysregulated, like journaling or listening to music. Doing positive hobbies can help you calm down and process how you feel. Once you feel better, you can then re-approach the challenge in a prepared, relaxed state of mind.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Managing Your Emotional Reactions
- ➢ Dealing With Difficult Emotions
- ➢ Feelings Wheel

Videos:

- ➢ POV: You Stop Letting Emotions C…

Podcasts:

- ➢ Meditation - Recognize Emotions
- ➢ Meditation - Dealing with Emotions



Emotional Dysregulation: Parents and Caregivers

Helping a child or young adult manage their emotions can be overwhelming, and it's sometimes difficult to know the best way to deal with emotional outbursts or temper tantrums. It can be helpful to know that this phase is a normal part of a young person's development; they are learning how to respond to stress and handle difficult emotions. Here are some tips you can use to help your child navigate their emotions, as well as some de-escalation strategies you can try at home:

- **Understanding emotions**. Define and explain a variety of emotions to your child, and give examples of when those feelings might come up. Learning to recognize and label emotions can help children better manage difficult feelings.
- **Model emotional regulation.** When you are dealing with a frustrating situation, model the type of behavior you want your child to use. For example, if you feel yourself getting mad, tell your child that you need a break and that you are taking deep breaths to calm down. This can help prevent outbursts and your child is also more likely to self-regulate if they see you take a moment to do so.
- **Acknowledge and validate their feelings.** It may help your child calm down if they realize you are trying to understand and listen to them when they express themselves.
- **Offer praise and encouragement**. Give your child praise when they manage their emotions appropriately. Affirmations can motivate children to continue positive behaviors!
- **Teach calming strategies.** Teach your child self-soothing strategies they can use to regulate their emotions. Some examples include deep breathing exercises, using a stress ball, listening to music, or drawing. These may not be effective if only used during episodes of escalated behavior, so remember to try to use them in everyday scenarios and encourage them to use these strategies if you realize emotions could be escalating.
- **Reach out for support.** If you notice that your child is experiencing more intense dysregulated or escalated behaviors, you may want to seek the help of a mental health professional. If these behaviors are happening at school, get in contact with your child's teacher and school counselor or social worker in order to identify potential triggers and set up any necessary accommodations.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ How Can We Help Kids With Self-Regulation?
- ➢ How to Help Children Calm Down

Videos:

- ➢ Anger Management Techniques for Kids
- ➢ Managing big feelings together

Podcast:

- ➢ Co-Regulation Parenting
- ➢ Hidden Clues about Emotional Dysregulation in Tweens



Emotional Dysregulation: School Staff

When children are in a heightened emotional state, it can be difficult for them to focus, remember simple information, and follow instructions. Additionally, it can be difficult to teach while a student's behavior is disrupting the flow of the class. It can feel frustrating to try and manage so much at once, all while trying to de-escalate dysregulated behaviors. If you want to learn how you can provide support to students dealing with emotional dysregulation, here are some strategies you can try:

- **Create a predictable environment**: Establishing clear rules, routines, and expectations can provide a sense of safety and stability. Visual aids like schedules or cues can further reduce anxiety and promote self-regulation.
- **Implement a reward system**: A reward system can motivate and reinforce positive behaviors. The rewards can lead to more engagement, foster self-control, and encourage more frequent use of emotional regulation skills.
- **Teach self-regulation skills**: Providing a toolkit of self-regulation strategies, like deep breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, and problem-solving frameworks, can help students manage their emotions and behaviors more effectively.
    - It is important to teach these skills during moments of calm and use them regularly even when students are not displaying escalated behaviors. The more students practice, the easier it will be for them to recall these strategies during moments of stress.
- **Model self-regulation:** It is important to check in with your own emotions to ensure you have the capacity to work toward regulating your students. Modeling regulated behavior is key to regulating student behavior, and if needed, you can ask for support from a school clinician.
- **Collaborate**: Parents, teachers, and school-based clinicians all play a pivotal role in helping students learn to manage their emotions. Parents can reinforce strategies, teachers can monitor behaviors in the classroom, and your school's BHT can offer more individualized support.

CPS Resources

- If behavior becomes hazardous, call the CPS Student Safety Center at 773-553-3335
- Check out the CPS Behavior Support Website

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Behavior Management Strategies for Teachers
- ➢ Students Need Regulated Adults

Podcasts:

- ➢ Strategies for Preventing Escalated Behaviors

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Grief and Loss

Definition: Grief describes feelings and experiences that are a result of coping with loss. It is often used to describe feelings associated with the death of a loved one, but people can grieve any type of difficult loss, such as the loss of a friendship, of a home, or a job.

Grief is a normal response for people who lose someone close to them, it can present in various ways and can be processed differently across cultures. Some may be aware of the "five stages of grief," and while some people may experience symptoms from some of those stages, grief is not linear and each person can have a different experience. While grief and depression can be experienced together, they also exist separately. Grief and depression can both involve intense feelings of sadness, and the difference is that while grief tends to lessen over time, depression may not. It is important to remember that there is no wrong or right way to process loss, and resources and support are available for those who are struggling.

Statistics:

- It is estimated that 1 in 12 children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the age 18. 1 in 4 youth who have died by suicide were bereaved (grieving a loss).

Signs and Symptoms of Grief:

- Sorrow, anger, and emotional outbursts
- Frequently speaking about their loved one
- Adopting mannerisms or possessions of their loved one
- Distracting oneself from the loss
- Ebbs and flows in emotions
- If symptoms of grief are more intense, longer lasting and/or significantly disrupts your ability to function please consult a mental health professional about prolonged grief disorder.



Learn More:

Articles:

- Coping with Grief and Loss
- National Alliance for Children's Grief

Videos:

- How Grief Affects Your Brain And What To Do A…
- We don't "move on" from grief. We move forward…



Podcasts:

- How grieving changes the brain
- Grief Out Loud

Grief and Loss: Students

Losing someone close to you is one of the most difficult experiences many people go through, and grief doesn't just happen after losing a person. It can also happen when you lose a pet, move away from friends or family, drift apart from close peer relationships, or experience a loss of other things that matter to you. If you have experienced this, it is understandable to feel a range of emotions, including sadness, anger, resentment, and numbness. Engaging in healthy coping skills will help you take care of yourself as you navigate this life-changing experience.

If you are struggling with loss and grief, these tips may help:

- **Stay Connected**. Maintain relationships with friends and family. Sharing your feelings with someone who cares can provide support and understanding. Even if it feels like nobody can truly understand what you are feeling inside, your friends and family care about you and may be able to serve as a listening ear. If you don't want to talk about this loss, simply being with other people may provide comfort as well.
- **Try Journaling.** It is normal to have questions, thoughts, feelings, and worries after the death of someone close to you. Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you process your emotions and remember good memories of the person you lost.
- **Take Care of Yourself.** While it may feel difficult to continue your day-to-day as normal, try your best to take care of your physical health. Remember to get enough sleep, to eat healthy meals, and try to incorporate healthy activities into your daily routine.
- **Self-Compassion.** Everyone grieves in their own way and at their own pace. As you take time to process and cope with your loss, be kind to yourself as you navigate this hardship.
- **Seek Professional Help**. Consider talking to a school counselor or mental health professional. They can offer support, connect you to resources, or refer you to grief specialists. To find the closest School-Based Health Center or Community Health Clinic to help you find a healthcare provider at no cost, visit CPS Student Health Services.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Grief (for Teens)
- ➢ Your Friend is Grieving: Tips for Supporting Them

Videos:

- ➢ The Grieving Process: Coping with Death
- ➢ Grief: Losing a Parent Early

Podcast:

- ➢ Grieving and remembering loved ones
- ➢ Supporting Others



Grief and Loss: Parents and Caregivers

Experiencing loss firsthand or seeing your child grieve is not an easy process. As a parent or caregiver, it may feel overwhelming as you process this loss yourself and as you help your child work through their own emotions. Allow yourself the time and self-compassion to walk through these feelings of grief at your own pace. Here is some guidance you can use to help your child:

- **Provide Patience and Comfort.** Children can react to death in various ways. Some may cry, others may withdraw, some get mad, and some may not appear to have much of a reaction at all. Let them process this loss in their own way, and comfort them when they need it.
- **Be There to Listen.** Give your child your undivided attention when they tell you how they are feeling so that they know they are being listened to. Remind them that it is okay to feel sad, to be mad, and that it is okay to cry. If they don't want to talk about their feelings, that is okay too, as some may require space in order to process their thoughts and emotions.
- **Process Your Own Grief.** Don't neglect your own feelings and healing. Grief can bring on an array of emotions and it is understandable that you may want to remain strong around your family, but allow yourself time to heal as well. Express how you feel, and don't be afraid to cry or be vulnerable around your children. You don't have to face your grief alone—help and support is available.
- **Connect to Care.** You don't have to go through this process alone. Connect with your student's school and let the staff know that your family has experienced a loss. Connect with the school counselor or social worker so that your student has someone they can talk to, and ask how you can be connected to grief counseling services if you or your family require additional support. The Chicago Services Resource Guide can also help identify a mental health provider to fit your family's specific needs.

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ When a Loved One Dies: Helping Your Child
- ➢ Helping Children Deal With Grief
- ➢ Teen Grief 101: How You Can Help

Videos:

- ➢ How can I help support a grieving child?
- ➢ How to comfort a grieving teen
- ➢ TEDx: When Someone You Love Dies

Podcasts:

- ➢ Griefcast



Grief and Loss: School Staff

Supporting students and/or colleagues through grief and loss can be a difficult task. It's important to learn ways you can support others as well as ways to support yourself through grief and loss. While each person grieves differently, we can find commonalities in supporting others and coping effectively.

Some strategies that can be helpful during grief and loss are:

- **Be understanding**. Recognize common grief reactions like changes in appetite, sleep issues, sadness, and social withdrawal. Remember that everyone processes loss in their own way, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.
- **Be patient.** Everyone grieves at their own pace. For students, grief may impact behavior, school work, sleep, ability to focus, and more. You can offer support by giving them a safe space to talk if they want to or by providing other helpful accommodations.
- **Connect students to support**. Normalize your students' feelings by telling them it's common to feel a range of emotions after the death of someone close to them. However, if their expressed feelings include risk to self (e.g. suicidal thoughts) or others, refer them immediately to the school social worker, counselor, psychologist, or nurse. For more details, consult the CPS Crisis Manual, specifically page 29 on supporting children and youth through grief.
- **Collaborate with staff**. Your student may be in need of more individualized support in order to help them navigate the changes they are experiencing. Connect with your colleagues and your school's behavioral health team to discuss support strategies and accommodations.
- **Coping with grief.** If you are navigating grief of your own, remember to take care of yourself.
    - Prepare for difficult dates like birthdays and anniversaries to manage emotional distress. If possible, you can schedule the day off to focus on your wellbeing.
    - You don't have to go through this process alone. Through the CPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you and your household family members have access to confidential counseling support at no cost to you. To access your ComPsych EAP benefits, call 1-800-890-1213 or visit guidanceresources.com and use the Web ID: EAPIL

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ Supporting Students After a Death
- ➢ Grieving Students in Your Class

Videos:

- ➢ Andrew Garfield and Elmo Explain Grief
- ➢ Bereavement For Elementary-Middle School Students

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Intersectionality in Mental Health

Intersectionality is a key concept that explores how various social categories such as race, gender, socio-economic status, sexuality, ability, and more all interconnect to shape an individual's life and opportunities. Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term originally aimed to highlight how overlapping identities influence one's exposure to different experiences, emphasizing that individuals experience an intersection of biases and discrimination that vary based on aspects of their identity.

When seeking or providing support to students or peers, it is important to remember the critical role intersectionality plays in mental health. The different layers of one's identity such as race, gender, sexuality, age, and religion can introduce distinct life stressors, influencing mental health in profound ways. Understanding mental health requires acknowledging the diverse experiences of marginalized individuals, including the impacts of inequality, discrimination, erasure, and violence. It's essential to recognize that the issue lies not within individual identities themselves but in the power structures that perpetuate discrimination and oppression, which in turn can affect someone's mental health.

When providing support, it is important to keep in mind the different facets of one's identity, as people from different backgrounds will vary in how they react to care. Just because some approaches may work for some, that does not mean they will work for others. Remember to be understanding and stay informed on how you can incorporate culturally competent practices into your approach.



Learn More:

Articles:

- Intersectionality & Mental Health
- Cultural Competence in Healthcare

Videos

- The urgency of intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw | TED
- Intersectionality and health explained

Professional Development:

- Mental Health Webinar Series, some topics include:
  - Intersectionality in Mental Health
  - Implicit Bias in Mental Health Practices
  - Equity in Education

Mental Health During the Winter

Definition: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that is related to the changing seasons, with symptoms that are distressing or interfere with daily functioning. The symptoms of SAD are similar to those of major depressive disorder, but most commonly occur during the fall and winter, and ease with the start of the spring and summer.

People that live in regions where there are seasonal changes that impact sunlight may be at higher risk for developing SAD. However, not everyone who is moody or lacks energy during the winter season has SAD. With the lack of sunlight during the fall and winter months, it is common for people to experience physical and emotional shifts. This is directly related to the neurotransmitters—or chemicals in the brain—that lead to changes in mood. Sunlight increases the amount of serotonin (boosting mood) and decreases melatonin (lessening sleepiness) during the day, so during the winter time when there is less exposure to sunlight, one might experience lower mood and increased fatigue.

Statistics:

- About 5% of people in the US experience seasonal depression, with an average age of onset between 20 and 30 years of age.
- 52% of people that reside in the Midwest region of the US report that their mood declines during the winter months.



Signs and Symptoms:

- Fatigue and low energy
- Sleeping more
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sad mood or irratable
- Decreased self-esteem
- Loss of interest in activities
- Lack of motivation
- Social withdrawal

Learn More:

Articles:

- Winter Blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder
- How to Maintain Your Mental Health in the Winter

Videos:

- SAD vs. Holiday Blues: How To Beat The Winter Sl…
- Winter got you feeling down? Watch this - Kelly R…



Mental Health During the Winter: Students

The weather outside can directly affect our moods and energy levels. Especially in a city like Chicago, the fall and winter months can feel gloomy. With shorter daytimes and colder weather, it is common to feel down or lack energy. Some people even have a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a disorder in which one experiences symptoms of major depressive disorder due to seasonal changes and reduced sunlight.

Whether you have been diagnosed with SAD or you simply feel more sluggish during the winter months, here are some things you can try to help get you through the gloomy weather:

- **Increase sunlight.** More exposure to sunlight can increase your body's vitamin D levels, which can help boost your mood and energy. Try keeping curtains or blinds open in the house, incorporate more outdoor activities like taking walks, or include more bright lights in the home.
- **Change your diet.** Some evidence has shown that consuming enough vitamin D, folate, and omega-3 fatty acids can help with symptom management. Consider eating foods like leafy greens, salmon, fruits, and vegetables and consult your doctor about how to integrate these vitamins and nutrients into your daily meals.
- **Stay active.** Regular physical activity is good for both your physical and mental health, as it can improve sleep, boost mood, and help reduce depressive symptoms. Aim to get at least 60 minutes of exercise over the course of the day. Taking a walk, dancing, and stretching are great ways to incorporate movement into your day.
- **Social support and hobbies.** In the winter, it can feel natural to want to stay at home or indoors. However, calling a friend, spending more time with loved ones, or engaging in a hobby you enjoy can help you cope with low moods.
- **Talk about it.** If you are struggling significantly with seasonal changes or you believe you may have SAD, please reach out to a mental health professional like a counselor, therapist, social worker, or psychiatrist. They can help you develop a treatment plan to support you and help you feel better.



Learn More:

Articles:

- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- 10 Ways to Beat the Winter Blues

Videos:

- 6 Signs You Have Seasonal Affective Disorder (S…
- The Winter Blues: Helping Teens Manage Season…
- What is Seasonal Affective Disorder? | Child Mind…



Mental Health During the Winter: Parents and Caregivers

Chicago's cold, dark winters can be tough to physically and mentally navigate. It is common for everyone to experience drawbacks from the shifts in seasons, and the changes in weather and daylight may take time to adjust to. For children and adolescents, these changes could have an impact on their mood, motivation, energy levels, and amount of socialization, as well as decrease their interest in their usual hobbies. This can impact the whole family, so here are some ways you can help:

- **Take advantage of the daylight.** Get out of the house and into the sun as much as possible. Although it is cold, encourage your child to dress warmly and take a short walk, sit on the porch or play in the yard. Research shows that at least 10–30 minutes of daylight in the morning can significantly improve mood. You can also keep your blinds and curtains open as much as possible to invite sunlight into your home.
- **Keep them moving:** Daily exercise or movement is a great way to combat the winter blues. Encourage your child to participate in a sport, have a dance party, stretch, or do yoga at home.
- **Create a routine.** Having morning and bedtime routines can help your child stay on schedule. Waking up and going to bed at the same time each day can ensure that your child is getting enough daylight and appropriate amounts of sleep.
- **Embrace the changes.** Help your child see the positive side of winter by making your home cozy and enjoying seasonal foods and drinks. You can also partake in fun indoor activities, like working on a puzzle, playing games together, singing karaoke, or having a movie marathon.
- **Reach out to a professional.** If your child is experiencing mental health challenges with symptoms that are distressing or interfering with their daily functioning, please consult with your family doctor to learn more about Seasonal Affective Disorder. Collaborate with your school's social worker, counselors, or psychologist to learn about helpful classroom strategies.

Learn More:

Articles:

- What is SAD?
- SAD in Kids

Videos:

- What is Seasonal Affective Dis…
- Tips for dealing with kids' seas…

Podcasts:

- Seasonal Affective Disorder
- the Seasonal Affective Disorder…



Mental Health During the Winter: School Staff

As the days get shorter and the weather gets colder, you might notice your students begin to act differently. It is common for children and adults alike to experience low moods or lack energy due to the weather and lack of sunlight during the winter months. These symptoms may include a sudden loss of interest in activities, appearing very tired during class, or lack of motivation. Here are some strategies that you can implement in your classroom to help students manage these seasonal changes:

- **Classroom lighting.** If you have windows in your classroom, try to keep the blinds open to let sunlight into your classroom. Natural sunlight can help improve mood and energy levels.
- **Energize the classroom.** Seasonal changes often lead to sleepier moods, so take study breaks with your class to encourage movement. Have your students stand up and stretch, march in place, or have a quick dance party.
- **Be patient.** It can be frustrating trying to engage with a classroom that seems lethargic and disinterested, but try to be understanding as students try to adjust to these changes.
- **Take care of yourself, too.** Seasonal changes affect everyone, and even adults need to take time to check in with themselves. Remember to partake in self-care practices when you have a chance.
- **Talk to your school's behavioral health team.** While it is common for people to experience "the winter blues," more serious symptoms may be an indicator that the student requires additional help. Seasonal Affective Disorder is a mental health condition that should only be diagnosed by a professional, so if you notice a student has been significantly struggling, reach out to your school's behavioral health team and collaborate with them to figure out the best ways to provide support.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Beating the Winter Blues: A Teacher's Guide
- ➢ 50 Ways to Melt the Winter Slump and Keep Your Students Engaged

Videos:

- ➢ How Schools Can Support Students with Seasonal Affective Disorder



Online Safety

There are many pros and cons to the current digital age we're living in. The internet and social media give us access to more information, resources, and people across the world than ever before. However, as internet usage has increased, so has widespread misinformation and screen time addiction. While these concerns are real, the internet and social media are not inherently bad. If we use the internet and social media safely and in moderation, they can be tools that help us learn, grow, and live healthy lives.

Statistics:

- The average person spends over two hours on social media every day
- Research shows that excessive digital use may be linked to an increase in anxiety, depression, stress, and sleep problems
- About 46% of teens report being online almost constantly
- According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 83% of high school students and 76% of middle school students reported using social media several times a day
- The 2023 YRBS data also shows that 12% of high school students and 25% of middle school students reported being electronically bullied (including through texting and social media).

Learn More:

Articles:

- Social Media and Mental Health
- AI, SEL, and Well-Being
- Chicago Connected Initiative

Videos:

- Is Social Media Hurting Your Mental Health? | Bailey Parnell | TEDxRyersonU
- The Battle for Your Time: Exposing the Costs of Social Media | Dino Ambrosi | TEDxLa…

Podcasts:

- How the news rewires your brain



Online Safety: Students

We spend a big portion of our day online. Whether it is for school, entertainment, or to stay connected with friends, we spend a lot of time scrolling on our phones or computers on a daily basis. The digital world has many perks and can't be avoided, so how do we make sure that we are navigating it safely?

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Online Safety.** It is very important to be cautious with the information you share with others online. Even if people seem friendly, it doesn't mean they are being truthful about who they are or their intentions, so remember to keep sensitive information private. If you think someone may be trying to take advantage of you, tell a trusted adult immediately.
- **Digital Footprint.** Remember that the internet is forever, so be very careful with the videos, pictures, or posts you share online. Even if you delete something, others can always save and share it regardless. If someone has shared an inappropriate photo or video of you, please tell a parent or trusted adult, there are steps you can take together to get it taken down.
- **Social Media and Self-Esteem.** Social media can be a fun way to stay up-to-date with friends, celebrities, or even your favorite influencers. However, remember that those posts are only the highlights of someone else's life and not an accurate representation of their reality, so it isn't fair to compare yourself to them. If you find yourself feeling down after using social media, it may be a good idea to take a break, spend time with friends or family, or do a hobby that brings you joy.
- **Take Breaks.** Spending too much time online can make us feel overwhelmed and anxious, because it can be difficult for our brains to process so much information at once. To prevent digital overload, give yourself regular breaks from being online!
- **Be Wary of Misinformation.** There is an endless flood of information online, and not all of it is true. Regardless of the type of news you take in, remember to fact check it and make sure it is coming from a reliable source. One way to check if something is reliable is to check the author's credentials and look for cited sources.
    - For example, when reading articles on health practices, make sure they are written or reviewed by medical experts such as doctors or licensed clinicians.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Mental Health and Violent Content Online
- ➢ Online Safety

Videos:

- ➢ Teen Voices: Oversharing and Your Digital Footprint
- ➢ Less Screen Time, More Life
- ➢ What is misinformation?



Podcast:

- ➢ Doom-scrolling
- ➢ The Ups and Downs of Social Media

Online Safety: Parents and Caregivers

Being online is deeply rooted in our daily lives and the lives of our students. Many students can only faintly remember a time where school, work, and even doctor appointments were not online. The internet and social media can help us build community, keep in touch with distant family members and friends, and even learn new skills. While social media has many perks, it can also have some negative effects, especially for young people. Over-exposure to harmful content, unrealistic standards, cyberbullying, and peer pressure can cause stress, anxiety, or low self-esteem. That's why it's so important to teach our children about how to use the internet safely and responsibly. Here are a few tips on digital safety:

- **Use parental controls.** Set time limits and website restrictions on your child's phone and computer. Many digital devices and websites have parental control settings that can help you block or limit certain webpages, content, and apps.
- **Encourage breaks.** Excessive screen time can be harmful to your child's sleep, attention span, emotion regulation, and cognitive development. Try to set time limits and encourage them to go outside, read a book, journal, draw, or participate in another fun activity away from screens.
- **Monitor your child's "friends" list.** Regularly take inventory of who your child is interacting with online. While community-building is a great aspect of social media, especially if your child has niche interests, it is still important to make sure who they follow is appropriate for their age.
- **Make a "do not share" list.** It is important to be aware of what your child is sharing online. Work with your child to come up with a list of things they **should not** share for their safety, like their location, inappropriate photos/videos, or credit card information. If any inappropriate photos or videos of your child are shared online, the resource "Take it Down" can help get them taken down.
- **Have a conversation.** Talk with your child about social media. Remind them that social media is not a "real" place and much of the content they are viewing may not be accurate, so they shouldn't compare themselves to potentially unrealistic standards.
- **Be aware of their social media presence**. Make sure your child is not posting content that could be harmful to others. Check what your child is posting to keep them and others safe and accountable.

Learn More:

Articles:

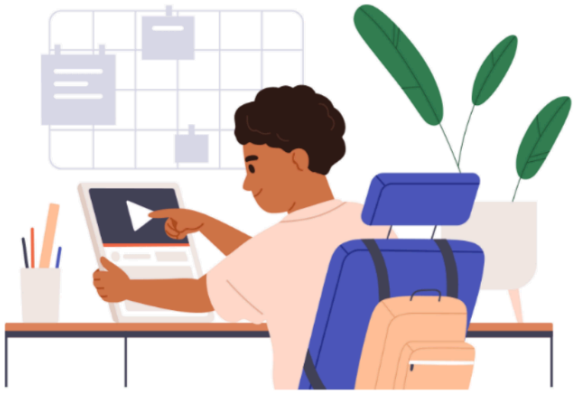
- ➢ Social Media and Self-Doubt
- ➢ Teaching Kids About Social Media

Videos:

- ➢ Social Media Impacting Mood
- ➢ Screen Time and Brain Development

Podcasts:

- ➢ How to Limit Social Media's Impact on Mental Health



Online Safety: School Staff

Technology has a constant presence in our lives. It has led to excellent advancements for education such as smart boards, online platforms for tracking and reporting grades, and sites where educators can share resources. However, as educators, we also see how technology can have negative effects on our students. That's why it's so important to teach our students how to use the internet safely and responsibly. Here are some tips you can use while educating your students on digital safety:

- **Talk about online safety.** Have conversations with your students about online safety, how to spot misinformation, and the effects of social media and screen time on the brain. Games can also be incorporated to keep students engaged—check out this educational game from Google with lessons about protecting data, cyberbullying, and more.
    - For lesson ideas, the CPS Personal Health and Safety & Sexual Health Education guidance document includes lessons on this topic! Content varies by grade level, to navigate the resource use the Ctrl F key on your keyboard to find the material that best fits your classroom needs.
- **Share resources.** In this digital age, many students can experience bullying outside of the classroom in online settings. Let students know about available resources and provide an open space for them to express any concerns they may be facing.
    - Bullying reports can be submitted to school principals, school staff, by calling 773-553-3772 or by emailing BullyingReport@cps.edu
- **Collaborate with parents/caregivers.** Many parents may not even be aware of the impact of unmonitored internet use for their children. Whether through emails, handouts, or conversations at parent-teacher conferences, reaching out to parents with resources on how to maintain online safety at home can be an effective way to ensure that students apply lessons learned at school to their home environments.
- **Reach out if you have concerns.** If you have concerns about student safety, contact the appropriate CPS office immediately. The Student Safety Center can be reached at 773-553-3335 and the Office of Student Protections and Title IX can be reached at 773-535-4400 or OSPSupport@cps.edu.

Learn More

Articles:

- CPS Acceptable Use Policy for Students
- Teaching Students the Cyber Safety Basics
- AI, SEL, and Well-Being

Videos:

- What is misinformation? Let's break it down | CBC Kids …
- The Battle for Your Time: Exposing the Costs of Social …
- Being Safe on the Internet



School Avoidance

Definition: Behaviors in which a child expresses distress about going to school, refuses to go to school by justifying reasons to stay at home, or has difficulty remaining in school the entire day.

Disclaimer: School avoidance/school refusal is not a clinical diagnosis. It is a symptom of an emotional disorder or other underlying issues which propels the avoidance. Therefore, there is no diagnostic code for school avoidance in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5).

Statistics:

- Approximately 160,000 teens avoid school due to bullying.
    - In 2023, nearly 37% of CPS middle school students reported being bullied on school property.
- A 2019 study found higher avoidance rates among urban students ages 12–18.

Signs and Symptoms:

- In very young children, it is common and developmentally appropriate for them to experience anxiety related to separation from caregivers. This separation anxiety typically tends to diminish at age 3.
- However, separation anxiety may continue for some older children and can look like:
    - Refusing to go to school or leaving school during the day
    - Throwing tantrums by crying, expressing anger, or refusing to move
    - Complains about physical aches or sickness that improve when they stay home
    - Leaving class to go to the nurse's office or other location in the school
    - Going to school but experiencing an unusual level of distress
    - Engaging in physically harmful behaviors toward self, others, or objects

When school-related anxiety is at the root, school avoidance may be a way for a student to communicate that they are struggling with issues like:

- Fear of failure
- Problems with other students
- Anxieties about using a public bathroom
- Threats of physical harm (as from a school bully)

Learn More

Articles:

➢ When Kids Refuse to Go to School

Videos:

➢ School Avoidance

➢ Tips to Stop School Anxiety



School Avoidance: Students

Going to school can be stressful when it comes to fitting in with friends, keeping up with schoolwork, and dealing with personal challenges. Balancing these aspects of your life can be tricky, and if school is the source of your stress, it may seem like avoiding school will make things easier. However, avoiding school can actually lead to more stress in the long run. Going to school is important because it helps you learn about the world around you, discover your passions and interests, and continue to grow. If you find yourself missing a lot of school due to stress, or you constantly feel anxious about going to school, here are some helpful tips:

- **Talk to Teachers or School Staff.** If a particular class is stressing you out, teachers or mental health staff at your school can help you make a plan that meets your needs and helps you succeed. Figuring out how you learn best and discovering healthy coping skills can help you feel more confident in your abilities and motivated to attend school. You can also talk to a school counselor, social worker, nurse, or psychologist about connecting with a healthcare provider if you would like help from a professional outside of school.

- **Ways Your School Can Help.** If you are having a difficult time attending school because of anxiety or stress, it is important to connect with your school for support. You or your caregiver can reach out to your school and work together to make a plan for attending school. This plan may include strategies to help make the school day less stressful.
    - If you are experiencing bullying, please inform a staff member in your school. You are not alone and your school can help you address this matter. Bullying reports can be submitted to school principals, school staff, by calling 773-553-3772 or by emailing BullyingReport@cps.edu

- **Connect with Others.** Being a part of a healthy social circle by joining a club, sport, or extracurricular activity can become a positive reason to attend school. Looking forward to connecting with friends and classmates can make going to school a little easier. Talking to your family may also help you manage your anxiety about attending school.

- **Find Ways to Relax.** In order to decrease your anxiety before going to school, practice breathing or meditation techniques. Additionally, making time for your hobbies and interests will help you feel better overall and give you healthy ways to decompress after a challenging day at school.

Learn More

Articles:

- Struggling to Go to School? You're Not Alone
- How to cope if you're anxious about going to school



Videos:

- Control School Anxiety *tips for teenagers

School Avoidance: Parents and Caregivers

School avoidance can be extremely challenging for parents and caregivers to navigate. If your child is struggling with school avoidance, you may face heightened levels of stress, work absences that could result in the loss of wages, and tension in your relationship with your child's school. Here are some strategies that can help you navigate school avoidance:

- **Identify What is Going On.** Children may avoid going to school for several reasons including anxiety, bullying or teasing, or fears about performance. Identifying the primary reason your student is avoiding school will help you determine your best next steps.

- **Collaborate and Problem-solve.** School avoidance for a prolonged period of time can be detrimental to your child's ability to keep up with their peers and schoolwork. Collaborating with your child and school staff such as teachers, counselors, or social workers can help you make a plan to support your child's wellbeing and school attendance.

- **Set Rules.** Your child must be aware of expectations regarding going to school and what circumstances would warrant staying at home (fever, illness, etc). These expectations can help empower them to face their fears and understand they are capable of success.

- **Seek Professional Help.** School avoidance is a serious problem that can worsen rapidly. Reach out to your child's school and work closely with them to determine your next steps. It's also a good idea to consult with a licensed mental health professional who specializes in child anxiety and can support you in helping your child re-engage in school. Ask the school guidance counselor, social worker, or your pediatrician to refer you to an expert. Additionally, your pediatrician may want to schedule a visit to rule out health problems.

Learn More

Articles:

- ➢ School refusal: When a child won't go to school
- ➢ School Avoidance: Tips for Concerned Parents

Videos:

- ➢ Helping your autistic child with school anxiety - pres…
- ➢ Parent Video: School Refusal Behavior
- ➢ School Avoidance - Video

Podcasts:

- ➢ Understanding School Refusal



School Avoidance: School Staff

If you have a student dealing with school avoidance, there are ways that you can help accommodate your student in order to make the process of them returning to school easier.

- **Work with the Family.** Regularly check in with your student's family and try to inform yourself on your student's situation. Students can be avoiding school for a variety of reasons, so it will be important to learn what support and accommodations you can provide to make school attendance more manageable for the student.
- **Work with Your School's BHT.** If a student is experiencing chronic absenteeism, it is likely that their counselor or social worker is working with them to create a school return plan.
    - Collaborate with your school's Behavioral Health Team (BHT) in order to stay informed on your student's progress and to learn strategies that can be used in the classroom to ease a student's anxiety.
    - If you work closely with the student, you may be more familiar with the student's behavior and you will be able to better inform the development of the student's re-entry plan.
- **Familiarize Yourself with Resources.** Review available resources and follow your school's guidelines on how to help students who refuse to go to school.
- **Prepare for a Gradual Re-entry.** Pushing a student to fully re-engage with school before they are ready might lead to more resistance. For some students, it might take some time before they feel they are able to return to a regular school schedule and partake in regular activities, especially if some of these activities are anxiety inducing, such as class presentations. Remember to be patient and offer positive acknowledgement when you notice the student is making progress.
- **Create a Welcoming Environment.** Approach the student's situation with empathy and understanding. Ask your student what support they would find helpful, listen to their concerns, and let them know that you are there to offer support if they begin to feel overwhelmed. If the student needs time to decompress, you can provide access to a calm corner or area in the classroom where they can take quiet breaks if needed.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ School Refusal: Every School Day Counts
- ➢ Practical strategies for dealing with school refusal

Videos:

- ➢ Understanding school refusal
- ➢ When Kids Refuse To Go To School | Child Mi…

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Seeking Mental Health Care

It is always okay to reach out for help, whether you are dealing with stress, relationship issues, academic pressure, self-doubt, or just having a bad day. It is especially important to reach out for support if you are struggling with mental health challenges. When students bottle up their emotions or a mental illness goes untreated, it can significantly interfere with their ability to learn, grow, and develop.

No one has to face their problems alone, and there are many helpful resources available. Therapy is one of these resources, but it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. There are different types of therapy, counseling, and coping strategies available, with many of them taking into consideration aspects of your culture and identity. If you decide a certain type of treatment is not the right fit, there are other options you can explore.

To make reaching out for help less overwhelming, students can go directly to the adults they already know and trust at their school, like their teacher or school counselor. Since students spend so much of their time at school, schools have the unique opportunity to provide mental health services to students where they already are. So whether you need individualized support or just someone to talk to, don't hesitate to seek the mental health care that fits your needs.

Statistics:

- 1 in 6 of U.S. youth (aged 6-17) experience a mental health disorder each year
- According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 72.3% of high school students and 77.9% of middle school students said that their mental health was most of the time or always not good (including stress, anxiety, and depression).

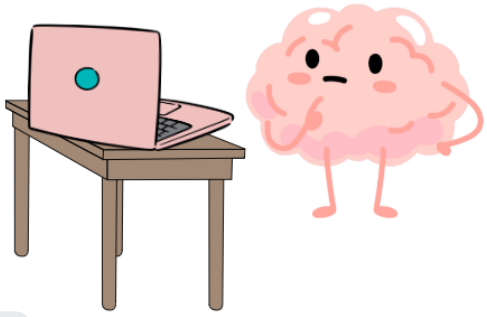
Hotlines for Immediate Support

- ➢ Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988
- ➢ Youth Crisis Hotline: 800-448-3000
- ➢ Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- ➢ NAMI Chicago: 833-626-4244
- ➢ SAMHSA: 800-662-4357
- ➢ Illinois Helpline: 833-234-6343
- ➢ The Trevor Project: 866-488-7386
- ➢ Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Chicago Services Resource Guide
- ➢ How to Choose the Type of Therapy For You
- ➢ Psychology Today - Find a Therapist



Videos:

- ➢ How to Ask for Help
- ➢ Cultural Identity: What's it got to do with mental health?

Seeking Mental Health Care: Students

Life can be stressful, especially when you're balancing school responsibilities, hobbies, and relationships with family and friends. Everyone goes through tough times, and it is normal to feel like you might need more support sometimes. If you are interested in talking with a mental health professional about your feelings or challenges, here are some steps to get you started:

- **Talk to a trusted adult.** If you're feeling down or struggling, it's important to talk to an adult you trust so that they know you need some support. Here are some things you can try:
  - Practice what you will say by writing things down or rehearsing your words ahead of time.
  - Find a private time and place to bring up your concerns.
  - Tell them how you feel, your concerns, and that you are interested in seeking additional support. Example: "I've been having a tough time with some things and I want to connect with a therapist or counselor to talk about my mental health."

- **Talk to someone at school.** Your school has staff who can help, like your school social worker, counselor, and psychologist. They can talk to you about how you're feeling and help figure out the best way to support you. If you don't know who the mental health professionals at your school are, you can ask your teacher or principal to help connect you.

- **Trying therapy.** If you're 12 or older, you can have up to eight 90-minute sessions of therapy without needing parental consent. There are different types of therapy that are available through different formats, such as virtual, via phone, or in-person. Find the method that works best for you.

- **Explore available resources in your area.** Review our Chicago Services Resource Guide, a comprehensive guide of organizations that provide mental health support as well as other social services. The Health Database section includes sites that allow you to filter for the specific information you are looking for, such as insurance, language, location, service type, and more.

- **Advocate for yourself.** As the person receiving care, you have the right to express your needs and concerns. If a care plan is not working for you or you want to try a different approach, make sure you communicate your concerns with your therapist or caregiver.

- **Finding a therapist can take time.** It's okay if you feel like you're not connecting with the first therapist you match with. Remember you might need to try different therapists before you find the right one. Therapists have different specialties and backgrounds, so it is fine if you want to find someone that better understands your culture and identity, or has an approach that you prefer.

Learn More:

Articles:

- Chicago Services Resource Guide
- Teen Support & Care
- Going to a Therapist

Videos:

- 5 Signs You Should Consider Therapy
- What to Expect in Therapy



Seeking Mental Health Care: Parents and Caregivers

Mental health is just as important as physical health for your child's learning and development, relationships, and overall well-being. If you notice that your child might be experiencing difficulties with their mental health, seeking support early can make a big difference in their academic and personal success. Finding the right care for your child may seem daunting, so here are some things to consider as you and your child start this journey together:

- **Talk to your child**. Creating a safe space for your child to share their feelings with you will help you learn how to best support them. Ask them what they need and let them be a part of their own care plan. Be transparent about potential services they may be receiving and ask for their input regularly to show you care about their opinions.
- **Contact your child's school.** The counselor, social worker, or psychologist at your child's school may be able to provide a range of services (like short-term group counseling and individualized support), as well as assist with connecting your child to long-term therapy options outside of school. If you are not sure how to contact the mental health professionals at your child's school, reach out to their teacher or principal and they will be able to help connect you.
- **Talk to your family doctor.** Your child's pediatrician and/or family doctor can help refer you to mental health treatment for your child.
    - If you have Medicaid insurance and need assistance coordinating care, please contact CPS Children and Family Benefits (CFBU) at 773-553-5437 (KIDS)
- **Reach out to a SBHC.** CPS has School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) in different school buildings across Chicago that offer many different kinds of services, including mental health services. Call the one nearest to you to learn what resources are available.
- **Explore available resources in your area.** Review our Chicago Services Resource Guide, a comprehensive guide of organizations that provide mental health support as well as other social services. The Health Database section includes sites that allow you to filter for the specific information you are looking for, such as insurance, language, location, service type, and more.

Learn More:

Articles:

- How to Talk to Kids About Starting Therapy
- How to Find a Therapist for Your Child

Videos:

- Finding the Right Therapist for Your Child
- What is Family Therapy?

Podcast:

- How to Help Someone Get Help (starts at 5:24)
- How to Find a Therapist (starts at 3:30)



Seeking Mental Health Care: School Staff

Supporting students' mental health starts with creating a safe and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable talking about how they feel. If you notice a student showing signs of distress, take a moment to check in with them. Gently ask how they're doing or if there's anything they'd like to talk about. If they share any mental health concerns, let them know you can connect them with a school clinician, such as a counselor or social worker. From there, either make a Behavioral Health Team (BHT) referral or reach out to a school clinician for appropriate follow-up support.

Here are some steps to consider:

- **Make a BHT referral**. If you are concerned about a student's mental health, you should refer them to your school's BHT. The BHT ensures students receive consistent and appropriate behavioral and mental health services based on their needs.
- **Report a mental health crisis.** In the event of a student crisis, it is crucial to involve a school social worker or counselor immediately to provide essential crisis intervention support. Mental health crises may include suicidal thoughts or behaviors, self-harm, disordered eating, psychosis, aggressive behavior, and more. If a clinician is unavailable, contact the Student Safety Center at **773-553-3335** and refer to the CPS Crisis Manual for further guidance. Never leave a student in crisis alone. If you need to go find additional support make sure there is another staff member available to stay with the student.
- **Take care of your own mental health.** Your wellbeing matters too, and there are resources available to help you seek the mental health care that is right for you.
    - Check out the Be Well program website for information on learning opportunities, wellness events, and helpful resources.
    - The CPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential counseling sessions with a licensed behavioral health professional, as well as comprehensive online information and resources, at no charge to employees. You may reach the EAP by phone for a consultation at 800-890-1213 or visit guidanceresources.com - Web ID: EAPIL

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ National Alliance on Mental Illness
- ➢ Chicago Services Resource Guide
- ➢ Mental Health Guide for CPS Employees

Videos:

- ➢ Why School Mental Health Matters

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series





Self-Care

Definition: Self-care is defined as participating in activities to preserve or improve one's own physical health and mental well-being.

Building healthy habits and taking care of yourself can help you better manage stress, prevent illness, and improve mood. Self-care means more than buying products or looking a certain way: rather, self-care is a series of behaviors and habits that can help us maintain our mental and emotional wellbeing. Taking the time to participate in activities that are soothing or joyful can actually keep our minds and bodies healthy in the long run! Self-care can involve any healthy activity that brings joy, calm, or that makes you feel like yourself, so find what works best for you and try to incorporate self-care into your daily routine.

Statistics:

- In a US national survey, 64% reported regularly participating in self-care.
- Those who engage in regular self-care are often linked with higher levels of happiness, improved sleep, and an increased likelihood to consider themselves healthy.
- Around 72% of young Americans use music as a way to care for their mental wellbeing.

Signs you may need a self-care break:

- High levels of stress
- Easily irritated
- Tired or feeling fatigued
- Feeling sick or unpleasant
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling burned out
- Unable to stay focused
- Not remembering the last time you spent time on an activity you enjoy



Learn More:

Articles:

- 5 Types of Self-Care for Every Area of Your Life
- Self-Care - Active Minds

Videos:

- What is Self-Care? | Mental Health Literacy
- Re-train Your Brain With Self-Care | Dima Abou Chaaban | TEDxUNBSaintJohn

Self-Care: Students

It's normal to feel stressed out sometimes—with school responsibilities, hobbies, friendships, and family life, there can be a lot to balance! Prioritizing regular self-care can help you recharge and keep your body and mind healthy enough to process difficult emotions, tackle challenges, and grow into the best version of yourself. Here are some examples of ways you can practice self-care:

- **Find what works for you.** Self-care can take the form of any healthy activity that brings you joy, relaxation, or fulfillment. This can include anything from going outside for a walk, watching your favorite show, having a spa day, or even taking a nap. Find what works for you, and try to incorporate these practices into your daily routine.

- **Take care of your physical health.** Getting enough sleep, drinking water, eating healthy food, and exercising are all equally important for our physical AND mental health. Our moods can be directly affected by our physical health!

- **Find a creative outlet.** Creative writing, journaling, painting, dancing, sports, and music are all outlets that can help you express yourself and decompress.

- **Stay connected.** Spending time with friends and family can be a great way to have fun and take care of your mental health at the same time. And if you're going through a hard time, opening up to people you trust can help you get support, gain a new perspective, or feel comfort by just having people listen to what you have to say.

- **Use positive self-talk**. Talking to yourself in a positive way can boost your mood and self-esteem. We can be hard on ourselves, so remember to give yourself some grace and encouragement.

- **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the act of living in the present moment. Mindfulness can look like taking a moment to focus on your breathing and clear your mind, which can be quite soothing and relaxing. Explore mindfulness techniques through apps such as GoNoodle or Smiling Mind.

Learn More:

Articles:

➢ Self-Care for High Schoolers

Videos:

➢ Self-Care in High School

➢ 6 Simple Self Care Tips To Become A Better You



Self-Care: Parents and Caregivers

Just like adults often come home tired from work, students can come home tired after a busy day of classes, exams, and after-school activities. Teaching your child at an early age about the importance of self-care will help them keep their body and mind healthy and set them up for success. Here are some tips you can use to encourage your child to participate in self-care:

- **Form healthy habits.** Teach your child about taking care of their body by eating nutritious and balanced meals, doing physical activities they enjoy, and getting plenty of sleep. Kids who are under 13-years-old should be getting 9–12 hours of sleep!
- **Explore fun activities.** Encourage your child to do hobbies and activities that they enjoy, like playing with friends, listening to their favorite music, or making art. These joyful activities can help them destress after an eventful day!
- **Take some time to relax.** Sometimes after a long day, all kids want to do is lay on the couch and relax, and that is okay. Taking a nap, enjoying a bath, or eating some ice cream while watching a movie are all good ways to rest and recharge. You may not want them to lay in bed *all* day; it is okay to set a time limit for 30 minutes or an hour so that they can take some time for themselves before getting back to homework, chores, or other activities!
- **Remember to take care of YOU.** Self-care is important for everyone, including parents and caregivers. Taking time for yourself and doing things you enjoy will do wonders for your wellbeing! Taking care of yourself will help you feel good and be the best parent you can be. Additionally, kids learn best by observing the adults around them, so make it a habit to show them the importance of self-care and healthy habits.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Self-Care For Kids
- ➢ Self-Care for Parents: Tips & Advice

Videos:

- ➢ Self-Care For Kids
- ➢ Dear Overwhelmed Moms, Self-Care Isn't Selfish
- ➢ Self-care: Being the best parent I can be

Podcasts:

- ➢ The Verywell Mind Podcast



Self-Care: School Staff

As a CPS staff member, you are not only shaping the minds of your students, but also playing an essential role in the community! While your work is rewarding, it can also be demanding and stressful. Prioritizing self-care is crucial not only for creating a positive and supportive learning environment for our students, but also for your own wellbeing. In order to avoid burnout, it is essential that you find moments throughout the day where you can take the time needed to recharge.

Here are some ways to put this into practice:

- **Prioritize physical wellness**. Taking care of your physical health is a very important form of self-care. Staying active, taking walks, eating well, staying hydrated, and getting enough sleep are all ways you can take care of your body.
- **Set boundaries.** Create an appropriate work-life balance. Schedule time off and be mindful of your bandwidth. If you find yourself unable to resist checking your email when you are home, you can try deleting the app for a period if necessary.
- **Find time to relax.** Sometimes it is easier said than done, especially if there are many demanding tasks waiting for you at home. Even if you only have 30 minutes to relax, take that time to focus on you. Watch an episode of your favorite show, enjoy a bath, go for a quick walk, or lay silently on the couch. Whatever relaxes you, it is worth it to make it a priority at least once a day.
- **Stay connected**. Collaborate with colleagues, both for support and because it is important to build a network of people who understand the unique challenges you face. It is also good to remember to maintain social connections with friends and family outside of work who can help you take your mind off of work.
- **Mind your mental health.** Taking care of your mental health is a great proactive form of self-care. Your CPS benefits include telephonic consultations and several free face-to-face visits with mental health counselors. To access your ComPsych EAP benefits, call 1-800-890-1213 or visit guidanceresources.com and enter the web ID: EAPIL

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ 5 Ways I Help Myself When My Job is to Help Others
- ➢ The Complete Guide to Self Care for Educators

Videos:

- ➢ A Self-Care Action Plan
- ➢ 2020 Teachers of the Year on practicing self care

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Self-Harm

Definition: Self-harm, also referred to as self injury, or non-suicidal self injury (NSSI), is defined as hurting or injuring one's self on purpose. Self-harm is not a diagnosis but rather a behavior that can be a sign of emotional distress.

People who self-harm may do so for various reasons, including to find an emotional release or a sense of control, but typically do not intend to take their own life. Everyone feels overwhelming emotions, but using self-harm as a way to cope can be dangerous and can have long-term effects on one's health and wellbeing. If you or someone you know is self-harming, there are resources and support available that can help you find alternative and healthier coping strategies.

Disclaimer: If self injury is suspected, please refer to a mental health professional immediately.

Statistics:

- 28% of CPS middle school students and 19% of CPS high school students did something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die (such as cutting or burning themselves on purpose one or more times during the 12 months before the survey).
- About 17% of teens reported that they have self-harmed at least once in their lives.
- LGBTQ+ teens are the most affected by self-injurious behaviors with about 63% reporting self-harm.



Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Scars or cuts that are often in patterns
- Frequent instances of accidental injury
- Wounds including: cuts, scratches, burns, and bruises
- Keeping sharp objects on hand
- Wearing sweaters or long pants to hide self-injury, even in hot weather



Learn More:

Articles:

- Self-Harm (Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Disorder)
- 6 Signs Someone May Be Self-Injuring

Videos:

- What is Self-Harm?
- Understanding Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

Self-Harm: Students

Self-harm, also referred to as self injury, or non-suicidal self injury (NSSI), can look different for different individuals and can be defined as hurting yourself on purpose. People may self-harm for different reasons, often because they're feeling upset, having trouble expressing their emotions, or are looking for a way to feel in control. Everyone feels stress, but using self-harm as a way to cope can be dangerous. If you are struggling with self-harm, or you know someone that is, it's important to reach out for help.

- **Turn to trusted friends and family.** When life feels overwhelming, turning to your support network can be a great way to feel heard, vent your emotions, and get advice. Even if it seems like someone may not understand exactly what you are going through, the people who care about you can often help you feel supported as you navigate your emotions. School counselors, religious leaders, and teachers may also be good sources of support.
- **Find healthier coping strategies**. When you feel the urge to self-harm, it can be helpful to try other ways to get an emotional release. Turning toward healthy activities like art, journaling, creative writing, sports, movies, TV shows, or cooking might help provide a sense of release and control. Other healthy forms of release can be screaming into a pillow, exercising in moderation, breathing exercises, meditation, or simply crying it out. Tools like stress balls can also be great ways to release your emotions.
- **Talk to a mental health professional**. Ultimately, self-harm can pose a very serious risk to your health and wellbeing, and it is often a sign of deeper painful feelings you are experiencing. Talking to a professional like a school social worker, counselor, or nurse may be a helpful way to figure out why you might be feeling a certain way and get more personalized resources to help you.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Help for Self-Harm | Text HOME to 741741 for support
- ➢ How to Tell Someone You Are Self-Injuring and Ask for Help
- ➢ How to Help a Friend

Videos:

- ➢ 6 Reasons Why People Self Harm (understand and how you can help)
- ➢ Self-Harm (Non-Suicidal Self-injury) Signs, Types, and How to Cope With Urges | Mass…



Self-Harm: Parents and Caregivers

Learning that your child is suffering from self-harm can be overwhelming, confusing, and scary. Self-harm, also referred to as self injury, or non-suicidal self injury (NSSI), can be take many forms and is defined as hurting one's self on purpose. If you learn that your child is self-harming, it is important to get the help they need as soon as possible.Here are some steps you can take to get them connected to support:

- **Learn about self-harm.** It's important to understand that self-harm does *not* necessarily mean a person wants to die. Instead, it can be a way of coping with intense emotions such as anger, sadness, stress, anxiety, trauma, or feelings of helplessness.
- **Approach with gentle conversation.** When you talk with them, let them know that you are not there to judge them and reassure them that you want to help. First, find a private time and place to bring up your concerns. You can then start the conversation by saying, *"I've noticed some changes and it looks like you're going through a hard time, do you want to talk about it?"* If you have noticed injuries you can say, *"I care about you and want to help, and I've noticed some bruises and cuts on your arms, can you tell me if these are due to self-harm?"*
- **Listen and don't judge**. Provide a safe space for your child to express their thoughts and feelings. Do not judge or take their thoughts personally and listen openly and without anger. Your acceptance can build trust and be a source of comfort.
- **Encourage positive coping strategies**. Create a plan for if and when your child has the urge to self-harm. Some healthier alternatives could include: screaming into a pillow, hitting a soft inanimate object, ripping up unimportant papers, messaging or calling a friend, calling or texting a helpline, and doing deep breathing exercises.
- **Work together with school staff**. The mental health professionals at your child's school, like the school counselor or social worker, are an essential partner in providing mental health support. They can connect your child with additional resources, more long-term support outside of school, and teach strategies to help them cope with emotional pain.
- **See a mental health professional.** If your child is struggling with ongoing emotional challenges or self-harm behaviors, seeking professional counseling or therapy may be beneficial. Mental health professionals can provide individualized treatment to support your child's mental well-being. For help connecting with a mental health professional, you can reach out to your child's school, healthcare provider, or look for available mental health services in your area.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ When Children and Teens Self-Harm

Videos:

- ➢ Why Do People Self-Harm?
- ➢ Help for Cutting and Self-Injury | Child …



Self-Harm: School Staff

As teachers, school staff, and school leaders, it isn't easy knowing how to respond if you suspect your student is self-harming. Self-harm, also referred to as self injury, or non-suicidal self injury (NSSI), can look different for different across individuals. It is okay to feel concerned and want to help, and it is easy to feel at a loss on what to do, especially if you are afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing.

Here are some steps you can take if you believe a student is self-harming:

- **Don't ignore the signs.** You may notice that your student has cuts, bruises, or burn marks; is experiencing extreme mood swings; or has suddenly begun to wear long sleeves even in hot weather. While wearing long sleeves and experiencing changes in mood do not immediately indicate self-harm, it is important to be aware of these changes in behavior.
- **Approach with gentle conversation.** When you talk with your student, let them know that you are not there to judge them and reassure them that you want to help. First, find a private time and place to bring up your concerns. You can then start the conversation by saying, *"I've noticed some changes and I want to see how you are doing, is there anything you want to talk about?"* If you have noticed frequent injuries you can say, *"I've noticed some injuries on your arms, so I wanted to check in with you to see if you were ok and to ask if you needed any support?"*
- **Offer support**. Whether your student tells you they are self-harming or not, offer them support by telling them that you are someone they can talk to. However, never promise that you will keep this a secret. Encourage them to speak to a mental health professional at the school, and offer to go with them to make that appointment if they are nervous.
- **Talk to your school's BHT.** If your student does disclose that they are harming themselves, or you have concerns that a student may be engaging in self-harm, you must take immediate action and talk to the school counselor or social worker. Make the student aware that you will be letting a school mental health professional know, and that you are doing this to get them help and support. You should then escort them to the school social counselor or social worker immediately.
- **Take care of yourself.** Having a conversation like this is not easy, and it is important to check in with yourself and your emotions afterwards. Prioritize your wellbeing and seek support from other staff if needed.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ Self-harm: A Guide for School Staff
- ➢ A guide for supporting students

Videos:

- ➢ Understanding Non-suicidal Self…
- ➢ Self-Harm (Non-Suicidal Self-injury)

Professional Development:

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Substance Use

Substance Use and Substance Use Disorder

Definition: A Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a medical condition that is defined by the inability to control the use of a particular substance (or substances) despite harmful consequences. In other words, SUDs occur when an individual develops a dependency on drugs or alcohol despite unhealthy outcomes such as impaired functioning, interpersonal issues, and overall health and wellness challenges.

Substance use can be viewed on a spectrum. People use substances for a wide variety of reasons and in many instances, people can use some substances responsibly and in a way that does not negatively impact their everyday life. At times though, substance use can develop into misuse or addiction, which is more likely to occur when other aspects of one's mental or physical health are suffering. This misuse can sometimes lead to a Substance Use Disorder.

Statistics:

- The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows what CPS high school students self-disclose about their substance use, including:
  - 29% have used marijuana and 30% have used an electronic vapor product
  - Nearly 12% have misused prescription pain medication
- Substance use and mental health issues often occur together, and one 2023 analysis found that 35% of adults aged 18 and over who have a diagnosed mental health disorder also have a co-occurring substance use disorder.
- In a study released by the National Governors Association, among young people who fatally overdosed between July 2019 and December 2021, 41% had a mental health condition or treatment history.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Drop in attendance and performance
- Frequently getting into trouble
- Engaging in suspicious behaviors such as lying or stealing
- Changes in appetite, sleep patterns, personality, mood swings, irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Bloodshot eyes/abnormal pupil size
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Slurred speech
- Unusual smell on breath, body, or clothing
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems

Learn more

Articles

- ➢ Taking a Harm Reduction Approach to Substance Use
- ➢ Family Toolkit | Here to Help
- ➢ ISBE Drug Education Resources



Videos

- ➢ Harm Reduction as an Act of Compassion
- ➢ What causes addiction, and why is it so hard to treat?

Substance Use: Students

If you are curious about the potential effects of substances, or you want to support friends who are struggling, here are some things to consider. To start, teenagers' brains are still in a critical development stage and substances can interfere with how this development occurs. Substance use can also have a negative impact on the areas of the brain that determine decision making, your ability to focus, memory retention, emotional management, and impulse control.

Some young people might use substances as a way to cope with difficult experiences or numb overwhelming feelings. It's important to know that substances can't actually fix the problem or help you heal in the long run, which is why it's so important to learn healthy coping methods.

If you or a friend is struggling with substance use, here are some tips to get help:

- **Social Support.** Lean on your friends, family, educators, and any other trusted adult in your life and express your concerns about your own substance use and mental health. It is okay to ask for help!
- **Healthy Coping Skills.** Eating healthy, getting enough sleep, journaling, meditating, deep breathing exercises, and participating in your favorite activities are great ways to practice self-care. If you are struggling with challenging emotions, there are many coping skills you can use to calm those feelings.
- **Do Your Research.** Learn how substance use affects your wellbeing and make informed decisions about substance use.
    - Vapes contain harmful toxins, and *are not* water vapor. They can be very addictive and have been linked to many health concerns, including lung disease.
    - Alcohol negatively affects your brain functioning and your heart.
    - Cannabis can cause coughing, stomach pain, anxiety, and reduced coordination.
    - Fentanyl causes dizziness, drowsiness, and a lethal dose is equal to less than a grain of rice.
- **Ask for Professional Help.** It is okay to need more individualized support, and therapy can help you talk about your feelings and learn about recovery options.
    - **Talk to Someone at School.** Your school has staff who can help with mental health, like the school social worker, counselor, or psychologist. They can talk to you about how you're feeling and help figure out the best way to support you. If you are unsure of who your school clinicians are, you can ask your teacher or principal to help connect you.

Learn More:

Articles

- Tips for Teens: E-Cigarettes
- Tips for Teens: Opioids
- IL Harm Reduction & Recovery Coalition

Videos:

- How do drugs affect the brain?
- Drugs and The Brain



Substance Use: Parents and Caregivers

It can be overwhelming if your child is struggling with substance use and mental health problems and you don't know how to help. Encouraging your child to seek help can take time, patience, understanding, and repeated attempts at having difficult conversations. It's not always easy, but persistence is key. If you are have concerns about your child's substance use, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Listen non-judgmentally.** Provide a safe space for your child to express their frustrations, anger, sadness, or any other emotion they want to share. Avoid lectures and, instead, listen to your child's opinions and questions about substances. Assure your child that you want to have an open conversation and that they can be honest with you without worrying about getting in trouble.
- **Be direct and clear about your concerns.** Remember to express your concerns with compassion and love. Try to avoid being confrontational, belittling, accusatory, or blaming. Let your child know that you are concerned about their substance use and you don't want to see them suffer. Avoid scare tactics; focus more on how substance use can affect the things that are important to your child, like sports performance, driving, or health.
- **Research harm reduction practices.** Harm reduction is a set of strategies used to reduce harm from substance use. Fentanyl can be sold in a pill, powder form, or as an injectable, and it is practically undetectable unless tested. Learn about safe use practices, naloxone and fentanyl test strips, how to use them, and where you can get them for free.
- **Reach out to a professional.** If you need additional support, a mental health professional who specializes in substance use can help you explore treatment options that will work best for your child. Explore the Chicago Services Resource Guide for mental health/substance use providers and additional resources.
- **Encourage treatment participation.** Encourage your child to keep appointments and participate in all aspects of their treatment plan. This may include individual, group and family therapy, medications, and job and life skillbuilding.
- **Check in regularly.** Ask your child how they are doing. Listen to their experiences and allow their feedback to shape aspects of their treatment plan. If a student feels heard and more in control of their situation, they may be more likely to participate in treatment.
- **Take care of yourself.** Neglecting your own needs can cause burnout and reduce your ability to care for others. Self-care can include physical activity, engaging in hobbies you enjoy, eating nutritious meals, and getting enough sleep. Taking care of yourself is important not only for your wellbeing, but will also model healthy behaviors for your child.



Learn More:

Articles

- LGBTQ+, Family and Substance Use
- Parents | Youth Now
- Conversations with 12–17 Year Olds

Videos

- Parents Supporting Students with Addiction
- Opioid Epidemic | How to Save Lives

Substance Use: School Staff

Schools play a unique role in improving student outcomes through mental health support, creating safe and supportive environments, and increasing connectedness between students and school staff. However, schools can also be a place where students can be exposed to substance use and other risky behaviors. Staying informed and providing support can help mitigate risk factors that make students vulnerable to engaging in dangerous behaviors, as well as boost protective factors that increase student engagement.

Here are some ways that you can support your students:

- **Show them you care.** Let students know that you care about their health, wellness, and success. Normalize conversations about wellbeing and create a safe space for students to ask questions about substances.
- **Non-judgmental listening.** When talking about substances, refrain from showing judgment or making stigmatizing comments, as this could make students feel ashamed or embarrassed about personal or family struggles. Remember to keep an open mind and approach these conversations with kindness and understanding.
- **Educate yourself regarding substances.** A lot has changed when it comes to substance use trends and drug education for youth, so make sure to stay up-to-date with the most recent and credible information. Avoid the use of scare tactics, and instead take an educational and harm reduction approach when speaking to students about the risks of substance use.
- **Provide resources.** Familiarize yourself with local substance use and mental health providers when supporting students who are facing substance use challenges. Share informational resources with students interested in learning more (such as the resources in this guide) and share the Chicago Services Resource Guide if families are interested in looking for treatment options.
- **Have a crisis plan in place.** Work with your school's BHT and administrators to have a crisis plan in place for when a student is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. Make sure you have completed the Overdose Prevention and Narcan Administration Training on SafeSchools, and learn where Narcan is stocked in your building.

Learn More:

Articles

- ➢ Safety First: Harm-Reduction Drug Intervention Curriculum
- ➢ Opioid and Fentanyl Fast Facts
- ➢ Educator Resources | Youth Now

Videos

- ➢ Stigma of Mental Health & Addiction
- ➢ Substance Use and Stigma

Professional Development

- ➢ Mental Health Webinar Series



Trauma

Definition: Trauma is defined by the psychological effects of either an event or series of events that were harmful or caused significant distress. Trauma typically occurs when these events are out of the control of the individual who experienced them, and can significantly impact their emotional or mental well-being.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. The symptoms are similar to those of trauma, however, PTSD symptoms can be more long-lasting and often include nightmares and flashbacks.

For some children, stressful or traumatic events can lead to long-term effects that may result in PTSD. The likelihood of a child developing PTSD depends entirely on how the event is perceived by the child as well as how much support they have. Symptoms can also potentially be more severe, more easily triggered, and last a longer time, further emphasizing that we need to view PTSD in youth with more patience and focus on supports that promote safety and prevent retraumatization.

Statistics:

- 41% of CPS high school students and 39% of CPS middle school students reported that they saw someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood.
- By the age of 16, around 1 in 4 children in the United States experience some type of traumatic event.

Signs and Symptoms of Trauma:

- Younger children: frequent nightmares, tantrums, dissociation, trouble forming attachment with caregivers or friends, and physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, or difficulty sleeping.
- Older children: difficulty concentrating, trouble with emotional regulation, intense emotions, isolation or difficulty expressing emotions, participating in high-risk activities, and physical symptoms such as frequent headaches.

Learn More:

Articles:

- ➢ What Is PTSD?
- ➢ Trauma

Videos

- ➢ How the body keeps the score on trauma…
- ➢ How childhood trauma affects health acr…

Podcasts

- ➢ Trauma Rewired



Trauma: Students

After something traumatic happens, it can be really difficult to feel safe and you may avoid situations that remind you of what happened. It is completely normal to have strong emotions or even want to shut yourself off after a traumatic event. You might also have feelings of stress or anxiety when something reminds you of the traumatic experience. This is called a trigger, and can be a person, place, thing, smell, or object that reminds you of a distressing experience. Because you often can't avoid triggers, it is important to have a plan for taking care of your mental health in the long run.

Here are some tips to try if you've had a tough experience:

- **Stay connected.** After experiencing trauma, it is important to stay connected to your friends, family, and trusted adults. Spending time with people you love can help create a sense of safety and normalcy in your everyday life. If you are comfortable doing so, it can also be helpful to talk to them about your experience and your feelings.
- **Practice coping skills**. If you find yourself unexpectedly feeling anxiety related to a traumatic experience, it can be helpful to practice breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, journaling, or other activities that help you relax. If possible, take a moment to step away from the stressful situation and focus on a calming technique that works for you.
- **Self-care.** Prioritize your wellbeing and regularly engage in healthy activities that bring you joy, soothe you, or help you feel grounded. This can help lessen stress, boost your resilience, and help you recharge after tough days.
- **Patience and self-compassion.** It can take a long time to heal from a traumatic experience, so try to be patient and kind to yourself as you process your healing. To help with this, try incorporating daily affirmations into your routine.
- **Seeking mental health support.** Remember that you are not alone, and if you need more support, you can always reach out for help. A therapist, school counselor, social worker, or psychologist can work with you to create a plan that supports you. If you aren't sure how to connect with the mental health resources at your school, reach out to a school staff member and they will help you.
    - Please view our one pager for additional resources and support on seeking mental health care within and outside of CPS.

Learn More:

Articles:

- How to Heal After Trauma
- How to deal with PTSD triggers

Videos:

- What Is "Trauma" - and How to Cope With It
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Teens



Trauma: Parents and Caregivers

Processing traumatic events can be challenging and scary—even for adults. So when it comes to children and adolescents being exposed to traumatic events, it can be very difficult for them to get back to everyday life. As a parent who wants to protect and comfort your child, it is normal to feel like you don't know how to help or what to do. Remember that you are not alone, and there is support available for you and your child. Here are some things to consider as you and your family take the time to heal:

- **Create a safe environment.** Use kind and supportive words to let your child know that their feelings are valid. Create safe spaces such as a calm corner at home where your child can go to be alone, relax, and regulate if they choose. Intervene if an activity makes your child upset or anxious.
- **Encourage hobbies and activities.** Allow your child plenty of time to play and enjoy recreational activities such as sports, favorite games, and time with family or friends. This can help build up their support system and encourage them to return to normalcy at their own pace.
- **Maintain a normal routine.** Consistent daily routines can help children feel a sense of security. Keep regular times for meals, bedtime, and chores, and use visual schedules if needed. Add relaxing activities like family walks and explain any schedule changes in advance. Establish special routines before and after changes or transitions, such as reading a favorite story or playing a familiar game.
- **Learn healthy coping skills together.** Because triggers are often unavoidable, it is important that your child knows ways to cope or calm down when they experience overwhelming feelings. Teach and practice skills like deep breathing or other mindfulness techniques. Practice during calm moments and remind them to use these skills when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- **Seek professional support if needed.** Monitor any sudden changes in your child's behavior, speech, language, or emotions, and reach out to their pediatrician if you're concerned so they can recommend follow-up care. Additionally, your school's Behavioral Health Team can connect your child with support and recommend available behavioral health resources. If you don't know how to connect with the Behavioral Health Team, reach out to your child's teacher or principal and they will help you.

Learn More:

Articles:

- Helping Your Child Heal After Trauma
- Helping Children Cope After a Traumatic Event

Videos:

- How to Help Your Child Deal with T…
- Trauma For Kids - Coping With Chil…
- How childhood trauma affects heal…



Trauma: School Staff

Teachers and school staff play an important role in making students feel safe and supported in the classroom, especially after students experience a traumatic event. A trauma-informed classroom can help support all students' mental and physical well-being, which helps create a safe and positive school environment. It's important to be aware of potential triggers, approach students with empathy, and create safe spaces where students can express their feelings and use coping strategies. To learn best practices for creating a trauma-informed classroom, you can check the Learning Hub and SafeSchools for training opportunities. In the meantime, here are some tips you can use to support students while also taking care of your own mental wellbeing.

- **Being a trusted adult.** Create an environment where your students feel comfortable and safe. If your student reaches out to you, remember to listen non-judgementally, and approach the conversation with compassion and reassurance.
- **Maintain a normal routine**. Children tend to function better when they know what to expect. Providing a visual schedule can be helpful, and try to maintain expectations of students with grace and support.
- **Be aware of changes.** Look out for signs that a child may need extra support. Students may be unable to engage as they normally would due to feelings of intense sadness, fear, or anger. This distress may also manifest as physical ailments, such as headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue. If you notice any of these signs, take a private moment to check in with them, and make a referral to your school's Behavioral Health Team if you have concerns.
- **Stay in touch with parents/caregivers**. Create a plan with the student and their family if appropriate on what to do when a student becomes overwhelmed or needs a break.
- **Take care of yourself.** Secondary traumatic stress occurs when someone learns about another's trauma. Affected individuals may relive past trauma, feel increased anxiety, and experience changes in confidence or their sense of safety. It's crucial to take care of yourself and seek support if needed.

Learn More:

Articles

- Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators
- Helping Teachers Manage the Weight of Trauma

Videos:

- PTSD in children : Tips For Teachers : Nip i…
- Trauma Informed Teaching
- How teachers can help students navigate t…

Professional Development:

- Mental Health Webinar Series



CPS Offices and Resources

Office of Student Health and Wellness (OSHW)

Student Health and Wellness aims to eliminate health-related barriers to learning and to advance child health equity in Chicago.

- Health Exams and Screenings
- LGBTQ+ Supportive Environments
- Medical, Food and Other Public Benefits
- Mental Health
- School-Based Health Centers Map
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

Office of School Counseling and Postsecondary Advising (OSCPA)

School Counseling and Postsecondary Advising (OSCPA) ensures that school counseling teams have the support and resources necessary to implement comprehensive school counseling programs that advance the academic, personal/social, and career development of all students.

Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)

The Office for Students with Disabilities works to support networks, schools, and families with all issues related to special education including instruction, interventions, and legal and compliance support.

Office of Social and Emotional Learning (OSEL)

Social and Emotional Learning works with schools and networks to establish multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for students' social, emotional, and behavioral development.

Office of School Safety and Security (OSSS)

The Office of School Safety and Security (OSSS) provides a safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning by taking a holistic, 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week approach to student safety.

- The Student Safety Center can be reached 24/7 at 773-553-3335.
- The Crisis Team's Hotline can be reached at 773-553-1792.
- Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)

Office of Student Protections and Title IX (OSP)

The mission of the Office of Student Protections and Title IX (OSP) and the Equal Opportunity Compliance Office (EOCO) is to promote a District that is free from abuse, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. We engage collaboratively with our stakeholders to remove barriers to academic programs and activities that provide an equitable, inclusive, and safe learning and work environment.

- Pregnant and Parenting Students

Crisis Hotlines and Helplines

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988
This hotline offers 24/7 crisis support for mental health concerns that impede safety. It also supports loved ones of those having a crisis.

Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline: 888-293-2080
This free service is available 24/7 and provides survivors of sexual violence and their significant others immediate support, crisis intervention, and referrals for the City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs.

City of Chicago Domestic Violence Help Line: 877-863-6338
This number is available 24-hours, 7 days a week. Trained advocates provide victims with information about their options, safety planning, and referrals to shelters, counseling, legal advocacy, and more.

Crisis Text Line: 800-448-3000
In order to access the Crisis Text Line, text HOME to 741741 or use WhatsApp or online chat. Users can speak with a trained volunteer who will help them move from a hot moment to a cool moment. They can also direct users to resources and support. Support is available in both English and Spanish.

National Alliance for Eating Disorders: 866-662-1235
This helpline is run by licensed therapists that can help callers connect to care, resources, support groups, and more. They are available Monday-Friday from 9am-7pm.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chicago: 833-626-4244
The Helpline is a free and confidential resource that provides a listening ear, guidance and connection to the right mental health and social service resources over the phone. Call the Helpline to talk to a live mental health professional, seven days a week (M-F 9am to 8pm, Saturday and Sunday, 9am-5pm.)

Runaway Safeline: 800-786-2929
Runaway Safeline is a 24/7 hotline that offers crisis support and referrals for youth who have run away. Their goal is to listen and help support youth to improve their situation. Please call, text, or use their online chat in order to access support services.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 800-662-HELP (4357)
This is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, helpline available in English and Spanish, for people facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
The Trans Lifeline offers support through a phone service that is run by trans people for trans and questioning peers. Individuals can call the Trans Lifeline if they need someone to talk to, even if they're not in crisis or not even sure whether they are trans.

Trevor Project: 866-488-7386
The Trevor Project provides 24/7 support to young people who are in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk. It is focused on the LGBTQ+ youth community, but open to all. It also has chat and text options.