

KEY MESSAGES

- Heading back to school can be tough on young people, but you can help them cope.
- Kids and teens today are dealing with some heavy stuff -- cyber-bullying, body shaming, community violence, abuse, neglect, unstable home lives, drug exposure, sexual orientation, immigration issues and more -- often they don't know where to turn.
- Sometimes, young people act out in school – but often these actions are hiding an underlying issue.
- Labeling a young person a “bad kid” and excluding them from their peers as punishment doesn't get at the root of the issue.
- Before behavior problems surface, there are emotions that young people are unable to deal with. Some simply may not have the tools that they need to effectively handle emotions like fear, sadness, and anger, which are often at the root of misbehavior.
- While we can't completely shield young people from all the stressful or traumatic situations they may be facing, we can help them learn to manage their emotions and reactions in ways that cultivate resilience.
- Mental Health America has developed its 2017 Back to School Toolkit to help increase emotional intelligence and self-regulation through materials for parents, school personnel, and young people.
- It's important for parents and caregivers to know the signs that a young person is struggling emotionally and have the tools to help.
- It's hard to talk about mental health sometimes, but the conversation is too important not to have.
- Mental health issues like depression and anxiety in young people are treatable and should be addressed as soon as possible - before Stage 4.
- Young people should find someone they trust and start a conversation. Parents and school personnel, be ready to listen and let them know you understand.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with language from the fact sheets and other materials included in this toolkit.