

DROP IN ARTICLE: STUDENTS

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While we all wish we could avoid the academic, social, and emotional pressures of school and stay in summer forever, sadly it can't be so. If the thought of going back to school fills you with dread and anxiety, you're not alone.

As if school wasn't stressful enough, there are situations like cyber-bullying, body shaming, community violence, abuse, troubles at home, pressure to use drugs, struggling with sexual identity, and more that can have you feeling all kinds of feels. It can be hard to keep your cool when you've got a lot going on emotionally.

Knowing how to react to emotions like fear, sadness, and anger can be tough. Of the 11-17-year olds who took MHA's Youth Screen: 69 percent said they often worry a lot, 68 percent said they often felt sad or unhappy, and 55 percent said they often felt irritable or angry. These emotions are often underneath the kind of actions that can get you into trouble.

If you have ever gotten in trouble at school, you know that it gets you the kind of attention you don't want, and generally ends up in being disciplined by through things like detention, suspension, expulsion, or even arrest. You might have realized that you were dealing with some complicated emotions before your behavior got out of hand.

Many students struggle to deal with negative emotions effectively. You may be in denial and refuse to accept that anything is wrong or that you may need help. You may not want to be around people or participate in activities. You might find yourself struggling with self-harm or turning to drugs or alcohol to cope with your pain; maybe you've taken it out on others and become a bully. These behaviors can often make difficult feelings even worse and may be signs and symptoms of an underlying mental health condition. If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health concern, there is hope and there is help.

Mental Health America (MHA) has developed tools and resources to teach you healthier ways to cope with the stressful environments and situations that you may be dealing with. These lessons are ones you can't put a grade on and will be useful to you for the rest of your life. Learn more at bit.ly/mhabts.

While you do not get to choose what happens to you, you do get to choose how you respond. This school year make smart choices about how to deal with difficult or uncomfortable feelings - and learn why your mental health matters.

Just like physical health, taking care of mental health struggles early can help to prevent more serious problems from developing in the future. If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental health problem, it is important to take action as soon as possible- before Stage 4. Start the conversation. Seek help from a trusted adult. Remember there is nothing to be ashamed of and that there is help and hope. Don't know how to start the conversation? MHA has tips and information to help get you started at bit.ly/tips4talking.

There are also serious signs that someone is in crisis and needs more immediate help. These include thoughts or plans of hurting oneself or another person. If you or someone you know is in crisis call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text "MHA" to 741741, or call 911.