

# Social/Emotional Health In Our Schools

Awareness, Intervention and Treatment

# It's OK to Talk About Mental Illness

## ❖ Stigma attached to Mental Health Diagnoses

- Due to stigma, negative attitudes about a group, and lack of understanding of what mental illness is, both students and educators are being left in the dark. This lack of clarity can lead students to feel isolated, misunderstood and even destructive
- In order to say *it's OK to talk about mental illness* we must first remind ourselves that mental illness can affect anyone, is not the result of character, personal defects, or poor upbringing and are treatable. When we can accurately point out, name and define mental illness we can have a common vocabulary to talk about it. By defining we demystify

# Mental Health By The Numbers

- ❖ **Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S.—43.8 million, or 18.5%—experiences mental illness in a given year**
- ❖ **Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S.—10 million, or 4.2%—experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities**
- ❖ **Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%**
- ❖ **1.1% of adults in the U.S. live with schizophrenia**
- ❖ **2.6% of adults in the U.S. live with bipolar disorder**
- ❖ **6.9% of adults in the U.S.—16 million—had at least one major depressive episode in the past year**
- ❖ **18.1% of adults in the U.S. experienced an anxiety disorder such as posttraumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and specific phobias**
- ❖ **Among the 20.2 million adults in the U.S. who experienced a substance use disorder, 50.5%—10.2 million adults—had a co-occurring mental illness**

# Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression

❖ Stress, Anxiety and Depression are most commonly seen in our students.

➤ Stress:

■ A reaction to a stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium. For our students this could mean any number of things

- Homework
- Tests
- Relationships
- Sports
- Friends
- Parents

➤ Our students are subjected to many stressors, it's the most prevalent social/emotional difficulty they face

# Stress

## ❖ What does stress look like?

### ➤ Emotional Symptoms:

- Lack of patience
- Feelings of sadness
- Feeling of being overwhelmed
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Difficulty coping with things

# Stress

## ❖ Cognitive Symptoms:

- Impaired concentration
- Trouble with remembering things, such as homework assignments or deadlines
- Chronic worrying
- Anxious thoughts or feelings
- Reduced or impaired judgment
- Impaired speech (mumbling or stuttering)
- Repetitive or unwanted thoughts

# Stress

## ❖ Behavioral Symptoms:

- Change in sleeping habits
- New or increased use of drugs, tobacco or drugs
- Nail biting
- Pacing
- Abnormal failure or delay to complete everyday responsibilities
- Significant change in school or work performance
- Unusual desire for social isolation
- Frequent lying
- Not getting along with peers, classmates or teachers

# Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression

## ❖ Anxiety:

- Anxiety is a general term that can cover several different types of disorders. All of them have nervousness, worry, fear, and apprehension in common. Sometimes the feelings can be overwhelming enough to manifest physical symptoms.
- What does anxiety look like?
  - Rapid heartbeat
  - Sweating
  - Problems with sleep
  - Inability to concentrate
  - Shortness of breath
  - Fidgeting
  - Fatigue

# Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression

## ❖ Depression

- Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest
- What does depression look like
  - Decreased mood and tearfulness
  - Decreased concentration
  - Decreased interest in activities that used to be pleasurable, like hobbies or socializing
  - Expressions of decreased self-esteem, like "I'm worthless," or "I'll never make it."

# Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression

## ❖ Signs of depression continued:

- Changes in sleep patterns, with difficulty sleeping or excessive sleep
- Decreased appetite
- Confusion or "not making sense"
- Falling grades
- Attempts to "treat" low mood or anxiety with alcohol or other drugs
- Suspiciousness about the intentions of others

# Other Significant Symptomology

- ❖ With Stress, Anxiety, and Depression, there is also significant risk of suicidality and self injurious behavior.
  - Self Injurious behavior (usually cutting) is a way to deal with emotional pain but can be the sign of a more significant mental illness
  - Can look like a suicide attempt
  - Usually on arms and legs, but can occur between toes, armpits or feet in order to keep hidden

# Self Injurious Behavior

- ❖ While cutting is the most prevalent form of self injurious behavior it can take other forms such as:
  - Carving
  - Branding
  - Marking
  - Biting
  - Head banging
  - Bruising
  - Hitting
  - Tattooing
  - Excessive body piercing

# Self Injurious Behavior

- ❖ What to look for:
  - Students who are more withdrawn than usual
  - Unexplained scars on arms or legs
  - Wearing long pants or long sleeves in hot weather

# Suicidality

- ❖ Students who become so despondent and feel like they've lost their attachment to things that were meaningful to them can express suicidal ideation (expressing they want to kill themselves)
  - This can look differently depending on student
  - “Wish I was dead” “Don't want to live anymore”
    - Statements like these need clarification with clinical staff
  - Giving things away

# Moving Forward

Should you encounter a student who is exhibiting any of the symptomology or warning signs described you should **immediately** refer them to one of the clinical staff in your building or the building they attend if they are not your student.

# District Resources

## ***Sleepy Hollow High School***

***Jennifer Kuhn, School Psychologist (332-6218)***

***Amy Walsh, School Social Worker (332-6278)***

## ***Sleepy Hollow Middle School***

***Dr. Maritza Cifre-Kerekes, School Psychologist (332-6254)***

***Jennifer Ramos, School Social Worker (332-5986)***

## ***Washington Irving School***

***Diana Longobucco, School Psychologist (631-9052)***

***Jacqueline Sanchez-Young, School Social Worker (631-2136)***

## ***WL Morse School***

***Dr. Ivette Lebenberg, School Psychologist (631-5148)***

***Amarilda Camaj, School Social Worker (631-5147)***

## ***John Paulding School***

***Anna Oliva, School Psychologist (332-6234)***

***Amarilda Camaj, School Social Worker (332-6234)***