

Healthy Living

Signs adolescents might be struggling with mental health

Adolescence can simultaneously be an exciting and challenging time for children. The World Health Organization defines adolescence as a transitional period children experience between the ages of 10 and 19. The physical changes and challenges of adolescence are widely recognized, but mental health also can be challenged during this pivotal period in a young person's life.

It's easy to mistake signs of mental health issues among adolescents as normal struggles that tend to affect all children at this point in their lives. However, the WHO reports that one in seven adolescents across the globe experiences a mental disorder, which is why it's so important that parents do not quickly dismiss signs of struggle as a normal part of adolescent life. Recognition of signs suggesting adolescents are struggling with mental health issues can increase the chances kids get the help they need.

Behavioral disorders
The WHO reports that behavioral disorders, which include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorder, are more common among younger adolescents than kids nearing the end of this period in their lives. Kids who have difficulty paying attention, are

excessively active and act without regard to consequences might be dealing with a behavioral disorder. Conduct disorder may compel children to exhibit destructive or challenging behaviors that compromise a child's ability to fulfill their academic potential. Conduct disorder also can increase a child's risk of engaging in criminal behavior.

Eating disorders
The WHO notes girls are more commonly affected by eating disorders than boys. These conditions, which include anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, tend to emerge during adolescence and are marked by abnormal eating patterns. Adolescents may exhibit an abnormal preoccupation with food and be particularly concerned about their body weight and the shape of their bodies. The WHO reports eating disorders often co-exist alongside other mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and even suicide.

Psychosis
Conditions marked by symptoms of psychosis, which can include hallucinations or delusions, tend to emerge in late adolescence or early adulthood. Participation in activities typical of daily life, such as school, are impaired by conditions indicative of psychosis.

Risk-taking behaviors

Some adolescents struggling with mental health turn to risk-taking behaviors in an effort to cope with their emotional challenges. The WHO reports that

young people are especially vulnerable to substance abuse when confronting mental health challenges during adolescence. Some adolescents also

look to risky sexual behavior as a means to coping with mental health issues during adolescence. Various mental health issues can arise

during adolescence. Parents are urged to be vigilant and observe children's behavior during this pivotal period in youngsters' lives.

Great workouts on days when a trip to the gym isn't feasible

The right workout routine can make a world of difference in a person's life. When people like their fitness regimens, they're more likely to commit to routine exercise, which can help reduce their risk for chronic diseases, make them less vulnerable to injury and improve their mental health.

No two people are the same, so a workout regimen that's enjoyable and effective for one person will not necessarily appeal to another individual. Some people have no qualms about exercising in a gym, where strength-training machines and cardiovascular equipment facilitate full-body workouts that promote healthy minds and bodies. But others find gyms intimidating or can't fit daily gym excursions into their schedules. Others may find working

out in the same facility each day a little boring. That's why it can be beneficial to find alternative means to exercising on those days when a trip to the gym isn't feasible or appealing.

• **Take to the trails.**
The great outdoors can be a gym unto itself. Various outdoor activities can build strength and promote cardiovascular health. Hiking is one such activity. According to Harvard Medical School, the uneven terrain hikers encounter on trails requires more energy to traverse, which in turn burns more calories than walking on level surfaces.

• **Commit to interval training.**
Interval training has long been recommended to busy adults with hectic schedules. Interval training is exercise that involves periodic short bursts of intense physical

activity followed by periods of rest or low-intensity activity. Interval training sessions tend to be shorter than moderate-intensity continuous training (MICT), but the periodic bursts of intense physical activity make interval training sessions highly effective workouts. In fact, a 2021 study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health found that interval training provides similar health and performance benefits as MICT. Challenging hikes can mimic the effects of interval training, as can additional activities such as jumping rope, cycling and swimming that do not necessarily need to be performed at a gym.

• **Embrace your inner yogi.**
Yoga is another physical activity tailor-made for busy adults who don't have time to get to the gym each day. The characterization of yoga as a niche activity is no longer applicable, as participation among males in the United States alone grew

from four million in 2012 to 14 million in 2022, according to Yogkulam.org. Though global participation figures are hard to determine, market projections estimating the valuation of the yoga industry at \$215 billion in 2025 are a testament to the popularity of this activity, which Johns Hopkins Medicine credits with improving strength, balance and flexibility. Yoga also has become increasingly accessible since the pandemic, as Yogkulam.org notes 40 percent of yoga practitioners prefer virtual classes available through platforms such as YouTube that can be streamed from the comforts of home.

There's no shortage of ways to fit exercise into your daily schedule, even on days when a trip to the gym is not in the cards.

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