



Raising Healthy Teens

Promoting the Health & Safety
of Rhode Island Teens

Winter 2018



Changing Direction and Thinking on Mental Health and Well-being

America is at a crossroads when it comes to how society addresses mental health.
One in five citizens have a diagnosable mental health condition.

The Campaign to Change Direction initiative is a collection of concerned citizens, nonprofit leaders, and leaders from the private sector who have come together to change the culture about mental health, mental illness, and wellness.

Regional prevention coalitions across the State have adopted this program to offer information on how to recognize the signs of emotional distress and direct people to local resources.

Mental Health Concerns and Impact

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), mental disorders are common in the United States and internationally as well.

- An estimated 5 million Americans ages 18 and older — about one in five adults — experience a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. (*SAMHSA 2014*)
- One-half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, three-quarters by age 24. (*NIMH 2005*)
- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20 to 25 percent of homeless people in the US has some form of severe mental illness. (*SAMHSA 2009*)

- In 2011, more people died by suicide in the US (39,518) than in motor vehicle crashes (32,367). (*CDC 2011; NHTSA 2011 Annual Report File*)
- For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death. (*NAMI 2011*)

Five Signs of Emotional Suffering

There is a simple pledge that anyone can do. Learn the Five Signs of emotional suffering so you can recognize them in yourself or help a loved one who may be in emotional pain. Often our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help.

The Five Signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help are:



Personality changes. You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.

continued next page

Changing Direction – *continued from page 1*

Uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.



You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.

Withdrawal or isolation from other people. Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.

May neglect self-care and engage in risky behavior.

You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.

Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by circumstances. Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about?



That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

Helping Someone Else or Yourself

If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, you can be the difference in getting them the help they need. It's important to take care of yourself when you are supporting someone through a difficult time, as this may stir up difficult emotions. If it does, please don't hesitate to reach out for support for yourself.



Learn more at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Never keep it a secret if a friend tells you about a plan to hurt themselves. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to find out what resources are available in your area, or encourage your loved one to call.

Learn The Healthy Habits Of Emotional Well-Being!

The Campaign to Change Direction offers simple, clear messages that everyone can understand. Just as we practice healthy habits to help prevent heart attacks, the Campaign encourages us to Learn the Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-being.

Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-being

- Take care**
Eat well, sleep well, exercise
- Check in**
With family, friends & counselors
- Engage**
You can't be healthy emotionally if your relationships aren't
- Relax**
Be active, meditate, garden, dance, love, cook, sing...
- Know**
Know the Five Signs of emotional suffering

the campaign to changedirection. www.changedirection.org

Managing Holiday and Exam Stress for Teens

As December rolls around each year, the stress and demands of our everyday lives takes a dramatic uptick. The holidays create increases in shopping, social demands and financial pressures.

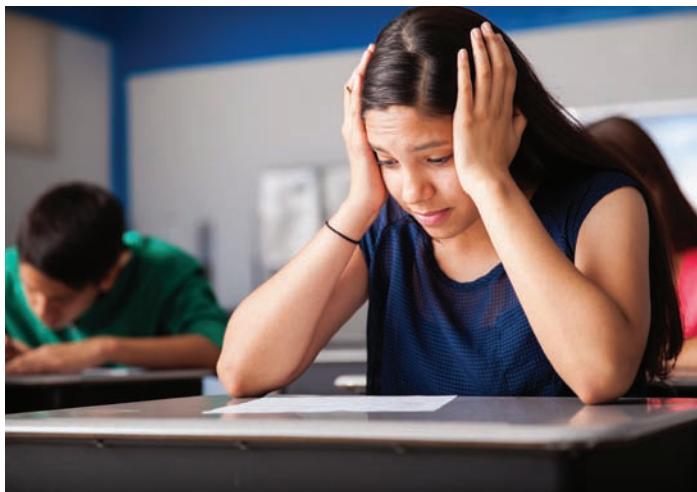
There is also the planning for school breaks, and juggling work and family calendars. With all this pressure on adults, and parents in particular, we need to recognize the extra stress on our often-overextended teens.

Here are a few ideas to help teens prepare for the holiday season and ways to find joy instead of pressure, for all in the family.

■ **Say “No”** Say no to things that don't bring joy or add value. When everyone is overtaxed and running on residual energy, it's best to pick what will refuel you — so be selective in your commitments for your family and teen.

■ **Manage Company** Manage the number of visitors and length of togetherness. Have an agreement to how the holidays will be split across your family. Be a strong role model on how to manage relationships and reduce being overextended. Tune into your teen's need for quiet or alone time. Practice self-care, and share that example and expectations with your teen.

■ **Give Back** It seems counter to our advice, but find time to volunteer as a family. It's a great way to bring perspective to our life's blessings, and teach empathy and compassion.



Test Success The year-end exam period typically coincides with pre-holiday activities. Make sure your teen is getting rest, eating healthy, exercising, and experiencing some peacefulness and balance at home. Stay tuned to your teen's calendar and help them with time management. Talk about their schedule, and possible need for after-class help or a tutor to allow them to be ahead of the study curve. Good study habits build confidence, reduce stress and enhance results.

The holiday season can be a wonderful bonding time with your teen. Set associated limits to manage stress and keep a balance for a joyous experience for all. Establishing your own holiday traditions can set the tone for what works best for your family – and as parents, keep true to your family's agreements and commitments for the happiness of everyone.

RI RESOURCES

BH Link Hotline — 401-414-LINK (414-5465)
24/7 call center connecting people to care and resources.

National Suicide Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (273-8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

Samaritans www.samaritansri.org/our-programs/hotline

Change Direction (Mental/Emotional Health)
www.changedirection.org/

RI Smoker's Helpline 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)
Tobacco Free RI www.tobaccofree-ri.org/

Alcoholics Anonymous (401) 438-8860
www.rhodeisland-aa.org

Parents Support Network of RI
(401) 467-6855 or (800) 483-8844 www.psnri.org

DRUGS 101

What Parents Should Know



Cough Medicine Abuse by Teens

You might believe you are covered in talking to your teen about alcohol, marijuana and maybe even juuling, but often overlooked is the abuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. You think of these safely in your medicine cabinet ready for a simple family illness. What you might not realize is the alarming increase in misuse of OTC medicines.

As a simple definition, OTC medicines can be sold without a prescription, and the misuse comes in taking it not as directed or when not needed. One of the more common medicines being abused is dextromethorphan (DXM), a cough suppressant found in many OTC cold medicines. It is being abused by swallowing large amounts or mixed with soft drinks. It's called "robo-tripping" or "skittling." Most teens don't realize OTC medicines can be addictive or you can overdose on medicines that contain DXM. They believe them to be "safe" since they are "only OTC" medicines. OTC medicine when taken in excess can provide stimulation to intoxication, similar to the effects of alcohol or marijuana.

According to the *Partnership for Drug Free Kids*, approximately 1 in 30 kids have abused OTC cough medicines to get high, with 1 in 4 kids knowing someone that has done this. With these alarming statistics, and the ease of purchase and access, it's time to talk to our teens about the dangers of abusing OTC medicines.

The Benefits of Making Family Dinners a Priority



When parents with college-aged kids or older talk about the connections and wonderful conversations they have, we know it doesn't happen magically. It's the result of daily

family time together. Commitment to open communication — and truly listening — creates honest dialogue and keeps parents as a key influence and confidante in their lives.

The pace of our lives, especially once kids are in middle and high school, makes it more challenging to have a seated meal, but this is the stage when it's truly important. Find a way to make dinner time together a priority as often as possible.

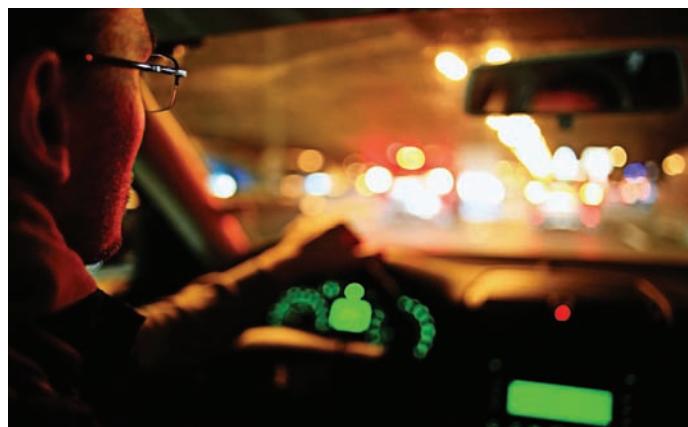
- Talk about your day, positives and challenges, and roll into the happenings of your child's day. Don't force the conversation, make it fun and pressure-free.
- Ask open-ended questions for expanded dialogue and listen for topics that might be better discussed privately.
- Notice any changes in your teen, and allow for it to be a time to talk about important issues, such as substance use and your shared values as a family.
- Family meals can be healthier and have a far-reaching impact on overall health and wellness. Keep it simple. Take-out can be helpful when timeframes are tight.
- Be fully engaged. Electronically disconnect from screens (including TV) during this time together. Music can be a positive mood enhancer to relax and have fun.

Numerous studies show that families that eat together have stronger communication, providing immeasurable dividends. Remind your family that this is one of the most important periods of the day for support, connections, trust and love. The groundwork you set will allow your dinner table to be a place they can look forward to coming home to for acceptance, openness and understanding.

Impaired Driving Shouldn't Be Part of the Holidays

The holidays can be a season of overindulgence — which often includes increased consumption and availability of alcohol. When we are celebrating, we need to remember to be role models for our children as well as others. We know the truth behind the adage of "actions speak louder than words" — which is especially relevant for teens.

When planning holiday logistics, be sure to include safe driving by using a designated driver that does not drink at all. Being a positive role model for safe behavior will help teens learn to set limits. Talk to your teen about impaired driving accidents in the news. A story with life-changing results makes an impact.



When hosting parties with alcohol, maintain a policy of no underage drinking — even if there are parents that allow it. Make sure alcohol is not easily accessible and keep tabs to make sure it is not being misused. Support local liquor stores and police in establishing and enforcing strict rules and punishments.

With many states decriminalizing marijuana, including Rhode Island, we are seeing more impaired driving involving the drug. Talk to your teen about the effects of driving under the influence of marijuana — slower decision-making, a decrease in peripheral vision and reduced ability to multitask — all critical driving skills. Agree on a plan with your teen to get a safe ride home from you if their planned ride is impaired.

Holidays are a time to celebrate so let's include the planning and necessary precautions to make them safe, and an opportunity to model the best behavior for our teens and community.



**Rhode Island
Regional Coalitions**

Prevention and Health Promotion for Life.

For more information on your regional coalition, please visit us at www.riprevention.org

The Coalitions are federally funded organizations providing leadership for youth substance use prevention and mental health promotion.

