

THE SEL BUZZ



Mental Health Matters

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What do you think of when you hear "mental health"?
What do you think when you hear "mental illness"?

Like physical health, everyone has mental health. Physical health is the state of your body, and mental health is the state of your mind, feelings, emotions, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

A mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood over a long period of time. A mental illness can deeply impact day-to-day living and coping with work, relationships, and other demands. But in most cases, those symptoms can be managed with a combination of medications and talk therapy (psychotherapy).

Being "mentally healthy" does not necessarily mean the absence of illnesses. All of us will have our struggles from time to time, but good mental health helps us bounce back and stay in control when times get tough. Being in a state of good mental health allows us to maintain healthy relationships as well as our physical well-being. Plus, we make solid life choices that are for the betterment of ourselves and those around us.

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Poor Mental Health - Warning Signs

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling confused, forgetful, irritable, angry, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting
- Experiencing severe mood swings
- Persistent thoughts/memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks

As a parent, oftentimes you wonder how you can help. Here are 8 ways you can help support a student experiencing a mental health concern.

1. **Create rituals of communication and safe spaces to talk** - Whether it's family dinner, family game night, talking on the ride to school, or a nightly check-in before bed, having regular times to ask open-ended questions and to listen to your children is important.
2. **Make sure your child has downtime** - We all need this, and children particularly need it. Be sure they aren't overscheduled; make sure that there is time for them to do things they enjoy.
3. **Encourage healthy media habits** - One of the things kids enjoy these days is being on their devices, which can be fun and connect them to friends, but can also contribute to problems with mental health. Talk to your child about how they use media.



4. **Make sure your child is getting enough sleep (9 to 10 hours) and exercise (60 minutes daily)** - Both are very important for mental health as well as physical health and can help lessen anxiety.
 5. **Keep in touch with teachers, coaches, and other adults in your child's life** - Not only may they have information about your child that you need, but they can also play an important supportive role. Open lines of communication with them can make a difference — and help to create community, which we all need.
 6. **Try to make your home a judgment-free safe haven** - This doesn't mean you can't and shouldn't have expectations about behavior or grades. Do your best to listen more than you talk; be empathetic and forgiving.
 7. **Pay attention to your own mental health** - Children pay more attention to what parents do than what they say. Take care of yourself.
 8. **Pay attention to the warning signs**
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Mental Health at Pegasus

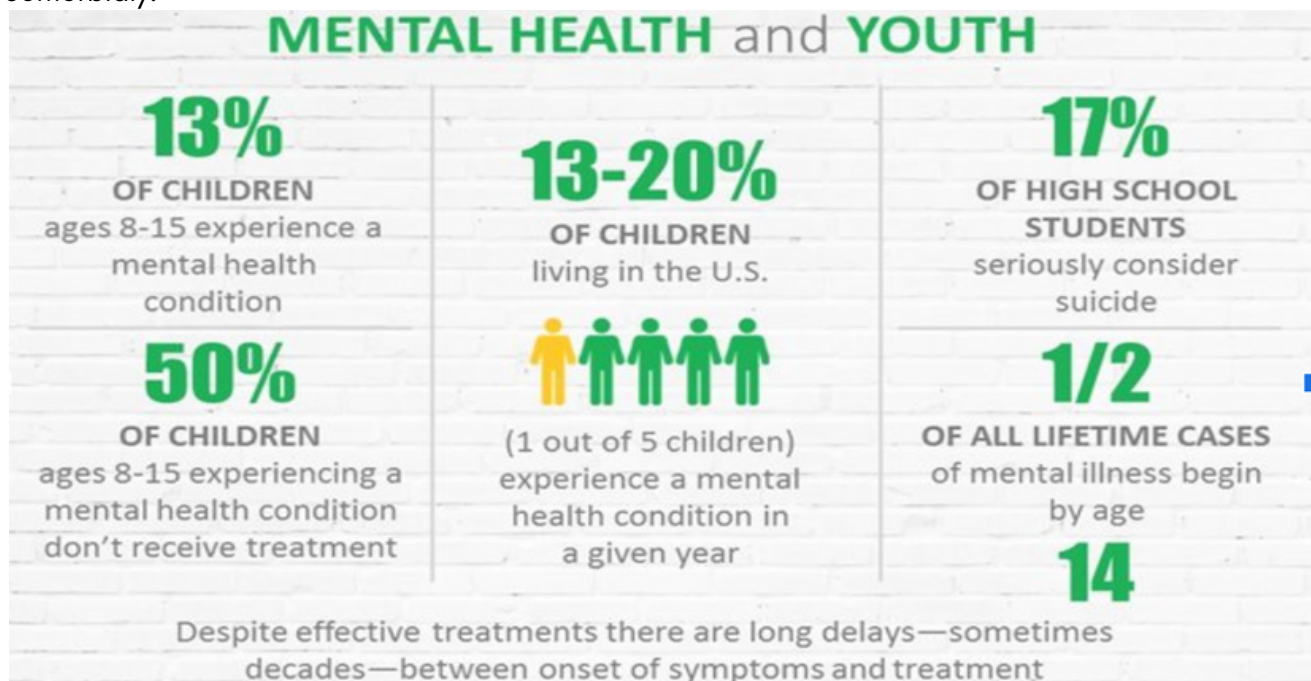
At Pegasus, about 7 percent of our students have a diagnosed mental health illness or are neurodiverse. These statistics only represent the students that we are aware of and have been formally diagnosed. Among children between the ages of 8 years and 15 years old, in the United States, almost 20% have a mental illness. That is 1 in 5 children according to the CDC (01/22). A fraction of those diagnosed are receiving care and many go undiagnosed.

The mental health issues Pegasus students experience most include anxiety-related disorders, depression, ADHD, and eating disorders. ADHD and anxiety-based disorders (i.e., social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, perfectionistic characteristics, panic, OCD, etc.) are the most prominent at Pegasus. Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder are also seen at Pegasus. Although these diagnoses are not considered mental health illnesses, students with these diagnoses are more at risk and mental illnesses often occur comorbidly.



Strategies for Positive Mental Health

- Talk about your feelings or write them down
- Be active = exercise
- Eat well
- Get enough sleep
- Value yourself
- Be present = Mindfulness
- Surround yourself with good people
- Do something you enjoy
- Set realistic goals
- Practice gratitude
- Be kind to yourself/others and to your future self
- Seek help (i.e., counselor, educational psychologist, etc.)



Resources

1. Mental health explained - [video](#)
2. 988 - Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
3. [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
4. [The Mayo Clinic](#)
5. [The National Institute of Mental Health](#)
6. [Child Mind Institute](#)
7. [Teen Mental Health](#)
8. Samhsas National Hotline (treatment and referral info) - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
9. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
10. HELLO- National Text Line 741-741