



Jun 27, 2023

Report:

Tackling the Alarming Increase in Youth Mental Distress: Preventing Suicide and Bullying

Introduction:

This report emphasizes the urgent need to address the escalating levels of mental distress among teenage girls and LGBTQ+ youth. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) highlight concerning trends in mental well-being, underscoring the importance of proactive measures to prevent suicide and bullying. The report also explores the role of schools, parents, teachers, mentors, and nonprofit organizations in educating and supporting youth to tackle these challenges.

Disturbing Trends in Mental Distress:

1.1 Teen Girls:

The latest data from the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in 2021 reveals a significant increase in sexual violence, sadness, and hopelessness among teen girls. Approximately one in five teen girls experienced sexual violence in the past year, indicating a worrisome surge compared to 2017. Forced sexual encounters were reported by more than one in ten teen girls, demonstrating a concerning rise since monitoring began.

Depressive symptoms among teen girls have also reached alarming levels, with three in five reporting persistent sadness and hopelessness in 2021. This represents a substantial increase from a decade ago. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the mental health challenges faced by adolescent girls.



1.2 Suicide Rates:

Multiple factors contribute to an increased risk of suicide among young people, including depression, substance use disorder, and poor academic performance. The YRBS data reveals a significant rise in suicidal ideation and attempts among teen girls. In 2021, more than one in four girls reported seriously considering suicide, representing a notable increase over the past decade. Additionally, over one in ten girls reported attempted suicide in 2021, indicating a similar upward trend. Notably, alcohol use was found to be higher among girls than boys, underscoring the need for tailored mental health support for this demographic.

LGBQ+ Teens:

The YRBS data also sheds light on the challenges faced by LGBQ+ youth, who are more susceptible to violence victimization, suicide risk, and other severe outcomes compared to their heterosexual peers. While the 2021 survey did not collect data on gender identity, previous research indicates that transgender young people face even greater challenges, including higher levels of violence, stigma, and mental health problems.

In 2021, safety concerns led more than one in ten LGBQ+ students to skip school, while nearly one in four experienced sexual violence, and almost a quarter were victims of bullying at school. Disturbingly, nearly half of LGBQ+ students seriously contemplated suicide, almost a quarter attempted suicide, and three out of four reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Additionally, one in five LGBQ+ students reported using illicit drugs.

The Role of Education and Support:

To address the rising levels of mental distress among youth, What Makes You Feel Beautiful plays a vital role in providing education, prevention, and support services. It is essential to educate students about suicide and bullying prevention, fostering self-love and well-being. Additionally, parents, teachers, mentors, community leaders, and nonprofit organizations must collaborate to promote mental health awareness and provide resources for youth.

What Makes You Feel Beautiful is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is dedicated to empowering girls and women to cultivate self-love at every age and phase of life through education, mentorship, and resources that help them develop self-love, self-esteem, personal development and confidence.



Vision Statement:

Our vision is a world where all girls and women feel confident, empowered, and safe in their own skin, and where self-love is celebrated and embraced as an essential part of personal well-being and growth.

Core Values:

- **Self-Love:** We believe that self-love is the foundation of personal growth, that every person has the potential to cultivate it and that cultivating self-love is essential to building confidence and resilience.
- **Inclusivity:** We embrace diversity and recognize that everyone has unique experiences and perspectives that should be respected and celebrated regardless of age, race, gender, size or background.
- **Empowerment:** We are committed to empowering girls and women to take charge of their lives, make informed decisions, and reach their full potential.
- **Education:** We believe that education is key to personal growth and development, and we strive to provide girls and women with the tools they need to cultivate self-love and confidence.
- **Community:** We believe in the power of community and support networks to create lasting change, and we strive to build a community of girls and women who can uplift and inspire each other.

Beliefs Statement:

- We believe that self-love is essential for personal growth, happiness, and success.
- We believe that every girl and woman has the right to feel confident and beautiful, regardless of societal norms or beauty standards.
- We believe that education and resources are critical in empowering girls and women to cultivate self-love and develop a positive body image.
- We believe that when girls and women feel beautiful and confident, they are more likely to achieve their goals and make positive contributions to their communities.



- We believe in the importance of building a supportive and inclusive community that celebrates and uplifts the diversity and beauty of all individuals.
- We believe that every person has the potential to cultivate self-love and confidence, regardless of their past experiences or circumstances.

F.L.Y. First Love Yourself Youth Program for girls 13-17:

Our mission with the F.L.Y. program is to empower girls to develop a strong sense of self-love, self-esteem, and confidence by providing a safe and supportive environment for personal growth and development. Our vision is to create a world where every girl feels confident, valued, and loved. We believe that by cultivating self-love, girls can overcome challenges, pursue their dreams, and live fulfilling lives.

Our Goals:

- To empower girls to love themselves and build healthy self-esteem.
- To create a safe and supportive community where girls can connect and learn from one another.
- To provide workshops, classes, mentorship, and group sessions that promote self-love and personal development.
- To encourage girls to pursue their passions and dreams with confidence.
- To reduce stress and anxiety among young girls by promoting self-care and mindfulness practices.
- To create a positive and lasting impact on the lives of young girls, their families, and their communities.

Our program is designed to help girls build resilience, develop leadership skills, and cultivate a positive mindset that will serve them throughout their lives.

Conclusion:

The alarming increase in mental distress among teenage girls and LGBTQ+ youth necessitates immediate action. Efforts should focus on comprehensive support systems that prioritize mental health education, prevention, and intervention. By working together, we can create a safer and healthier environment for our youth, empowering them to overcome challenges and thrive mentally and emotionally.



Blog

<https://www.wmyfb.org/post/addressing-the-alarming-rise-of-girls-youth-mental-distress-preventing-suicide-and-bullying-on-maui>