TAY TIPS



TRANSITIONING TODAY'S YOUTH INTO ADULTHOOD



Increasing Social and IN THIS Emotional Well-being ISSUE...

Increasing social and emotional well-being in transitional-aged youth (TAY) can be a helpful tool in assisting them with their transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Understanding different aspects of adolescence that can affect social and emotional well-being, and ways to intervene can be a powerful tool for the TAY themselves, their family members and caretakers, and professionals involved with their care.

This issue of *TAY Tips* is devoted to identifying different issues that adolescents and young adults face. Additionally, potential interventions to minimize negative, as well as maximize positive effects will be presented.

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Building self-esteem and self-confidence

Everyone has the right to feel good about themselves, but when a young adult struggles with self-esteem and self-confidence issues, the difficult nature of transitioning into adulthood can be greatly impacted in a negative manner. Low self-esteem and self-confidence seem to be a prevalent problem; particularly among those who struggle with mental heath issues. While self-confidence and self-esteem cannot be elevated overnight, there are several things that can be done that will help over time.

- 1. Decrease negative or critical thinking, and replace such thoughts with more positive or realistic thoughts.
- 2. Practice self-care that includes healthy eating habits, getting enough sleep, and incorporating physical activities or hobbies that make you feel good.
- 3. Set realistic goals and break them into smaller steps so that progress can be seen, even before the overall goal is met.
- 4. View mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures.
- 5. Build positive relationships with trusted adults and peers.
- 6. Reward accomplishments, no matter how small.

www.orangecounty.net

Resource for finding activities and events throughout Orange County; including recreation, sports, arts, and music.

www.ymcaoc.org

YMCA of Orange County, opportunities and activities for youth and adults.

www.orangecountykidsactivities.com

Website with links to a wide variety of activities for youth and young adults.

www.bgca.org

Boys and Girls Club of America. Link to your local Boys and Girls club to find local activities and opportunities for youth and young adults.

www.mhaoc.org

Mental Health Association of Orange County has programs such as the Clubhouse with social, recreational activities, education and programs for mental health consumers, as well as a mentoring program for 16-25 year-olds.

www.ocapica.org/about_programs.asp

Activities that include afterschool programs, martial arts, youth coffeehouse, and a youth newspaper for youth and young adults to become involved with their community through the Orange County Asian & Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA).

Friendships and Peer Pressure

Helpful information for parents and caretakers

Adolescence is a time when peers play an increasingly important and central role in the lives of youth. Their relationships begin to become more exclusive, intimate, and more constant compared to earlier years.

Adolescence is also a time when individuals begin to negotiate taking on more mature roles, as well as formulating a self-identity that is increasingly independent from their family or caretakers. The shift that occurs during adolescence toward more autonomy from the family and increased closeness with peers is often the source of conflict within families. Providing parents, caretakers, and other professionals working with young adults a better understanding of the normative process that takes place and roles they can play more successfully negotiate this period may be critical in fostering a positive transition.

The pressures from peers are complex and can influence individuals in both positive and negative ways. Negative peer pressure tends to get a lot of attention, particularly when adolescents act out. However, focusing more attention on building a youth's self-esteem and social skills necessary to build positive peer relationships may be more beneficial to the teen in the long run. This may be especially important for young adults who are marginalized or have difficulties connecting with their peer group.

Maria Guzman, Ph.D., a specialist in adolescent development offered some useful information in a 2007 publication entitled *Friendships, peer influence, and peer pressure during the teen years*:

Facts about teen-parent relationships during adolescence:

- Parent relationships are not necessarily undermined by peer relationships
- While it seems that teens are influenced by their peers, parents continue to be the most influential factor in their lives.
- Parent-adolescent conflict increases between childhood and early adolescence; although in most families its frequency and intensity remain low.
- Parents who continue to communicate with their teens, even when there are conflicts, actually maintain closer relationships.

Facts about teen friendships:

- Teens often have multiple layers and groups of friendships.
- Peer friendships are dynamic.
- Peers tend to choose those who are similar to themselves.
- Peer friendships can be a healthy venue for positive youth development.

Strategies for Coping with Peer Pressure:

- Nurture teens' abilities and self-esteem so that they are equipped to foster positive peer relationships and deflect negative pressures.
- Encourage positive relationships between significant adults and teens.
- Encourage diverse relationships.
- Support parent education programs for families with teenagers.
- Equip youth with skills necessary to resist negative behaviors, as well as to make good decisions.
- Teach youth exit strategies of ways to say "no" to negative pressures.

Dating Violence

(from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center)

It is difficult to report on the prevalence rates of dating violence among youth, because different studies and surveys ask about it in different ways. Some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about psychological and emotional abuse and sexual violence. Some ask about dating violence over the lifetime, while others only ask about the current relationship or the past year. Past estimates of physical and sexual dating violence among high school students typically range from 10% to 25%, and estimates for college students range from 20 to 30% (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Not surprisingly, even higher estimates are found when verbal threats and emotional abuse are considered (Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996).

Signs of teen dating violence

- 1. General signs and symptoms of distress that could be caused by dating violence or other stressful life circumstances (e.g., depression, anxiety, abdominal pain, sudden changes in relationships with family and friends or in functioning at school, and drug and alcohol abuse)
- 2. Specific signs and symptoms that are more specific to intentional injury, including dating violence (e.g., contusions; abrasions; lacerations; fractures, burns, multiple injuries, and a pattern of injury over time. Be suspicious if the stated explanation doesn't seem to be consistent with the injury.)

Treating Victims of Teen Dating Violence

- Treat physical injuries and sexual assault compassionately and thoroughly
- Speak with adolescent privately, taking an accurate history
- Communicate support and empathy to the patient
- Because many adolescents, both girls and boys, accept physical and sexual aggression as normal in dating relationships, it is important to talk with the patient about the types of behavior they should expect in intimate relationships and to present an alternative perspective.
- Assess potential for recurrent danger. Assess changes in the severity and frequency of the violence; weapons used or available; threats to kill; forced or threatened sexual acts; separation or break-up; drug or alcohol abuse; and history of suicide attempts.
- Help the patient to plan for safety and to get needed support. Offer information about legal resources, such as restraining orders, mandatory arrest, the police, and calling 911. Also provide information about community services, such as youth services, support groups, and legal advocacy. Encourage the patient to develop a specific safety plan.
- Make a referral, if necessary, to a medical or mental health specialist.
- Comply with all legal reporting mandates.

References:

Wekerle, C. & Wolfe, D. A. (1999). Dating violence in mid-adolescence: Theory, significance, and emerging prevention initiatives. Clinical Psychology Review, 19(4), 435-456.

Bullying

Unfortunately, bulling is a common occurrence among students in high school. Bullies, victims, and bully-victims (individuals who have engaged in bullying and who have been victims of bullying) are all at an increased risk for depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, and substance abuse.

Bullies tend to target individuals who are marginalized b their peers, and typically include individuals who look different, have a lower social status, who have disabilities or who have different religious or ethnic backgrounds. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals are also at a higher risk for being bullied.

Traditionally, bulling has been viewed as physical aggression, verbal insults or attacks, gossiping, and rumor spreading that can damage someone's reputation. With modern technology, bullying has spread to the cyberworld and can include threatening e-mails, instant messages, and more commonly, posting information on social networks such as MySpace.

Ways to help victims:

- Increase their ability to ignore or walk away from the bully
- Increase their anger management skills so not to aggress back
- Increase self-confidence and self-esteem
- Encourage help-seeking behaviors trusted adults, counselors, or authorities if warranted
- Building positive family and peer relationships

Ways to help bullies:

- Find constructive outlets for anger
- Increase anger management skills
- Increase social skills
- Increase self-confidence and self-esteem
- Build positive family and peer relationships



Protecting Online Identity and Reputation

Many young adults may not recognize the risk associates with online identities. Consequences can be damaging to both their social relationships, as well as potential job or educational opportunities. Many employers check online social networks and forums when making hiring decisions and inappropriate language or pictures can inhibit a young adult's chances of getting a position. Educate and encourage young adults to use the internet responsibly and make protecting their online identity and reputation a priority.

Things young adults should know to protect themselves when online:

- 1. **Nothing posted online is temporary.** Once something is posted (text, images, videos, audio, etc) viewers can copy, save, and forward the information even after the information has been taken down.
- 2. Set all profiles to "Private". Only allow people you know and trust to access your profiles, and make sure to review all security settings to ensure you are protecting yourself. For example, some social forums have the right to use any photos posted by you in advertisements, unless you set your privacy settings to disallow this practice.
- 3. **Keep passwords safe and private and change them often.** Choose passwords that cannot be guessed (i.e. birthday, pets name, etc.), and change them often to avoid your online identity from being stolen. Never share passwords with anyone, including best friends, boyfriends, or girlfriends.
- 4. **Never post inappropriate content including pictures, comments, videos, or audio.** Even if your profile is set to private, content can still be copied and forwarded without your knowledge. You wouldn't want to loose a job or educational opportunity based on this happening.
- 5. **Google yourself to check your "digital footprint".** You never know what might be out there about you unless you check.



Goal Setting

Goal setting seems like a simple task, but follow-through is often a difficult task for many young adults. Self-esteem and self-confidence can be strengthened when an individual is able to successfully set and accomplish attainable goals. Assisting young adult clients with formulating realistic and clearly defined goals that are broken into manageable steps, with timelines, and a plan for overcoming potential obstacles can be very helpful in developing their skills for increased independence and personal responsibility. Metaphorically, their goals are like a planned road trip in which you plan for unexpected obstacles or detours; they are in the driver's seat when it comes to their future.

A simple form like the one below can be helpful, or a good interactive version done on the computer can be found at:

http://kidshealth.org/teen/misc/making_a_change_module.html

My Goals:		
Goal 1:	Goal 2:	Goal 3:
Goal Completion date:	Goal Completion date:	Goal Completion date:
Steps to achieve this goal:	Steps to achieve this goal:	Steps to achieve this goal:
2		2.
4	4	4
Obstacles to achieving my goal:	Obstacles to achieving my goal:	Obstacles to achieving my goal:
Plan to overcome obstacles:	Plan to overcome obstacles:	Plan to overcome obstacles:

Time Management

Notes	Monday	Thursday
	7	7
	8	8
	9	9
	10	
	11 12	<u>11</u> 12
	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
	5	<u>4</u> 5
	6	6
ABC Prioritized Task List	7	7
	Tuesday	Friday
	7	7
	9	9
	10	10
	11	11
	12	12
	1	1
	3	3
	4	4
	5	5
	6	6
		7
	Wednesday	Saturday
Date People to Call	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	Cundou
	12	Sunday
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

Time management skills can be a pivotal skill needed for a successful transition into adulthood. Young adults need to be capable of maintaining a structured schedule so that they are more likely to take care of their responsibilities, but still have time for fun and leisure activities. A daily routine with set times for sleeping, eating, and prescribed medication can play a big role in the successful management of mental health symptoms as well.

Young adults need to be able to differentiate between things they "have to do" to reach their goals and stay emotionally and physically healthy, and things they "want to do" that may be less of a priority. Have young adults make a list that prioritizes their Have To's and Want To's that is in sync with their goals and responsibilities. It can also be helpful to identity activities considered time wasters and replace them with more constructive activities. When

prioritizing, make sure that there is a balance between productive time and leisure time – we all need "Me Time" to be at our best.

Having a calendar or planner, no matter how simple, that is kept up can greatly increase the likelihood of increased time management responsibilities.