



Teen Speak

Family Relationships and Mental Health Risk

One of the greatest protective factors
for a teen is their family!



Parent-teen relationships have strong effects on a teen's overall health and continue to impact their health over time as they become adults.

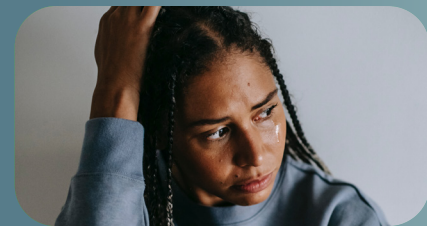
Family connection alone can contribute to teens flourishing, and the amount teens flourish increases with increasing levels of family strength and connection.

The stronger the family connection, the more teens will flourish.

Supporting Teens is More Important Than Ever

Teen mental health has continued to worsen over time. In 2019, more than 1 in 3 high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, a 40% increase as compared to 2009, and approximately 1 in 6 youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year, representing a 44% increase as compared to 2009. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these trends. An October 2021 fact sheet from the White House reported suicide as the second leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 24, and CDC analyses indicated that in 2021 more than a third (37%) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and 44% of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless in the past year.

Mental health is also the largest risk factor for a teen's participation in other unhealthy behaviors. When at least one mental health risk factor (like depression or anxiety) is present, teens are significantly more likely to engage in substance abuse and risky sexual behaviors.



**40% increase in feelings
of sadness or hopelessness**



**44% increase in
planning suicide**

The Power of Strong Family Relationships

Strong family relationships, and specifically strong parent-teen relationships, can help to ease the effects of both teen risks and harmful childhood experiences. When teens believe their parents don't care and have difficulty talking with their parents about their problems, they are more likely to have behavioral and emotional health issues. In contrast, greater parent-teen relationship satisfaction has been associated with a lower risk of mental illness, a lower risk of eating disorders, a lower risk of overweight or obesity, and a lower risk of marijuana use.

A variety of factors in the parent-teen relationship have been associated with positive teen health:

- ✓ Parental warmth
- ✓ Parent-teen communication
- ✓ Time spent together
- ✓ Relationship fulfillment
- ✓ Parental involvement

Family dinners have been associated with fewer depressive symptoms and lower risk of certain sexual risk behaviors.

Strengthening the parent-teen relationship supports improvements in teen mental and physical health and social and occupational functioning. Even with early hardships in childhood, **a supportive, safe, stable, and nurturing parent-teen relationship leads to positive outcomes.**



Learn how you can best prepare your team to strengthen family relationships in the communities you serve with our Teen Speak resources:

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Citations

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