

(7/23/25) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

(1) *Students' Misguided Use of Social Media and Chatbots*

(2) *Understanding what worries youth*

And, as always, you will find

(3) *Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education*

**This community of practice *Practitioner* is designed
for a screen bigger than an iPhone.**

For discussion and interchange

>*Students' Misguided Use of Social Media and Chatbots*

Personal computer technology has become a multifaceted intervention tool. Advanced technology offers resources for improving almost every facet of efforts to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development. Technology is expanding, exponentially. “Telehealth” is on the rise (e.g., using online or phone interactions to teach, consult, and provide health information and care). At the same time, student use, misuse, and abuse of social media and chatbots are raising serious concerns that folks are struggling to address.

From: *School Counselors Worry About Students' Misguided Use of Social Media*

Social media platforms like Instagram, X and TikTok have become landscapes for learning and increasing awareness of topics like mental health. But for children who are learning how to navigate virtual spaces, the pitfalls are many and hidden. Educators and researchers are becoming increasingly worried how much kids are absorbing the digital information they find online about mental health, which they are unlikely to fully grasp even if the information is trustworthy.

“I have had sixth graders who will come into my office and we’ll be talking about something and they’ll say, ‘Well, yes, because of my anxiety.’ And I’ll say, ‘Oh, I didn’t know that you were diagnosed with anxiety. Did you go to a doctor and get a diagnosis?’ And they will say, ‘No, I’ve just been watching a lot of TikTok videos and I think that I have anxiety’,”

[Hanna Kemble, elementary school counselor and leader coordinator in Kansas]

School counselors across the country describe similar experiences. Schoolchildren are using social media to diagnose themselves with a mental illness or psychological issue.

For many counselors, the prevalence of children using social media to self-diagnose suggests a larger problem related to lasting social and emotional impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, unregulated virtual spaces and the importance of teaching media literacy skills. Technology may pose solutions, too: some counselors say they are changing how they connect with students and are testing out artificial intelligence platforms.

Among youth, “at least one in three have looked for mental health information on social media sites such as YouTube (38 percent) and TikTok (34 percent),” according to a 2024 Common Sense Media report, the nonprofit dedicated to media research and advocacy. ...

Jamie Nunez, senior manager at Common Sense Media, warns that using social media during times of emotional challenges can be especially dangerous for schoolchildren as virtual algorithms regurgitate similar content and increase the potential for children to engage with inaccurate or troubling information. “Social media companies do play a role in feeding content to our kids that can be concerning,” said Nunez. “The child will not only get things like how to address a symptom or

what a particular mental health related issue might be, they also get things like validation from their peers.”...

Educators and researchers agree that stronger efforts need to be made in teaching media literacy skills. “We need to teach media literacy early and often, before a child is exposed to social media,” said Nunez. “We need to teach our kids who’s the creator [of the technology], what’s their expertise, what’s their agenda, what are they ultimately trying to sell?”

He emphasized that open dialog is crucial. “Rather than banning content or shaming students about what they’re watching, I think it’s important to support and have a dialog between counselors, teachers and parents around what those safe spaces are,” said Nunez....

From: *Mental Illness Self-Labeling*

Self-labeling with a mental illness, for example, deciding that one “has depression,” has the potential to affect clinical outcomes through multiple cognitive and behavioral pathways....

Although little evidence has been garnered to date, many intriguing questions have been asked about self-labeling and self-labelers:

Why do so many adolescents seem to self-label these days?

Are self-labels a way to seem cool?

Are they an excuse to get out of doing work?

Can people really be trusted to diagnose themselves?

Could all this self-labeling be harmful?...

Much of this interest stems from the fear that self-labeling could have unintended negative consequences for mental health. At worst, self-labels might become “self-fulfilling prophecies” such that individuals who see themselves as having a mental illness start to think and act in ways that contribute to the development of such an illness. Combine this with the notion that young people appear to be self-labeling at high rates, and some have pointed to self-labeling as a possible driver of increasing rates of mental illness among youth...

The recent proliferation of mental-health awareness and anti-stigma campaigns has been met by some with skepticism; critics have questioned whether increased awareness of mental-health conditions may be unintentionally increasing the actual incidence of mental-health concerns. ...

Work should be done to develop, test, and disseminate interventions aimed at improving clinical outcomes in the context of self-labeling. Such interventions may include prevention efforts targeting maladaptive beliefs about mental illness at a wide scale; they may also include narrowly targeted interventions for individuals who already self-label....

Additional research has focused on the role of social influences (including online interactions, social connections, and perceptions of peers) in facilitating self-labeling, particularly among young people

For resources related to this concern, see our Center resources

>Normalization and Popularization of Mental Illness and Its Impact: Personal Experience and a Look at Research Findings

>Countering the Over-pathologizing of Students' Feelings & Behavior: A Growing Concern Related to MH in Schools

>Common Psychosocial Problems of School Aged Youth: Developmental Variations, Problems, Disorders and Perspectives for Prevention and Treatment

Then, see our Center’s online clearinghouse on *Misdiagnosis*



Understanding What Worries Youth

The dictionary defines worry as a feeling of anxiety and unhappiness caused by the problems that you have or by thinking about unpleasant things that might happen. What do you think students are worried about? Here are excerpts from two articles on the topic.

From: ***“What Are Some of the Things You Are Worried About?”: An Analysis of Youth's Open-Ended Responses of Current Worries***

“...There has been tremendous concern expressed from researchers, media, practitioners, and parents about the mental health of youth today. Yet, we have heard relatively little from youth themselves about the types of concerns or worries that they feel are most prominent in their lives. The current study found that youth reported relatively few worries; however, youth who self-generated a greater number of worries had worse mental health than youth who reported fewer worries. Our results also revealed that youth generally are most worried about factors associated with their personal lives, such as school and their future....

Overall, we found that worry about school was the most reported concern among adolescents. This finding aligns with the broader literature suggesting that academic achievement is a salient concern among youth. Notably, some research has found that self-reported academic pressure among adolescents has risen since the early 2000s. This trend may relate to the importance placed on attainment of higher education....

There is rising competitiveness and individualism and today's generation of youth feel heightened pressure to be perfect, and perceive that others are more demanding of them than earlier generations. Together, this literature highlights that adolescents today may perceive immense pressure to succeed in their academics, and that this worry is at the forefront of their concerns....

Researchers, media, practitioners, and parents should consider asking youth what they are worried about to understand the types of worries as well as how many distinct worries youth report. Attention should be paid to youth who self-generate many worries or report that they are worried about everything and/or being socially evaluated, as these worries in the current study were most consistently related to poorer mental health....”

From: ***Students AI chats reveal their largest stressors***

“...Alongside recently published a report revealing what worries today's kids are willing to share with artificial intelligence systems. The top 10 chat topics were the same across all ages, grades and geographic locations, according to data from more than 250,000 messages exchanged with middle and high school students spanning 19 states.

Balancing extracurricular activities and school was the largest concern among students, followed by sleep struggles and finding a relationship or feelings of loneliness.

The remaining hot topics were interpersonal conflict; lack of motivation; test anxiety; focus and procrastination; how to reach out for support; having a bad day and poor grades. Less than 1 percent of students discussed social media,...

Findings about children's states of mind — even if received through a chatbot versus in person — could give valuable data to schools to use to make improvements...”

For more, see our Center resources

>About Anxiety, Resilience, and Schools

>Addressing Student Burnout

>Students in Distress

>Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Problems at School

>Overparenting as a Barrier to Development, Learning, and Well-being

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>Unraveling the dangers of mental health self-diagnosis: A study on the phenomenon of adolescent self-diagnosis in junior high schools
- >>Self-Diagnosis of Mental Disorders
- >>Kids are asking AI companions to solve their problems, according to a new study. Here's why that's a problem
- >>Normalizing Anxiety on Social Media Increases Self-Diagnosis of Anxiety
- >>Cross-cultural disparities in teachers' reports of ADHD symptoms and behavior
- >>Soft skills in high schools: integrating self-regulated learning and social, emotional, and behavioral skills frameworks
- >>How ZIP Codes Determine a Child's Future — and What We Can Do to Fight Back
- >>School Leaders More Likely to Support AI Use by Teachers Than Students
- >>"You're Not Forced to Do Anything You Really Don't Want To": Comparing Flexible Learning Options and Mainstream Schooling Experiences in South Australia

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 7/23 Investing in young people
- 7/24 Eating disorders information for schools
- 7/24 Problematic Media Use: Screening and Intervention
- 7/29 Promoting healthy communities
- 7/29 Adolescent substance abuse prevention
- 7/30 Conflict management and problem solving
- 7/31 Supporting Staff Well-Being to Enhance Student Outcomes
- 8/5 Harnessing the power of anxiety
- 8/5 How to structure teams for better student outcomes
- 8/6 Student Connectedness Fosters Attendance and Engagement
- 8/7 Supporting multilingual student success
- 8/12 Supporting students with disabilities
- 8/14 Building resilience: How families can prepare for the uncertain school year ahead
- 8/20 Mental health and special education
- 8/20 Understanding anxiety
- 8/20 Classroom participation and engagement
- 8/21 Making the case for prevention
- 8/25 Understanding anxiety in children and youth
- 9/18 The power of emotion regulation to drive k12 wellbeing
- 9/24 Family Engagement is the Foundation for Attendance and Learning

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.)

Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth (Webinar recording)

To Listserv Participants

- Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- Let us know what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Looking for information? (We usually can help.)

Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you! Contact: ltaylor@ucla.edu

The work of the **National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports** emphasizes that:

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

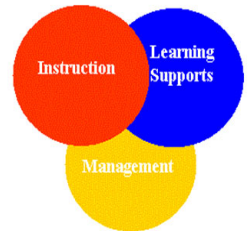
Our research indicates that transforming student/learning supports involves

>moving school improvement policy from a 2 to a 3 component framework and

>unifying and developing student/learning supports into a comprehensive and equitable intervention system

See:

>**Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions**



THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>.