

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



EDUCATE EMPOWER EMBRACE



**HEAR
YOUTH
TODAY!**

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VOICES OF YOUTH MEDIATHON

Imagining a Future where Youth Mental Health Matters

BY NIAMH NI HOIREABHAIRD

Simply existing in today's world isn't easy, this is particularly true for young people. The pressures of climate change, widespread economic downturn, the current COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures of social media are all the more compounded during adolescence, when children and youth are also grappling with the trials and tribulations of growing up.

Even as an adult in my early 20s, I find these things hard to cope with.

Adolescence is a formative period in life. Prolonged stress and anguish can have negative repercussions on mental health during this transition into adulthood. Many mental health issues are identified during this period and left unaddressed can continue and worsen as the mind continues to develop.

Mental health issues can affect anyone at any point in life. However, the occurrence of mental health issues among young people is especially common. In September 2020, the World Health Organisation reported that an estimated 10-20% of adolescents globally experience mental health conditions but that most of these cases go unreported and untreated. Depression and anxiety are at the top of the list of mental illnesses affecting this age group. According to the same article, suicide is one of the leading causes of death amongst 15-19 year olds across the globe.

It's not hard to see why young people are so affected when considering the bullying, isolation, discrimination, xenophobia, and alienation that children and adolescents are exposed to in their daily lives online or in real life. For adolescents who are made to feel different, it can be even more overwhelming. .

In addition to these external factors that impact young people's mental health, youth of today hold a heavy, personal responsibility to fix the current state of the world. Great youth activists have emerged to speak out about injustices but the onus should not be on them to fix the problems inherited from previous generations who have failed to protect the planet and its people.

There are a number of potential causes for the rising number of mental health problems and suicides among young people. Stigma, lack of awareness, and a lack of mental health support and resources are among them



Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) addresses a child's right to access to healthcare for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. This refers to both physical and mental health care.

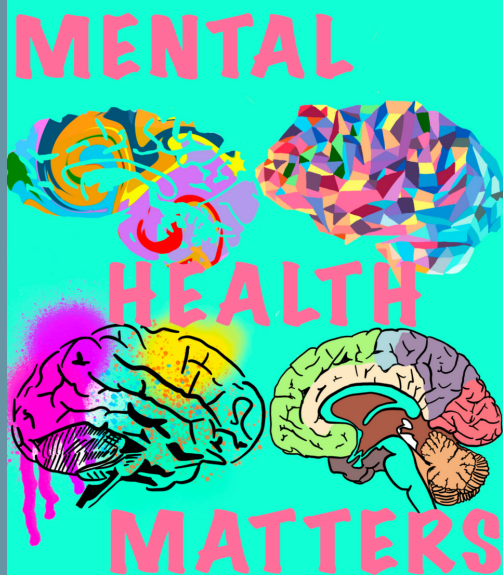
Accessing support proves even more difficult because of the stigma that exists around mental health conditions and the cost involved in doing so. Combatting this stigma is the first task that needs to be addressed on the journey to create a better future for adolescent mental health.

Providing mental health support to all who need them is easier said than done. Ensuring mental health support does not completely resolve the issue of the poor mental health that adolescents are experiencing in the modern world. Social inequalities prevent people from accessing the health care and support that they need. The absence or lack of mental health care in some areas of the world is a barrier for ensuring the provisions of Article 24 of the CRC.

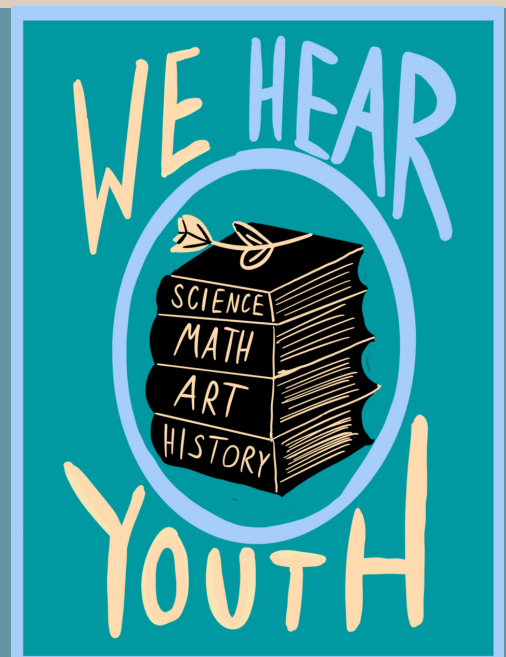
A future where mental health is not stigmatised and that speaking about such issues won't be taboo is what we should all envision. Promotion of healthy mental wellbeing and awareness-raising of the different mental health issues that affect adolescents in today's world is essential to ensure a better future for everyone's wellbeing.

Every child has the right to survive and thrive, and, in an ideal world, mental health issues would not be stigmatised and mental health supports and provisions would be unlimited.

There are no quick fixes for these issues and the road to ensuring promotion and protection of mental health for every child will be a long and difficult one but it is vital to do to ensure a better future for every child.



GRAPHICS
BY
JAX RICHARDS





PHOTOS BY JOY XING



INTERVIEWS BY ANNA-MARIA GORANOVA



QUESTION 1 : DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WITH YOUR CLOSE ONES?

"**MOST** OF THE TIME I WISH I
COULD TALK FREELY AND OPENLY
ABOUT MY MENTAL HEALTH BUT
ACTUALLY I CANNOT FIND THE
RIGHT WORDS TO EXPRESS WHAT I
AM FEELING. HOWEVER,
IF I FIND THE COURAGE TO SAY
HOW I FEEL, I END UP BEING
MISUNDERSTOOD."

"NOT
REALLY. IM A PRETTY RESERVED
PERSON AND QUITE SELF-
CONSCIENTIOUS. THEREFORE I
FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TALK FREELY
ABOUT PERSONAL TOPICS. I'M TRYING
TO WORK ON
THAT BECAUSE I FIND IT AS AN ISSUE
WHICH MAKES ME ANXIOUS BUT I
STILL CAN'T
FIND A WAY HOW."

"YES! I
CONSIDER IT AS A MAJOR TOPIC
WHICH SHOULD BE MORE OFTEN
SPOKEN ABOUT! EVERYBODY
SHOULD BE AWARE OF IT'S
IMPORTANCE, GET INFORMED, LOOK
FOR HELP IF SO IS
NEEDED, LOOK FOR WAYS TO
IMPROVE IT OR JUST DISCUSS IT
WITH YOUR PEERS, BUT
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE!"

"SOMETIMES
IT IS EASIER TO DISCUSS IT WITH A
PARENT AND SOMETIMES A TALK
WITH YOUR BEST
FRIEND IS WHAT YOU NEED. IN
BOTH SITUATIONS I THINK IT IS
IMPORTANT TO SHARE IN
ORDER TO LIFT OFF THE WEIGHT
FROM YOUR CHEST."



QUESTION 2 : DO YOU THINK THAT TEENAGERS' MENTAL HEALTH IS BEING NEGLECTED BY OLDER PEOPLE?

"YES,

TEENAGERS' MENTAL HEALTH IS BEING NEGLECTED BY MOST OF THE ELDER PEOPLE. I SUPPOSE IT IS BECAUSE THEY WERE RAISED IN TIMES WHERE THERE WERE NO SOCIAL MEDIAS, THE HATE WAS LESS AND THE VALUES WERE DIFFERENT. I THINK THEY LAY ASIDE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES BECAUSE MOST OF THEM NEVER HAD ONE AND DO NOT

UNDERSTAND
THE STRUGGLE."

"I

THINK THAT IT IS OFTEN NEGLECTED BY THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT IN YOUR SHOES, THEY BELIEVE THAT AS YOU ARE YOUNGER, YOUR PROBLEMS ARE NOT OF A GREAT IMPORTANCE AND SOMETIMES TEND TO MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE EXAGGERATING.I'VE BEEN IN SUCH SITUATIONS BUT I THINK THAT THE BEST THING TO DO THEN IS TO FIND THE RIGHT PERSON WHO YOU ARE SURE THAT WILL BE A GOOD LISTENER AND WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH AN ADEQUATE ADVICE."

"YES, I DO. ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE PARENTS THINK ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S MENTAL-HEALTH. I BELIEVE THAT IS BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT THEIR INNER PROBLEMS - PROBLEMS REFLECTING THEIR EMOTIONS IN THE FEAR OF BEING CALLED CRAZY OR BEING TAKEN TO A SPECIALIST BY THEIR PARENTS."



QUESTION 3 : ON THE DAILY BASIS, WHAT IS IT THAT YOU THINK IT AFFECTS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH THE MOST?

"I
THINK MENTAL HEALTH IS MOSTLY AFFECTED BY
WHAT OTHERS SAY, WHAT WE SEE ON THE
MAGAZINES AND SOCIAL MEDIA AND HOW WE
PERCEIVE IT. IT IS AFFECTED BY HOW WE SEE
OURSELVES AND IF WE ARE BEING GOOD TO
OURSELVES OR WE TREAT OURSELVES HARSHLY."

"THE
PEOPLE WHO SURROUND ME! IF A TOXIC
BEHAVIOR IS HAVING A BAD INFLUENCE ON YOU,
RUINING YOUR DAY, MAKING YOU ANXIOUS,
GIVING YOU DOUBTS ABOUT YOURSELF, CUT IT
OFF!!! SET BOUNDARIES, DON'T LET OTHERS POP
YOUR HAPPY BUBBLE, MAKE YOURSELF A
PRIORITY, ALWAYS!"

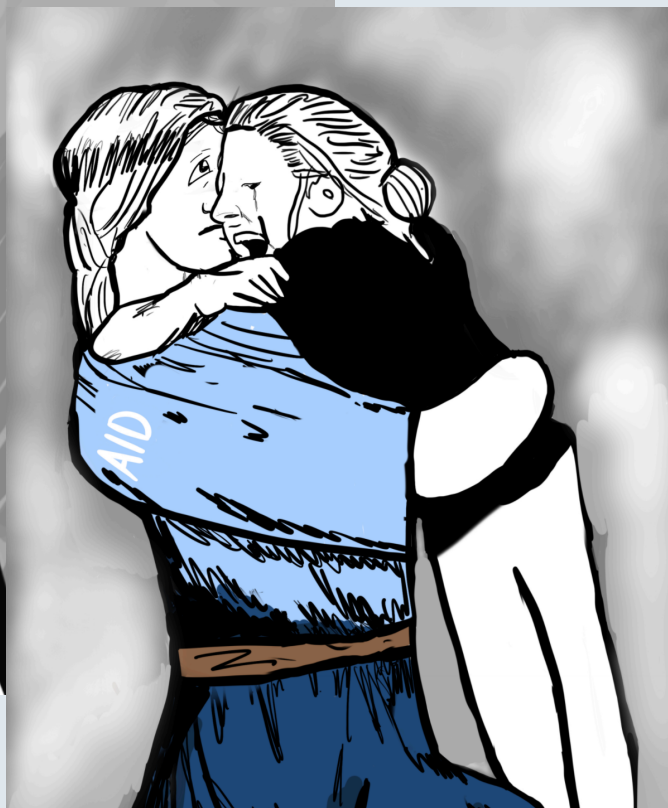
"ON
DAILY BASIS THE THINGS THAT AFFECT MY MENTAL
HEALTH THE MOST ARE SURELY SOCIAL
MEDIA AND CLOSE MINDED PEOPLE'S OPINION.
SOCIAL MEDIA IS FULL OF PICTURES THAT
"MESS" WITH PEOPLE'S MINDS AND SET UP SOME
KIND OF STANDARDS THAT
AFFECT EVERYBODY'S OPINION AND THEY SET HIGHER
EXPECTATIONS FOR THEMSELVES AND
THE ONES AROUND THEM."

"EVERYONE
IS STRESSED ABOUT THE VIRUSES AND EVERYONE IS
TALKING
ONLY FOR THIS AND HOW DANGEROUS IT IS. THE
PRESSURE ABOUT BEING PROTECTIVE IS
ENORMOUS. MY PARENTS BEING OVER-PROTECTIVE
SOMETIMES MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I AM
STILL A CHILD THAT CAN'T DO ANYTHING ALONE."





GRAPHICS BY JAX RICHARDS





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IS NOT STIGMATISED AND THAT
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