



Know! Teens are NOT so Footloose and Fancy-Free

As it turns out, being a teen is not as carefree as we adults would sometimes like to think. In a 2018 study conducted by [PEW Research Center](#), it appears teens have a host of problems and pressures weighing them down.

When 13 to 17-year-olds nationwide were asked about a variety of issues plaguing fellow youth in their community, they named mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, as the number one problem. Seven in ten young people shared this same concern, regardless of gender, race or socioeconomic status. Bullying came in second, with more than half of all teens saying it was a major problem where they lived. Next in line was drug addiction, followed by underage drinking. The silver lining here is that even though about half of all teens see drinking and drug use as a major issue among their peer group, less than one-in-ten report feeling a lot of pressure to personally use drugs or drink alcohol.

Speaking of pressure, without question, academics is at the top, with 88% of teens saying they feel 'a lot' or at least 'some' pressure to get good grades. Not surprisingly, teens say they worry about looking good, and fitting in socially as well. Young people also report feeling pressure to participate in extracurricular activities and to be good at sports.

Nearly one in four children worry every single day about their family having money for basic expenses, and another one in four report coming across people who try to put them down - on an everyday basis. More than one in four young people say they feel tense or nervous about their day, and wished they had more good

friends. The study also found that family finances, teen pregnancy, bullying, drug addiction and gang activity, while a concern for all, weighs even heavier on the minds of children growing up in lower income homes.

In looking at the near future, of those teens who say they plan to go to college, the majority say they worry about getting into a college of their choice, and are concerned with being able to afford it.

Footloose and fancy-free are certainly not words to describe the majority of today's young people. The amount of worry and stress upon them can be overwhelming, and may lead to unhealthy behaviors and coping skills. While you cannot and should not attempt to take away every adversity in your students' lives, you do have a unique opportunity to teach, support and provide solid advice on helping them deal with the problems and pressures they are facing.

In a series of tips to follow, we will share information on maintaining mental health, putting a stop to bullying, and preventing or dealing with substance abuse, as well as healthy ways to help students cope with the many pressures and stressors in their lives.

Sources

- [Pew Research Center: Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers. Feb. 2019.](#)

About Know! Teachable Moments

Everyone has a role in prevention. By reading this Know! Teachable Moment today, you're doing your part to prevent substance misuse and create a healthier world for all.

We created these free tips to empower teachers and educators like you to protect your students from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. However, we rely on donations from people like you to provide these tips. If you found this tip interesting or helpful, [please consider donating at preventionactionalliance.org/donate](#).

Know! Teachable Moments are provided by Prevention Action Alliance with support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, the Ohio Department of Education, and Start Talking!.

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