



# MENTAL HEALTH AND OUR YOUTH

Dale Wisely

- ▶ MH, esp. in youth, in crisis BEFORE the pandemic
- ▶ Now: Demand up.
- ▶ Anxiety/depression (rising for years) sharply up.
- ▶ Suicide rates NOT up.
- ▶ Demand up, supply grossly inadequate/access to care
- ▶ Child emotional maltreatment: Before COVID, about 20% of kids reported in surveys. Most recent data: 55%

COVID & MENTAL HEALTH

# What about COVID? What do we know?

- ▶ Interrupted school-related supports
- ▶ Greatest impact likely on pre-existing MH
- ▶ How did youth fare with all the insane adult behavior?
- ▶ Has made access to care crisis worse
- ▶ But, highly variable reactions & signs
- ▶ Depression & Anxiety up, but suicide rates not.

# Youth Mental Health: The Crisis

- 10% of youth will have at least one major depressive episode.
- 1 in 6 kids has MH diagnosis, but more like 1 in 15 experiencing serious symptoms at present
- BEFORE COVID! youth getting worst of MH effects



No more than 20% of children with MH diagnosis received care from a mental health provider. Maybe 50% by no one. *Whether kids are facing trauma because of child abuse or loss of a family member or everyday anxiety about the virus and unpredictable routines, they need even more support now—all amid a more significant shortage of children's mental health resources.*





- ▶ 2020 survey of 1,000 USA parents: 71% said pandemic had taken a toll on their child's mental health
- ▶ 69% said the pandemic was the worst thing to happen to their child. Survey of 3,300 high schoolers (spring 2020): close to a third of students felt unhappy and depressed much more than usual.

- ▶ Mental health crisis on the rise.  
From March 2020 to October 2020, mental health–related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 (CDC)

- POLITICS:

MH CARE IN SCHOOLS

ATTACKS ON SEL & SCHOOL COUNSELORS, A

ANTIDISCRIMINATION TRAINING, ON PROGRAMS  
THAT TEACH ACCEPTANCE AND HONOR  
DIVERSITY.



**WE DONT  
NEED NO  
EDUCATION**

Dear Teacher:  
Please take care of  
my child's mental  
health, too.

Have a nice day!

- ▶ The Paul Simon Principle
- ▶ The Impossible Job
- ▶ So much to do, but what if just a LITTLE bit of time makes a difference.

# Emotional needs

Sense of belonging

Certainty they are loved

Sense of being *able*

Social interaction (rewarding) with peers

Safety & security (freedom from abuse)

Guidance & limits

The background of the slide is a dark, grainy photograph of three people standing in a row, facing away from the camera. They appear to be in a dimly lit outdoor or semi-outdoor space, possibly at night. The person in the center is slightly taller than the two flanking them. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

ADHD

Anxiety/Depression

Suicide & Self-Harm

Post-traumatic reactions

Substance abuse

## MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG YOUTH



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# MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG YOUTH





ADHD

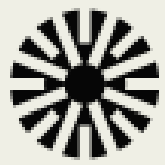
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# MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG YOUTH



HOME

U.S. POLITICS

MEDIA & NEWS

SOCIAL TRENDS

RELIGION

INTERNET & TECH

PUBLICATIONS

TOPICS

INTERACTIVES

FEBRUARY 20, 2019



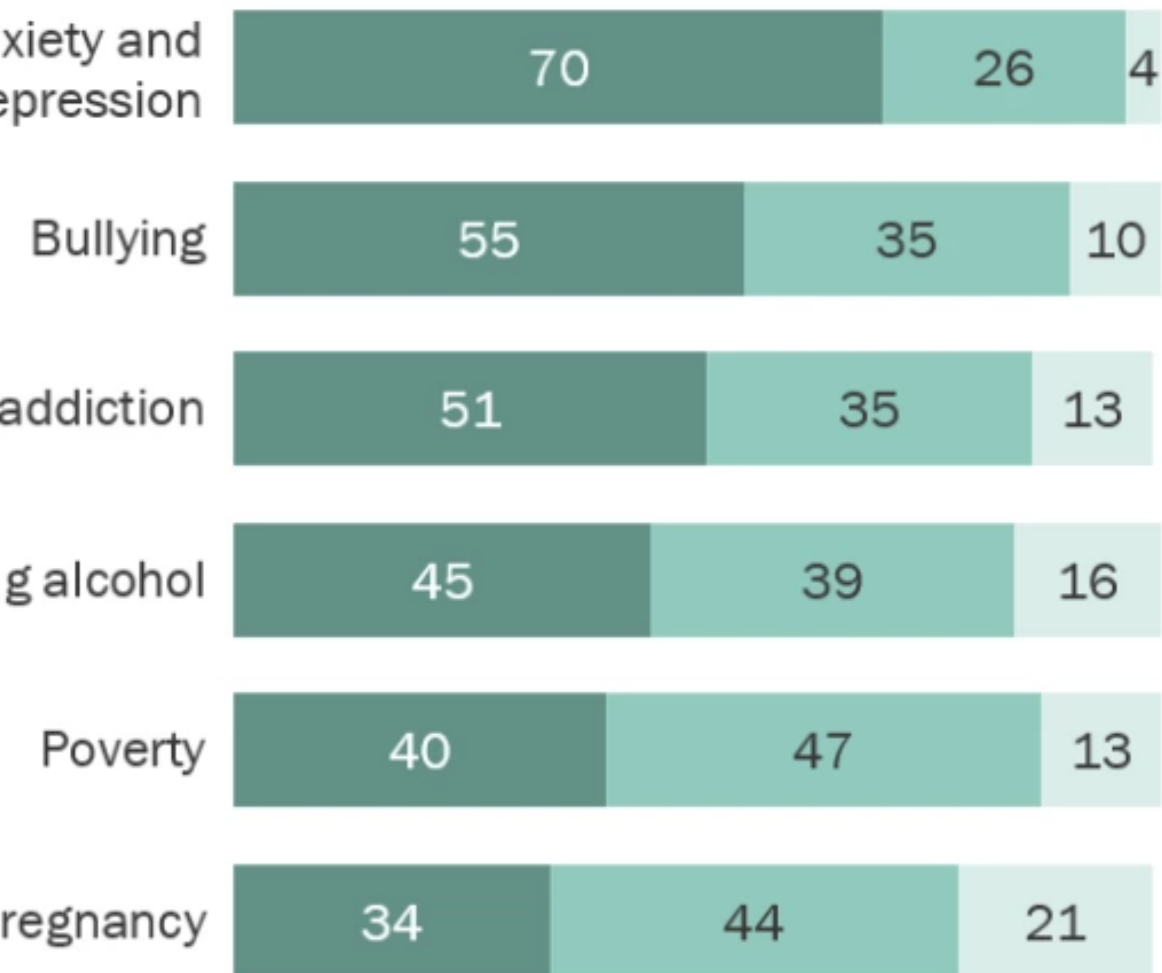
# Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers

*For boys and girls, day-to-day experiences and future aspirations vary in key ways*

# Problems teens see among their peers

Teens saying each of the following is a \_\_\_\_ among their age in the community where they live

■ Major problem ■ Minor problem ■ Not a problem





- ▶ Sadness or hopelessness
- ▶ Irritability, anger, or hostility
- ▶ Tearfulness / frequent crying
- ▶ Withdrawal from friends & family
- ▶ Loss of interest in activities
- ▶ Poor school performance
- ▶ Changes in eating & sleeping habits
- ▶ Restlessness & agitation
- ▶ Feelings of worthlessness & guilt
- ▶ Lack of enthusiasm & motivation
- ▶ Fatigue or lack of energy
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Unexplained aches & pains (headaches/stomach aches)
- ▶ Thoughts of death or suicide

## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN YOUTH

- ▶ Feeling nervous or "on edge."
- ▶ Perfectionism with distress
- ▶ Unfounded or unrealistic fears.
- ▶ Trouble separating from parents.
- ▶ Sleep disturbance.
- ▶ Obsessive thoughts and/or compulsive behaviors.
- ▶ Trembling, sweating, shortness of breath, **stomachaches, headaches,** and/or muscle tension or other physical symptoms.

## SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY IN YOUTH





ADHD

Anxiety/Depression

Suicide & Self-Harm

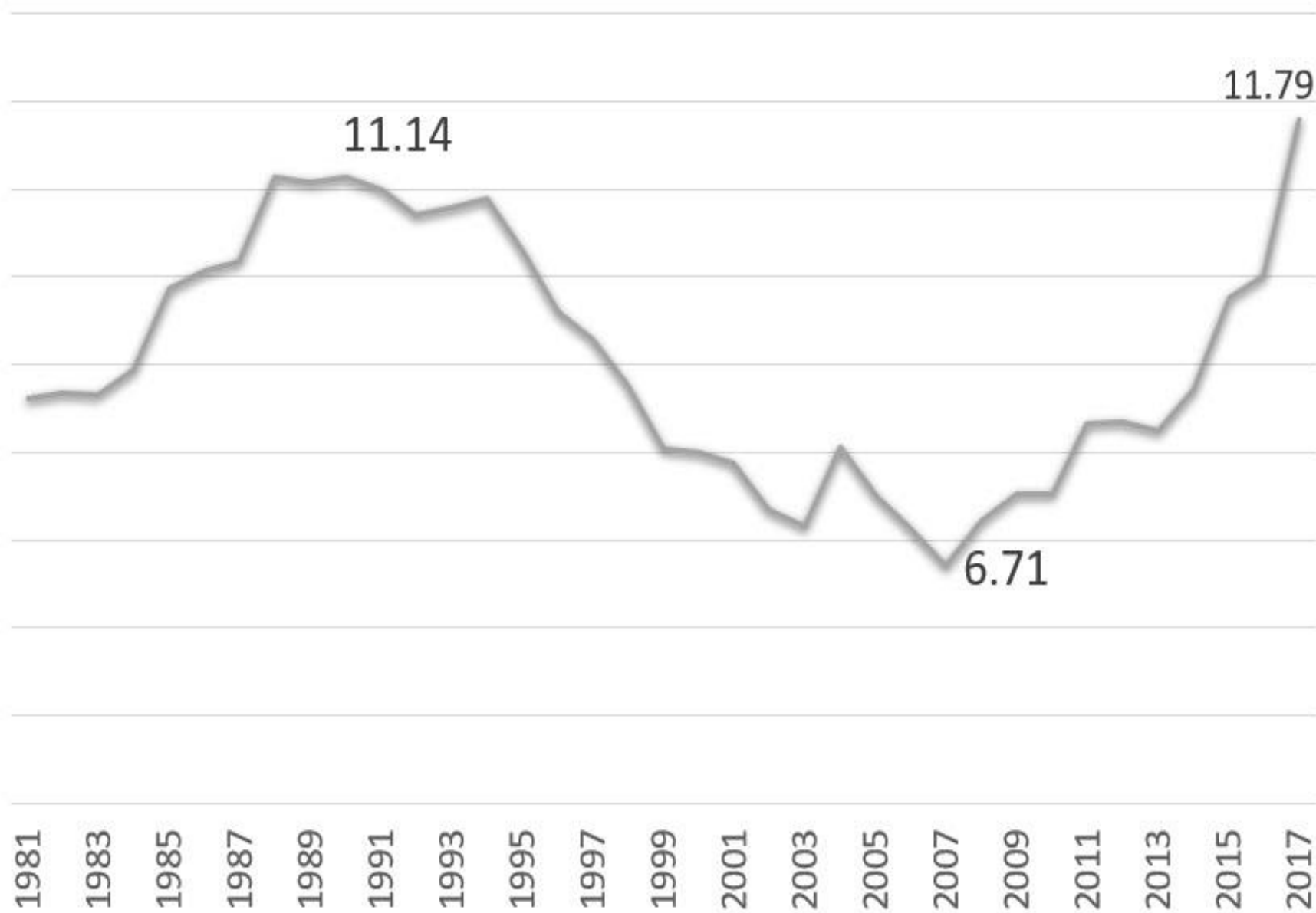
Post-traumatic reactions

Substance abuse

# MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG YOUTH

suicide

a national crisis

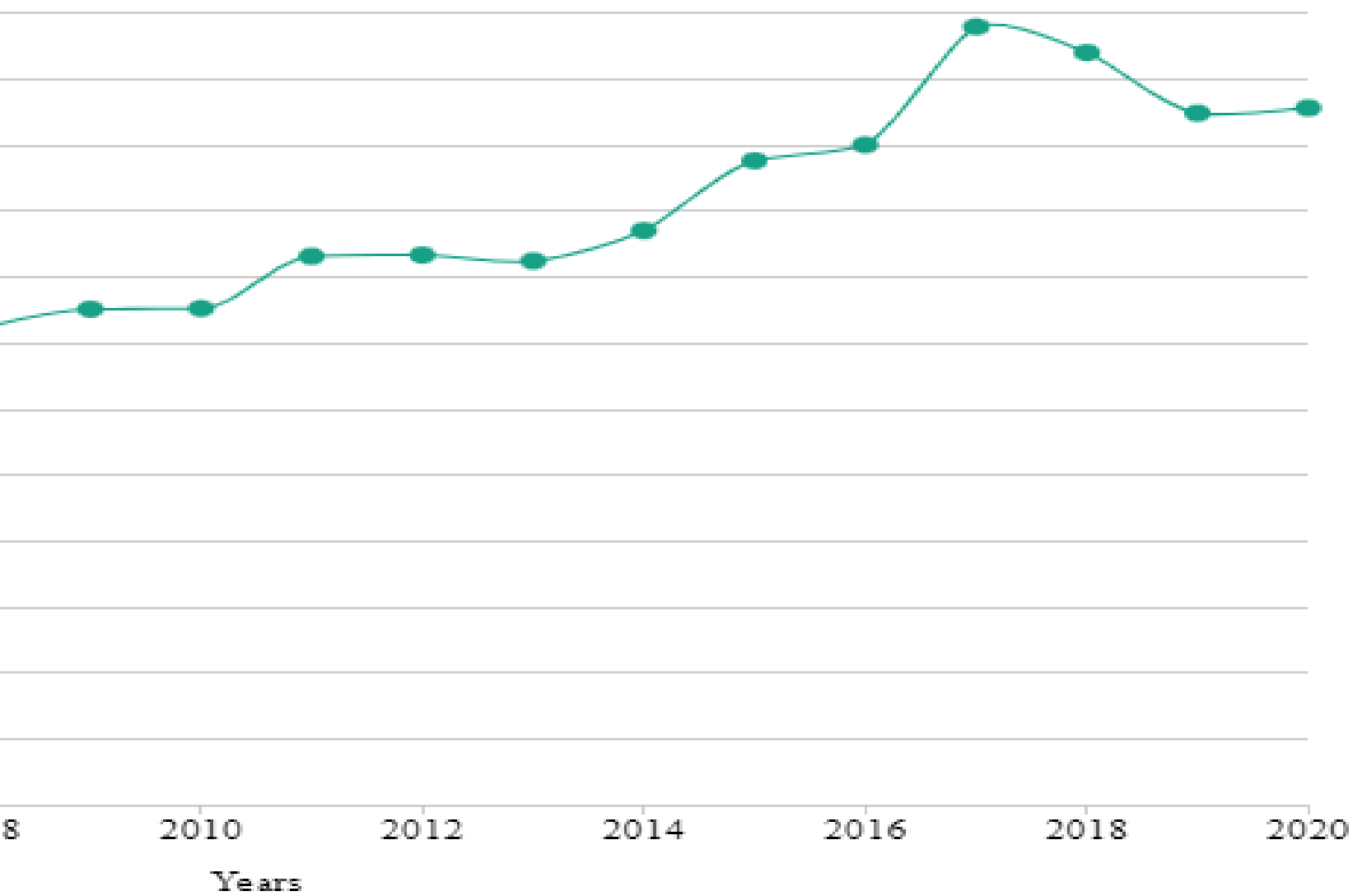


Suicide Rates, 15 to 19-year-olds, 1981-2017.

Peaked in early 1990s; Dropped to low point in 2008.

In 10 years, 2007-2017, suicide rates in teenagers

increased **76%**



**15 to 19-year-olds**

# What to do?

PROACTIVELY ask child/teen directly about suicide.

Begin as early as age 9 if aware of emotional distress

routinely for teenagers.



# The Columbia Lighthouse Project

	Past 1 Month	
1) Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?		
2) Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?		
If <b>YES</b> to 2, answer questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 If <b>NO</b> to 2, go directly to question 6		
3) Have you thought about how you might do this?		
4) Have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself, as opposed to you have the thoughts but you definitely would not act on them?	High Risk	
5) Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Did you intend to carry out this plan?	High Risk	
Always Ask Question 6	Life-time	Past 3 Months
6) Have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? <i>Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, held a gun but changed your mind, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.</i>		High Risk

# BULLYING WHAT VICTIMS SAY HELPS & HURTS

helped	Didn't help or hurt
Listened to me	Punished other students (can hurt victims)
Gave me advice	Sat down with me & other students together
Checked in with me over time	Said they would talk to other students
	Processed it in class
	Brought in a speaker
	Talked with whole class about it
	Told me to work it out
	Told me to ignore it
	Told me if I acted different it wouldn't happen
	Ignored me

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ▶ Do you have nicknames?
- ▶ What's recess/break like for you? PE? lunch?
- ▶ Have you been teased?
- ▶ What kinds of things do the others tease you about?
- ▶ (social media?)

## HELPING VICTIM

- ▶ praise victim's non-violent response
- ▶ assure **LONG TERM** availability to listen & help
- ▶ be vigilant & monitor on an *ongoing basis*



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Guidance & limits

The power of relationships.

The power of the brief encounter.