

# Myths and Facts about Behavioral Health

MYTHS	FACTS
<b>1. Teens Don't have mental health or substance use Problems.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> An estimated 2.7 million U.S. children and teens have emotional or behavioral problems that get in the way of learning, making friends, and family relationships. <sup>1</sup>
<b>2. Once a Person has a mental health Problem, he/she Will Be ill forever.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> There are different types of mental health conditions and many of them can be effectively treated. Most people feel better after getting help such as therapy and/or medications.
<b>3. Mental Disorders and Drug Addictions are Caused By a Person's Lack of Will Power.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> There are many causes of mental health and substance use problems. These causes include things that a person cannot control such as genetics, family history, brain chemistry, and life experiences.
<b>4. Talking about suicide Will Cause someone to Commit suicide.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Studies show that talking to a suicidal person about suicide does not lead to suicide attempts. <sup>2</sup> In fact, suicidal people often feel relieved when someone gives them a chance to discuss their feelings and suicidal thoughts.
<b>5. Teens use mental health Problems as an excuse when they are really just lazy.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> People do not ask to have mental health problems. A teen with a mental health problem may seem tired or not interested, but often times she/he feels overwhelmed, hopeless, or has a lot of emotional pain. <sup>3</sup>
<b>6. A Person can stop using Drugs or alcohol anytime he/she wants.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Addiction, withdrawal (feeling sick when not taking a drug or drinking alcohol), and being near friends or family who use alcohol/drugs can make it very hard for a person to quit. <sup>4</sup>
<b>7. Drugs and alcohol help relieve stress and help people Deal with Problems.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Drugs and alcohol may make people forget or not care about their problems for a while, but the problems will still be there after the drugs or alcohol wear off. <sup>4</sup> Using drugs or alcohol will not solve the problems.
<b>8. People with mental health Problems are Dangerous and could flip out at any time.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Most people with mental health problems are not dangerous, violent, or out of control. Unfortunately, this myth often stops people from seeking the help they need because they worry others will think they are "crazy."
<b>9. People who have Depression always look like they are sad.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Sadness is only one of the feelings associated with depression. Other signs of depression include being moody, feeling irritable, and losing interest in things that used to be enjoyed.
<b>10. Only abnormal, crazy people Go to Psychiatrists, Psychologists, or therapists.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Many people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds meet with psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists to help them deal with stressful life situations or to get additional support.
<b>11. Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and therapists only Give common sense advice that people already know.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists have been specially trained to spot patterns in human thinking, behavior, and emotions. These mental health providers use their education and experience to help people better understand and cope with their life situations.
<b>12. Therapy, substance use treatment, and other types of mental health care are too expensive.</b>	<b>Fact:</b> Free and low-cost mental health and alcohol/drug treatment are available. Every county or region has behavioral health services for people who do not have health insurance and for people with limited income. Peer counseling services and support groups are often free.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing [feedback@ahwg.net](mailto:feedback@ahwg.net) or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

<sup>1</sup>National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health & Human Development. Parents Report Estimated 2.7 Million Children with Emotional and Behavioral Problems. 2005, [http://www.nichd.nih.gov/new/releases/americas\\_children05\\_bg\\_parents.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/new/releases/americas_children05_bg_parents.cfm)

<sup>2</sup>Adolescent Health Working Group. Suicide Myths and Facts. 2003, <http://www.ahwg.net/projects/headsup.htm>

<sup>3</sup>Zeigler Dendy C. *Teaching Teens with ADD and ADHD*. Woodbine House. 2000; 310-11.

<sup>4</sup>Adolescent Health Working Group. Myths and Facts about Substance Use. 2002.