

Weathering the Storm

How Supportive Adults Can Promote Youth Mental Health and Wellness

A growing barrage of stressors has led to nearly 42% of U.S. high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.¹

Bullying

15% of high school students experience bullying at school.¹

Homophobia/Transphobia

Nearly 22% of LGBTQIA2S+ high school students have attempted suicide.¹

Violence

Youth lived through 686 mass shootings in 2021.²

COVID-19

Youth report higher levels of social isolation, academic disruption, and economic uncertainty since the start of the pandemic.³

Racism

Over 50% of high school students of color have experienced racism.⁴

Natural disasters and climate change

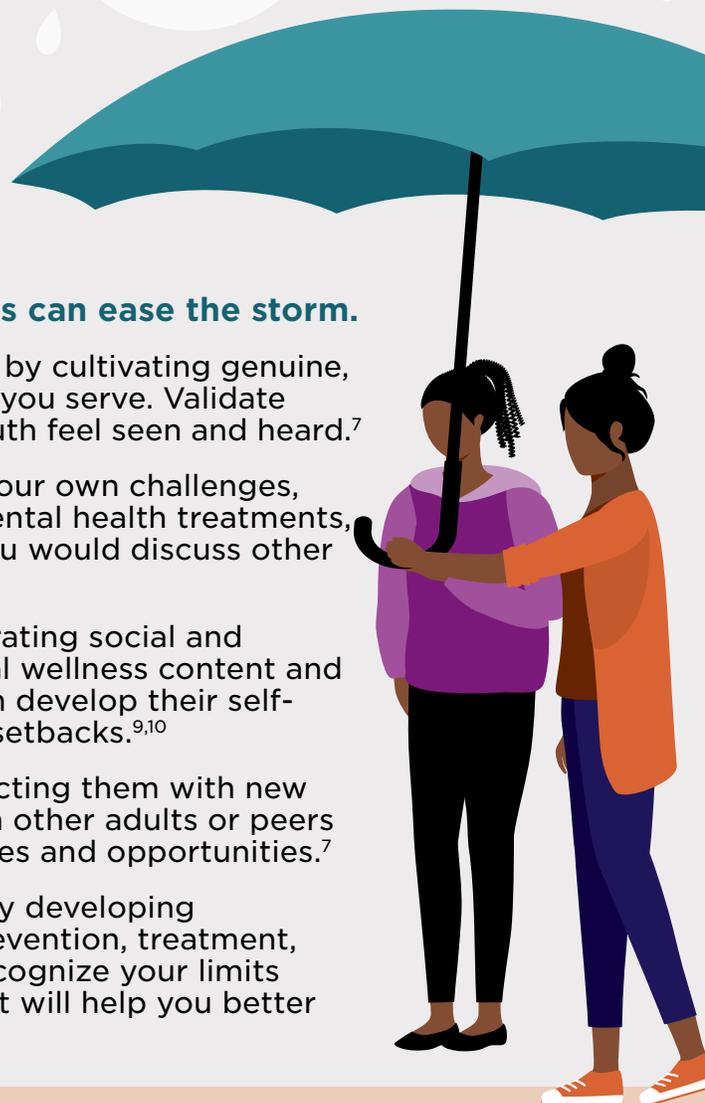
59% of adolescents and young adults worry about climate change.⁵

Political negativity and polarization

55% of adolescents say the current political climate is a source of stress.⁶

While the stressors will be there, supportive adults can ease the storm.

- ▶ **Create a safe and supportive environment** for youth by cultivating genuine, dependable, and caring relationships with the youth you serve. Validate emotions, listen with intent, and invest in making youth feel seen and heard.⁷
- ▶ **Normalize talking about mental health** by sharing your own challenges, successes, experiences, and stressors. Talk about mental health treatments, such as therapy and medication, in the same way you would discuss other treatments for physical illness or injury.^{7,8}
- ▶ **Promote resilience and mental wellness** by incorporating social and emotional learning, healthy relationships, and mental wellness content and activities into your programming.⁷ Aim to help youth develop their self-confidence and their ability to remain flexible amid setbacks.^{9,10}
- ▶ **Inspire and expand possibilities for youth** by connecting them with new ideas, places, and things. Facilitate connections with other adults or peers who can expose them to illuminating new experiences and opportunities.⁷
- ▶ **Increase capacity to support youth mental health** by developing partnerships with organizations that can provide prevention, treatment, and support services for both youth and adults.⁸ Recognize your limits and actively pursue connections and knowledge that will help you better support youth through difficult times.



Youth with a supportive adult in their lives report **greater self-confidence, decreased sadness and worry, and better school engagement and achievement.**^{11,12}

Need immediate support for someone who is struggling or in crisis? Help is available.

- [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](#) to reach a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States.
 - [Teen Link](#) Call 833-6546 (1-866-TEENLINK) to reach a help line for teens, by teens that provides information and resources to youth and their families on preventing youth suicide and that can also connect callers to adult crisis counselors.
 - [National Institute of Mental Health](#) Call 866-615-6464 for a free automated voice information system with information on eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and panic disorders.
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Additional Resources

- [Relationships First: Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive](#) (booklet)
 - [Practical Strategies for Creating Welcoming & Supporting Environments for All Youth](#) (webinar)
 - [Classroom Management](#) (tip sheet)
 - [Incorporating and Prioritizing Youth Mental Health in Sexual and Reproductive Health Programming](#) (tip sheet)
 - [Closing the Loop: Developing Effective Referral Networks for Youth](#) (webinar)
 - [Mandatory Reporting and Keeping Youth Safe](#) (resource guide and training)
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