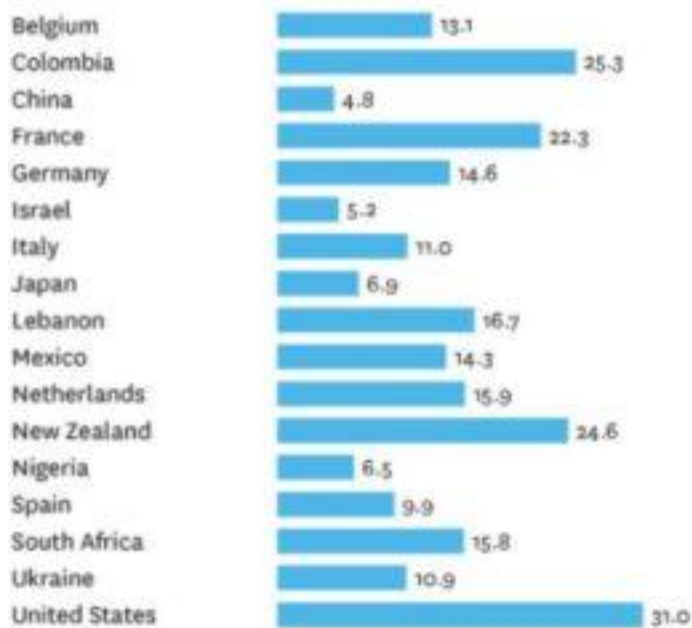


1 in 5 U.S. Teens Suffer from a Diagnosed Mental Illness

I proudly live in the United States, the land of the free and the brave. The land of opportunity and the American dream. Despite the great blessings associated with living in America, the U.S. is the highest percentage of the population that will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetimes. It is hard to believe and very disturbing, to say the least. How can countries like Israel, China and Columbia who deal with Communism, the daily threats of being blown up by terrorists or drug dealers be less anxious than us?

UNITED STATES LEADS THE WORLD IN ANXIETY

Percentage of the population that will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetimes.



SOURCE WHO WORLD MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY UPDATE, 2009

HBR.ORG

Mental Illness Starts Early.

Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begins by age 14 and three-quarters begins by age 24. The number of teens and even younger children experiencing mild to moderate anxiety, depression and other disorders has skyrocketed over the past decade. Recent research shows that a whopping one in five suffers from a debilitating diagnosable mental illness. And those are only the ones that have reached out, been diagnosed and found help.

There are many thoughts and assumptions on why this is happening to our kids. Social media has not helped as over-connected teens consistently compare themselves to their peers showcasing their exciting lives, amazing experiences and their happy existences. Not many teens or adults for that matter share openly when things are not going so good. That is why some call it “Fakebook.” I have heard blame placed on helicopter parenting where parents (me included) rarely let our kids fail, swooping in whenever they needed help. While we have good intentions, we starve developing minds of the ability to “work things out” which builds their critical thinking skills, a major component to becoming a successful adult. Then there’s the over-scheduling issue to accommodate for organized sports and other activities that reduce the time for just plain unstructured play and exploration. Unstructured play is an opportunity for kids to be kids, exploring their surroundings and working on conflict resolution.

Schools have a role with their intense focus on “the test.” Kids have more homework than previous generations. Students not only have to take the test, but they are also taught effective and efficient test taking so they can do good on the “standardized” test. I hate that word especially as it relates to teaching kids or adults. Nobody learns the same way. Schools are starting to pay more respect to “individualized” student education which is an excellent sign.

“YOU HAVE TO GET INTO A GOOD COLLEGE!!!” *Parents...* We’ve all said it. Students face tremendous pressure from parents and educators to do better than average academically and in the community so they can be “compete” to be better positioned to get into college. This includes taking college level courses as early as the ninth grade! Performing hundreds of hours of community service and becoming “Super Kids” It’s no wonder our kids are stressed. Post college, when young people transition into adulthood, their anxiety gets worse in some cases. **The American Psychological Association’s Stress in America report** showed Millennials as the most stress generation in history.

You can forge your opinion on why our kids and young adults are so stressed out. Fortunately, schools, community organizations, and forward-thinking ed-tech companies are beginning to address what I consider is a “silent epidemic.” At **D. Knight Marketing & Consulting**, we are honored to be working with some of these organizations to get their life-saving messaging, training and services out to the masses.

When you picture the face of mental illness, what do you see?

Video Player

00:00

01:22

That amazing and heart-wrenching video was produced by The Youth Mental Health Project. TYMHP was started by a parent, **Randi Silverman** who produced a movie about her experience raising a child with bipolar disorders. I highly recommend watching the film. You can access it here. She and her co-founder **Wendy Ward** are hosting free screenings of the movie and creating workshops that help educators and parents recognize early signs of mental illness in children.



In the ed-health-tech area, there is an incredible organization called **BetterHelp** which provides their members affordable, unlimited online/ mobile access to a licensed, professional counselors. They have served over 700,000 adults to date. BetterHelp has been working with **DKMC** to launch **TeenCounseling.com** which will offer this convenient service for teens 13-19 anywhere, anytime at the touch of their fingers. We are working with a few forward-thinking school districts in Florida to pilot this service for their students and expect to roll out **TC.com** to all teens soon.

Working through schools to address the challenges of teen mental health issues been a lot of work primarily because the U.S. education system is very risk averse and slow to adopt new tech strategies. Fortunately, schools now have real data that shows how mental health issues directly affect student achievement. Most educators now agree that a healthy mind is as important to a child's development as a healthy body.

We have embraced the challenge 110%. If our efforts can help just one child lead a happy, healthy life and not consider suicide, it has been worthwhile.

Download our free data on how teen Mental Health is affecting student achievement.
Teen Mental Health and Student Achievement