

# Healthy Young Minds

A free publication of the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)

June 2016 \* Issue 3

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## Mental Health Education in Schools Passed in State Legislature

A bill that clarifies the school health curriculum to include instruction in mental health has passed both houses of the State Legislature and now awaits the Governor’s signature to become law. S.6046/A.3887-A, the “Mental Health Education in Schools Act”, will require all schools under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education (SED) “to ensure that their health education programs recognize the multiple dimensions of health by including mental health and the relation of physical and mental health so as to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.”

Similar versions of the legislation have been introduced over the past four years, passing in the Senate twice, but never in the Assembly. Thanks to the leadership of Assemblymember Catherine Nolan (D-Queens) and Senator Carl Marcellino (R-Syosset), the two primary bill sponsors, the bill was successfully shepherded through the both houses of the Legislature with only one day remaining in the legislative session.

The new legislation also amends previous language regarding school safety that linked potential violence in schools to students experiencing mental health problems. The old language perpetuated a stigmatizing and inaccurate perception that people with mental illness are more violent than those without such challenges.

Once signed by the Governor, the legislation will become effective on July 1, 2018.

A newsletter for educators, parents, and students about mental health in schools. This information is intended for reuse. Please give credit.



**Mental Health Association  
in New York State, Inc.**

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# The Mental Health of the Bully

It is relatively well known that children who are bullied are at an increased risk to present with mental health problems later on in life, and it is important to provide the student who was or is bullied with resources and support in order to decrease adverse consequences of the experience. But what about the emotional health of the bullies themselves? Are we doing enough to prevent recurrent episodes sprouting from the same perpetrator? Are we addressing the root of the issue?

According to Mental Health America, bullying can lead to “tragic consequences” that include an increased risk of suicide not only for the bullied student but for the individual carrying out the bullying as well. Bullies experience their own list of risk factors that include low self esteem, lack of empathy, and intense pressure to “fit in” with their peers (Mental Health America). Down the road, they are at an increased likelihood to use alcohol and drugs, drop out of school, commit crime, and become abusive partners or guardians (Stopbullying.com).

In the article *Bullies Nearly Twice as Likely to have Mental Health Disorder*, ABC News Now reporter Lama Hasan wrote about one study conducted in 2007 at Brown University that found children with depression, anxiety and Attention Deficit Disorder are more than two times as likely to be “identified” as bullies. However, as Hasan commented, it is important to point out this does not mean people with mental health disorders are likely to “become” bullies, just that those with the specified disorders are more likely to be “considered” bullies. Regardless, the bullies themselves require support in order to grow as emotionally healthy members of society.

It may be time for schools to incorporate more resources within action plans that help the students who are bullying in order to protect against repeat offenses or future mental health issues.

For more information on bullying, visit the webpages for national anti-bullying campaigns: STOMP-out Bullying, NoBully, and The Bully Project.

**Children with depression, anxiety, and Attention Deficit Disorder are more than two times as likely to be “identified” as bullies.**

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## Transitioning to College: *The Proactive Path*

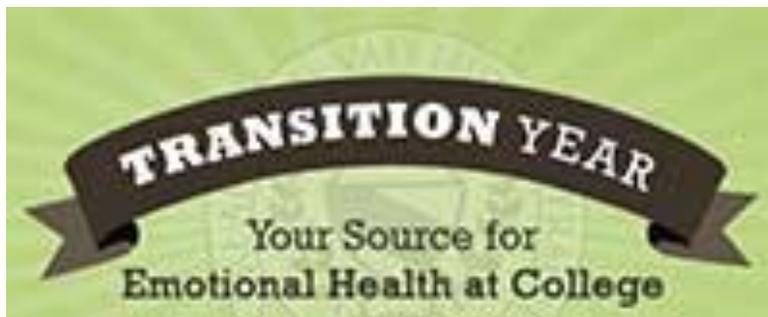
College is a time for adolescents to blossom into young adults as they gain knowledge in various fields of study, are introduced to new concepts and cultures, and develop the skills that will render them capable of leading productive professional and private lives in the “real world.” The transition from high school senior to college freshman is invigorating but understandably nerve-wracking as well. Whether the student is diagnosed with a mental health disorder or not, the change can provoke a host of general anxieties, specific worries, and varying levels of stress.

Difficulties with mental health can lead to the individual missing out on valuable and enjoyable experiences. According to the JED Foundation, an organization that devotes itself to promoting the mental wellness of college students, about half of these students can become “too stressed to function academically or socially.” The best move a parent and student can make is to be proactive by keeping the mental health of the transitioning student in mind.

An especially helpful resource to consult during the college transition period is TransitionYear.org. It is the joint effort of the JED Foundation and the American Psychological Foundation that aims to highlight to both the parent and student the importance of emotional health before, during, and after the college transition. According to the website’s main page, the goal is for all parties to “embrace [newfound] independence, exploration, and growth” that is associated with becoming a college student. TransitionYear.org acts as a guidebook for parents and students by offering tips, checklists, information, and more to help navigate each stage of the process.

The website is broken into two separate guides, one for parents and one for students, that both trace the transition from initially selecting the most appropriate school, to making the transition from home life to college life, and through successfully attending college. Some stand out tips and resources are included in the table on page 3.

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# Mental Health and Social Media: Helpful or Harmful?

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, the list goes on. Social media is a phenomenon that has not gone unnoticed by professionals in the world of mental health. Some have questioned if the perhaps “artificial” socializing might be doing more harm than good, and research seems to be focusing on the negatives.

Social media may be to blame for decreased levels of self esteem. Honor Whitman of Medical News Today wrote about one study conducted in the United Kingdom that found social media increases the likelihood an individual would feel “less confident” about his or her achievements. Benedict University’s Dr. Shannon Rauch explained this to be a result of individuals constantly comparing their lives to the “idealized” version of their friends’ lives that are publicized online. Social media also reinforces dependence on outside approval by quantifying “likes,” “reposts,” and frequently updating the user on comments, hampering an individual’s ability to look inward for approval and satisfaction. This can even lead to what some see as an addiction to social media. Specifically regarding Facebook, Whitman commented “63% of American Facebook users log on to the site daily, while 40% of users log on multiple times a day.” At the University of Bergen in Norway, Dr. Cecile Andraessen went so far as to work with a team to create the Berge Facebook Addiction Scale that measures addiction to the social networking site.

By being connected 24/7, younger participants of the internet’s myriad of social media sites might be under undue stress because of cyberbullying. At one time, bullying could be contained within public settings such as schools or malls. Now, an individual can be bullied relentlessly over social media. Whitman reports 33% of teenagers are reported to have been victim to cyberbullying which can lead to mental health problems and an increased risk for suicide.

That being said, additional studies have found no link between social media use and mental health. Dr. Rick Nauert commented in his Psych Central article *Social Media Can Help Those with Rare Illness Share Info* that some people find a haven of sorts online. This can occur when social media is used to gain support and advice from peers on mental health conditions that the infamous stigma might have prevented them from obtaining in real life. The difference seems to be in how social media is used. WebMD HealthDay reporter Alan Mozes quoted University of Michigan’s associate communications professor Scott Campbell as saying “passive” browsing or “lurking” seems to have less constructive results than “active” participation that includes posting and commenting.

As research continues, it appears to be up to the user to weigh the pros and cons of taking part in the various forms of social media available online.

## ***Transitioning to College: continued from page 2***

Beyond the detailed guides, TransitionYear.org offers links to outside resources, such as hotlines and a Question and Answer feature where users can submit questions and experts will post answers back onto the main site.

The JED Foundation also runs various other online resources for transitioning college students such as ULifeline and Half of Us. ULifeline describes itself as an “anonymous, confidential, online resource center” where college students can find information on multiple topics concerning mental wellness. The website features an online mental health evaluation test and the ULifeline Network that lists helpful resources on campus of participating colleges and universities. Half of Us is a national campaign aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge of mental health issues in college-aged populations by providing information on different struggles and disorders, providing tips on how to help one’s self or friend, and search engines to locate professional help nearby.

<b><i>Choosing the Right College</i></b>	<b><i>Making the Transition</i></b>	<b><i>Attending college</i></b>
<i>“Right Fit” worksheet, guides to finding resources on and off campus, key questions to ask on tours to evaluate a college’s “Emotional Wellness Philosophy”</i>	<i>Identifying potential setbacks, recognizing warning signs, transferring treatment, “hovering” parent vs. supportive parent</i>	<i>Creating a “Communication Contract” between parent and student, understanding the Americans With Disabilities Act and Accommodations, identifying leave of absence policies</i>



## MHANYS

The Mental Health Association of New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) and its network of 26 local affiliates work to promote mental health and recovery, encourage empowerment in mental health service recipients, eliminate discrimination, raise public awareness, and advocate for equality and opportunity for all.

MHANYS works to ensure available and accessible mental health services for all New Yorkers.

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## Did you know?

### Common Myths regarding Self-harm in Teens

- **If a person self-harms, they are trying to complete suicide.** *An individual who self-harms is not always intending to end their life. People self-harm for a multitude of reasons that include, but are not limited to, releasing tension, expressing feelings of anguish or anger, and gaining relief from feelings of “numbness”*
- **Individuals who self-harm are just attention-seekers.** *Self-harm can be a way to communicate despair, but this does not mean attention is all an individual is seeking. The individual’s mental and emotional health is in trouble and in need of help, which can only come about once a situation has gained attention.*
- **Self-harm is when a person deliberately cuts themselves with a knife.** *Self-harm can be conducted using a variety of methods and instruments. Banging, punching, hair pulling, excessive skin picking, and pinching can all be forms of self-harm.*

## RESOURCES

### MHANYS

We are proud to announce our new website. Find information about our statewide affiliate network, our projects and mental health resources.

[www.mhanys.org](http://www.mhanys.org)

### Youth in Transition

[www.youthnys.org](http://www.youthnys.org)

### NIMH

National Institute of Mental Health  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

### NEDA

National Eating Disorders Association  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

### NYASP

New York State Association of School Psychologists  
[www.nyasp.org](http://www.nyasp.org)

### Youth Power

[www.youthpowerny.org](http://www.youthpowerny.org)

## Transition Age Youth



[www.youthnys.org](http://www.youthnys.org) A new website for transition age youth and young adults, their families, friends and schools provides resources to support independence, improve overall well-being, support educational goals and community living for youth with mental health challenges. A project of MHANYS.