

# 3 Things I Wish I Knew About Mental Health in High School (And 1 Thing I Wish Adults Knew)

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We all remember the challenges and difficulties of high school—even before the internet and social media! Raising a child today is hard; it doesn't come with a manual, and often, we feel like we are winging it.

We know kids today are dealing with heavy subjects—cyber-bullying, body shaming, community violence, abuse, neglect, unstable home lives, drug exposure, sexual identity exploration, immigration issues, and more.

Kids can be moody, hard to read, and don't always want to talk. Emotions are a basic part of the human experience, but sometimes we struggle with how to deal with them effectively. Kids aren't any different.

While access to mental health information is becoming more available in the age of information, we know that there is still a gap in mental health resources and information for teens and young adults. Nadia Ghaffari, Mental Health America's 2017 mPower Award Winner and Founder of [TeenzTalk.org](http://TeenzTalk.org), asked the [TeenzTalk](http://TeenzTalk) community what they wish they could tell their younger selves in high school.

Here's what they had to say:

- *“I would say to my younger self that it's OK if you get a bad grade on a test. If you keep worrying about it, it will prevent you from ever moving past it. You can still succeed in the class with a few bad tests. Communicate openly with your teacher about it and learn from past tests.”*
- *“I wish that I had known that fighting depression would be the hardest battle I'd have to fight. I convinced my parents that it was imperative that I get counseling, and I went to a psychiatrist in early sophomore year. I wish I had known that I'm worth more than a grade, a test score, or an award. This is what I would say to my younger self: you are worthy and your journey deserves to be heard.”*
- *“If I was to talk to my younger freshman self, I would say self-worth does not come from an Instagram “like”, a compliment, a grade, or a boy liking you. Confidence comes from yourSELF—about your body, about recognizing your negative and positive qualities, about your genuine interests, and about your potential. I wish I knew that there was no need to compare myself to anyone. Instead my cares should have been reserved for what was important and mattered to me in my life. This became nurtured with changing my negative mentality into a positive outlook of wanting to be my best self. Accomplishments don't define you; overcoming insecurities and challenges is what builds character.”*
- ***“I wish [teachers and parents] knew that my struggles can't be clearly explained in words. Sometimes emotions are so strong that they control everything I do, and I don't really have a say. In these times, please be patient with me.”***

It's hard to know how to approach a young person who is struggling with issues you may not understand or relate to. However, it's important not to ignore it.

Encourage communication, let that person know that they can talk to you, and provide them with an environment that is safe and supportive.

Listen. Try not to overreact. And remember what it was like to be a teenager.

Oftentimes they need your help, but don't know quite how to ask for it. Be patient, but address serious issues head-on.

By providing supportive environments and teaching children and teens to recognize their emotions and address them in healthy ways, we can change lives.

*Need some tips on starting the conversation? Check out MHA's tools for parents and teens:*

- [Talking To Adolescents and Teens: Starting The Conversation](#)
- [Time To Talk: Talking To Your Parents](#)

*Mental Health America's 2017 Back to School Toolkit aims to increase emotional intelligence and self-regulation through materials for parents, school personnel, and young people.*

*Visit [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/back-school](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/back-school) to learn more.*

*If you think your child is going through emotional or behavioral issues, MHA has an online screen that parents can take to see if their child is at risk at [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) and tips and information to help you get started with that important conversation with your child [here](#).*

*There are also serious signs that someone is in crisis and needs more immediate help. These include thoughts or plans of hurting oneself or another person. **If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text “MHA” to 741-741 or call 911.***