Vaping and Juuling: A Trend on Fire

Why Doesn’t Anyone Like Me?

Releasing Anxiety’s Grip

Healthy Minds 2018/2019
Pressure Doesn’t Make Perfect: Beware Sky-High Expectations

“I do see high schoolers struggling with high parental expectations,” said Karen Williams, LIMHP, CHI Health psychotherapist. Showing interest in our children’s activities is extremely important. But interest can become obsession when we try too hard as parents. “What we do want is for kids to live up to and into their potential – not our idea of perfection,” Williams said. “There’s no perfection for kids or for parents. We all make mistakes and we get to try again.”

5 Signs Parents Need to Step Back

1. You criticize more than you praise your child.
2. You micromanage your kid’s projects.
3. You feel like every activity will make or break your child’s future.
4. You’re making decisions your children should make.
5. You become frustrated easily and lose your temper.

Welcome to Better You Healthy Minds

Who among us would choose to relive those difficult teen years – particularly with today’s challenges? It’s hard being a teenager and sometimes just as complicated raising them. BetterYou Healthy Minds is just one way CHI Health is helping families navigate what can often be a turbulent time.

Within these pages, CHI Health mental health experts will shed light on the struggles teens face today – and offer tips for families to get through life’s challenges together.

Topics in this issue include peer pressure, anxiety, parental expectations, depression, cutting, bullying, social media and more.

Please use this publication as a resource, and get in touch at CHIhealth.com/BetterYouSurvey to share topics you’d like to see covered in the next BetterYou Healthy Minds.

Helicopter No More: Be Present without Hovering

- Let children set their own goals and timelines. Ask: “What do you want to accomplish today/this week?” Guide them in an age-appropriate way.
- Ask open-ended questions. “What’s going on tonight with your homework?” not “Do you have homework?”
- Have conversations that aren’t face-to-face, such as in the car or while preparing dinner.
- Pause to hear what kids say. Sometimes small comments signal a larger truth. “I’m tired of this” can mean more than routine weariness.
- Embrace disappointment as a character-building experience. “Sometimes we have to fall down gracefully and figure out how to get back up,” said Karen Williams, LIMHP, CHI Health mental health therapist.
- Give kids time to just be. “We are human beings, not human doings,” Williams said.

“Sometimes small comments signal a larger truth.”
What Bullying Really Looks Like

What's not OK is to respond by being rude, mean or worse—bullying.

Students age 13-18 bullied at school

22%

Young people that experience cyberbullying sometime in their life

28%

Many young people will experience bullying over the course of their lifetime. However, not every conflict is bullying. Sometimes it’s just bad, unacceptable behavior. How to tell the difference:

Rudeness: Carelessly saying or doing something that hurts someone.

Meanness: Purposefully saying or doing something once, maybe twice, to hurt someone.

Bullying: Intentionally aggressive behavior, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power. Three components must be present:

1. Repeated actions or threats
2. A power imbalance
3. Intention to cause harm

Who Bullies Targets Most

Bullies don’t need a reason to treat someone badly. But according to a new study, weight is the predominant reason kids become targets. Parents can combat this trend — so pervasive it’s been dubbed “fat shaming” — by helping teens develop a positive body image. Start by being a positive role model and avoiding negative talk about food, weight, body size and shape.

Vaping and Juuling: A Trend on Fire

Originally marketed as an alternative to cigarettes, vaping and e-cigarettes have caught fire with kids. In fact, e-cigarette use tripled in middle and high school students from 2013 to 2015.

Five fast facts:

1. “Vaping” is the act of puffing on an e-cigarette. E-cigarettes are also called e-hookahs, mods, vape pens and Juuls.
2. A Juul (“jewel”) is an e-cigarette that’s small – sometimes resembling a flash drive – and popular because kids can sneak puffs during class.
3. Almost all e-cigarette products contain nicotine, which is addictive and can disrupt brain development in young people. One Juul cartridge can have as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.
4. E-liquids used in e-cigarettes have been marketed to resemble kid-friendly products like juice boxes, candy and cookies.
5. The Centers for Disease Control has stated that e-cigarettes can contain cancer-causing agents, heavy metals like lead and volatile organic compounds.
Why Doesn’t Anyone Like Me?

It’s not easy making friends, especially during the tumultuous teen years when you’re changing so much.

“High social anxiety, exposure to bullying, physical appearance, race, confusion about who you are, home environment and other issues can all affect the social dynamics of a teen,” said CHI Health Psychotherapist John Duggins, LIMHP, LADC. “And that can lead to beliefs that ‘I must not be good enough’ or ‘there must be something wrong with me.’”

How do you surround yourself with people who like you? “Participation. It sounds fairly simple but it’s not very easy,” Duggins said. “Get involved in clubs at school, after-school programs, sports or volunteering in the community. Wherever you have the opportunity to meet and engage with other teenagers.”

Four Ways Parents Can Help in the Friend Department

1. Talk to a trusted teacher, coach or club leader about your teen’s struggles and get their input.

2. Encourage your teen to home conversational skills with you, grandparents or other loved ones.

3. Role play social situations with your child so he or she can practice responses.

4. Share how you sometimes struggle to make small talk, and how you handle awkward moments.

Your Brain: What Were You Thinking?

Teen brains are still developing – that’s why smart teens sometimes make bad decisions. The frontal lobes aren’t fully connected and the teen brain doesn’t have as much myelin – a coating that plays the role of electrical wire insulation – as an adult brain does.

That’s why seemingly normal teenagers, even excellent students, occasionally make questionable decisions. So when do parts of the brain finally communicate well with each other? Think mid-20s.

Breaking Free: Releasing Anxiety’s Grip

Anxiety can feel like an invisible force that holds you back in life. “Learning to face it is an essential part of growing up,” said Mindy Hinton, LIMHP, CHI Health psychotherapist. If your teen is struggling, take deep breaths together to ease the fight-or-flight process. It’s important to acknowledge feelings as real and valid. It’s not helpful for kids to feel they are failing in some way. Practicing mindfulness exercises can ease nerves by helping kids stay present in the moment.

“Practicing mindfulness is incredibly empowering for children, and for ourselves,” Hinton said. “It can help kids better manage stress and anxiety when it does occur. It helps with self-regulation, promotes positive emotions and helps grow self-compassion.”

If anxiety persists or escalates into panic, seek professional help.

When Those Facebook Friends Aren’t Your Friends After All

Social media gives teens an “instant connection with a large number of people that can quickly provide a feeling of acceptance,” said CHI Health Psychotherapist Mike Grove, LIMHP.

But incomplete brain development also means adolescents “are naturally more likely to be impulsive and engage in problem behaviors.” Instead of losing hours in the digital world, Grove suggested teens cut back and have more “in-person social interactions” through organized school, church and club activities, as well as part-time jobs.

“Just One Breath” Mindfulness Exercise

1. Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably and set a timer for one minute.
2. Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.
3. Take a slow, deep breath. Imagine the air moving down into your lungs and back up as you exhale.
4. Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.

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Contrary to popular belief, the act of self-harm known as cutting isn’t necessarily a prelude to a suicide attempt. However, it should be taken seriously. “Typically children are using it as a coping mechanism for emotional pain. It provides a sense of control,” said Christi Cloyd, LIMHP, LADC, a CHI Health psychotherapist and chemical dependence counselor.

Cutting can also be addictive because it releases endorphins – similar to a runner’s high. “After cutting, they get this endorphin dump for 90 to 120 seconds, but then a tidal wave of guilt and shame usually comes afterwards, which might prompt them to cut again,” Cloyd said.

If you suspect your child is cutting, don’t overreact or try to control the behavior. Ask your child – in a direct and caring way – if they are cutting. If they are, ask what is hurting them emotionally. Then seek professional help immediately.

Teen Suicide: An Alarming Trend

It’s every parent’s worst nightmare and it’s on the rise. In 2016, suicide became the No. 2 leading cause of death for U.S. teens after staying at No. 3 and even decreasing in the 1980s and 1990s. One reason: teen suicide attempts may be more likely to be lethal.

“If you’re worried about your child:

- Talk about it. Don’t be afraid to ask: “Do you want to kill yourself?”
- Remove access to guns, knives, prescription and over-the-counter medications, ropes and belts.
- Seek professional help immediately.

Trophy-Free Self-Esteem: Get It with Grit

Self-esteem isn’t about winning. It’s about what you learn along the way. “Confidence is the key word,” said Teri Echtenkamp, LIMHP, CHI Health psychotherapist. “Kids with self-esteem know their self-worth, their abilities. They can be confident in struggle or in success.”

Following the self-esteem buzz of the late 1980s, researchers found this: “The best way to build self-esteem is in activities that are useful and challenging,” Echtenkamp said. That doesn’t necessarily mean organized sports or academic achievements. It can be a casual hobby or volunteer work which is personally meaningful.


Building Kids Up: The Parents’ Role

- Talk about your own failures. Let kids see how you handle struggles.
- Participate in activities that challenge you. Talk about hurdles and progress.
- Practice habits you want your kids to adopt. Put your cellphone down at dinner and listen.
- Compare your child to others. But do have and communicate standards.
- Put yourself down. Even toddlers pick up on negative self-talk.
- Be a lawnmower or snow blower. Let your children clear their own paths forward.

Set Limits for Strong Kids

Healthy habits are essential, so set limits and stick with them. “It’s the hard and boring part of being a parent, but it’s essential,” said Teri Echtenkamp, LIMHP, CHI Health psychotherapist.

- 9 to 11 hours sleep for ages 6 to 13 and 8 to 10 hours sleep for ages 14 to 17
- More fruits, vegetables, grains and healthy proteins and less sugary snacks and energy drinks
- An hour a day of structured sports or unstructured play
- Good digital habits
- Create family media plan at healthychildren.org

If you suspect your child is cutting, don’t overreact or try to control the behavior.
“How are you?” It’s a question we ask, usually without expecting a serious answer. But if we talk more openly about mental health, struggles many share could be brought to light—where there’s support.

If you’re concerned about a friend or loved one, try starting a conversation. Some approaches from mentalhealth.gov:

• “I’ve been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?”
• “It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help you to find help?”
• “I’m concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?”

If you are struggling, tell someone you trust. These are delicate conversations. Some are better at offering and accepting support than others, and misunderstandings are inevitable. But making an effort can make a world of difference.

Simple Ways to Break the Silence—Conversation Starters

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Mood Swings, Aggression, Depression – It’s Not a Phase

The teen years can be a roller coaster of accelerated hormones, plummeting moods and startling behaviors. Thankfully, most adolescents manage to stay on track. But how do you know if normal teenage angst has turned the corner into clinical anxiety? If teen aggression is endangering their development? Or worse, if moodiness is putting them at risk for suicide?

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in five young adults lives with a mental health condition, while 50 percent of all lifetime mental illnesses begins by age 14. “If you’re worried, tell someone,” said Hugo Gonzalez, MD, CHI Health psychiatrist. “An easy first step is to talk with your doctor to rule out other physical health conditions, then ask for help finding a mental health specialist. Anxiety and depression are serious problems—not something teens are going to outgrow. Getting the right help early is extremely important.”

Mental Illness: 10 Warning Signs*

1. Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
2. Seriously trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so
3. Severe out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors
4. Sudden, overwhelming fear for no reason
5. Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or weight gain
6. Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
7. Repeatedly using drugs or alcohol
8. Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
9. Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still
10. Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

*From the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).
For help and answers call 402-717-HOPE

CHI Health Omaha/Council Bluffs
Metro Locations
Creighton University Medical Center - Bergan Mercy
Immanuel
Lakeside
Lasting Hope Recovery Center

Mercy Council Bluffs
Midlands
Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility

Psychiatric Associates clinics:
3308 Samson Way, Suite 203, Bellevue
2001 S 75th Street, Suite 100, Omaha
801 Harmony Street, Suite 302, Council Bluffs
415 S 25th Avenue, Omaha
7101 Newport Avenue, Omaha
16909 Lakeside Hills Court, Suite 400, Omaha
11109 S 84th Street, Suite 3841, Papillion

Additional help:
Nebraska Family Helpline Any Problem. Any Time.
1-888-866-8660

Boys Town National Hotline
1-800-448-3000

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

Red Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio
1-888-628-9454

If you are a danger to yourself or others, or know someone who is, call 911.