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Topic: Mental Health in Schools

Mental health is a problem for adolescents and adults alike. Without mental wellness, people suffer from issues like anxiety, depression, lack of concentration, or eating disorders. Unfortunately, there are lots of teenagers who face these issues, and they lack support. I am well aware of this because I have dealt with this problem and found it hard to ask for help out of the fear of not being taken seriously - a reaction I received at home. My academic performance suffered, making it seem as though I didn't care when I just needed help. Lack of mental health awareness is a major issue that needs to be addressed because too many students are suffering. Schools are not prepared to help them; therefore, schools need to invest in resources to adequately support adolescents.

Schools should raise awareness about mental health issues. The article *The importance of Mental Health Awareness*, highlights how mental health issues affect more than twice as many teens as adults: 46% compared with 19%. That number needs to be better known to highlight the gap between teens and adults dealing with mental health problems. However, schools are not prepared to support students due to a lack of resources. According to the article *Mental Health in Schools: A Hidden Crisis affecting millions of students*, there just aren't enough staff members to tackle the job. The educators charged with supporting students dealing with mental health issues are the same ones who are "drowning in huge caseloads." Therefore, schools need to apply a multi-tiered support system that provides resources without burdening teachers. For example having different services for students dealing with different things.

Furthermore, there are real consequences to not addressing this issue. The Child Mind Institute found that while the overall dropout rate is 7%, it elevates to 38.7% for students served under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) with emotional disturbance. Some believe that serving students with mental health issues is not a school responsibility. The Vice President of Policy and Programs at Mental Health America, Theresa Nguyen, believes that while educators can help identify "red flags in students' interactions and behaviors", they are already pushed to their limits. Yet, the article by Classroom Mental Health highlights how teachers are in a "unique position" to identify when students are in a bad mental state.

Addressing mental health in schools is not as difficult as some may think. The National Association of School Psychologists suggests building and improving the communication between educators and establishing leadership teams "composed of school and community mental-health professionals". This partnering can ensure that educators don't get overwhelmed.

Overall, it is important to remember that bringing awareness to mental health and breaking the stigma around it is key to helping students dealing with these issues in the present and future or else teens will keep getting the same reaction I did when I tried to reach for help at home.

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