

A Quick Look at...

LONELINESS & ISOLATION WITH TEENS

Diocesan Youth Minister Meet-Up Notes from January 12, 2021

Key Points from Presentation with Kristi Stefani, PsyD:

- *Isolation and separation are our deepest sources of pain.* As humans, we are created with a desire to be seen, to be loved, and to belong.
 - Suffering is bearable if there is the presence of another.
 - Showing up and simply being present is what matters most!
- Statistics from the World Health Organization:
 - ½ of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age but most cases are undetected and untreated.
 - 10-20% of adolescents globally experience mental health issues.
 - Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15 to 19-year-olds.
- What contributes to Mental Health:
 - **Biology:** Are you eating well, sleeping? Getting fresh air and rest?
 - **Head & Heart:** Are you making space for expressing feelings, thoughts, and emotions? Talk to someone, write it out, prayer.
 - **Relational:** Are you staying connected to family, friends, God?
- Tips for Youth Ministers to support teens:
 - **Listen.** Know that you aren't responsible for solving their distress.
 - **Model healthy boundaries.** Give yourself permission to be human and have limitations. Reach out when you can't personally help.
 - **Do not be afraid** to discuss mental health, suicide, and self-harm with youth—if they are suffering, *your accompaniment is key!*

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Going Deeper

- Diocesan “Foster the Good” speaker series, Session One: Knowing One’s Role When Loving Your Neighbor: <https://richmonddiocese.org/session-1-knowing-ones-role-when-loving-your-neighbor/>
- Podcasts on Mental Health by Ave Explores: <https://www.avemariapress.com/aveexplores-mentalhealth>

Training Opportunity

- Mental Health First Aid Course: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/>

Organizations

- [Commonwealth Catholic Charities](#)
- [IPS Center for Psychological Services](#)

- Q&A about Walking with Distressed Teens when You're Not a Therapist -

1. Sometimes teens will come to me and bring up something and know my limits if someone or they're in danger I have to let people know but sometimes it's a situation where they go to their parents and they either don't care or don't have a good response. Do you have tips for navigating bringing a parent in and not betraying the teen by doing so? Approach the youth by saying “some of the things that you've shared with me would be helpful to share with your family. Is there a way we can go about that together? How can I support you in talking to your parents? What do you want them to know? What are you open and willing to share?” This allows the youth to be part of the decision-making process as you bring everyone together, rather than leaving them alone.
2. **What can we do to more engage youth and help them not feel alone and isolated during this time of COVID?** Be straight forward and admit ZOOM can be exhausting and it is hard to engage all the time. Invite your teens to give ideas and take ownership of some of your virtual youth events. When possible, get out of the virtual world and do as much as you can in-person safely—seeing someone in-person improves feelings of loneliness much quicker!



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