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# PATH PARENT NEWSLETTER

*December 2020*

## **Message from PATH:**

**Parents, welcome back to our quarterly newsletter! This issue we focused on the topics of mental health and communication as they are both important agents in preventing substance use among youth and young adults. You'll also find helpful information on what a safe space is and how to practice active listening. We hope you find this information useful to share with your friends and family.**

# MENTAL



# HEALTH

## **Why is mental health important?**

Mental health consists of your emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is just as important as your physical health because it impacts your daily activities, responsibilities, and relationships. It's the foundation for dealing with emotions, thinking, communicating, learning, being resilient, and building self-esteem. Unfortunately, it's still not talked about or normalized enough. Millions of people suffer from mental health problems or illnesses and many go untreated. People of all ages can struggle with their mental health, even though stresses and adversities look different for everyone. Poor mental health is one of many factors that causes a person to turn to substance use as a coping mechanism. This is why it is necessary and important to normalize speaking about it and seeking help.

## Helpful Tips and Resources

Mental health problems can be treatable and improve over time for some people. Improving your mental health varies from person to person since everyone goes through different life experiences and we recognize that not everyone has equal access to health care. However, here are some tips and recommendations that may help:

- **Stay active physically and mentally. You can find some examples on how to do so in our previous parent newsletter [here](#).**
- **Eat and drink healthier to the best of your ability. Healthier diets increase ability to engage in more physical activity. If your body feels good, then you could potentially feel good mentally. You can find healthy eating tips on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#).**
- **Do something you love or try a new or old hobby that once made you happy. It may be hard to visit certain places or participate in some activities due to social distancing, but this could be an opportunity for you to try something new like cooking new recipes, creating any form of art , or finally reading some books that you've been meaning to get to.**
- **Communicate your feelings and experiences to a professional or trusted individual, if or when you are ready to do so. If not, then it is still important for your mental health to stay connected with friends and family. Even though our main form of communication at the moment is virtual, there's still fun ways to spice up a zoom call such as screen sharing a movie night or hosting a virtual game night. If you are ready to have a conversation about mental health or would like to know the best way to support someone who shares that information with you, [here](#) is a good resource.**

It's okay to prioritize your own well-being and change your routine by including activities that bring you joy. We must first help ourselves sometimes before we are better able to help others. It's also okay to reach out to local resources if you feel you can't get through it alone. Fresno has many resources and we've listed some below:

- **The Peer-Run Warm Line: Fresno County (559)-600-9276**
  - **SAMHSA Disaster Stress Line: Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.**
  - **Teen Line: Call (310) 855-HOPE or (800) TLC-TEEN (nationwide toll-free) from 6pm to 10pm PST or Text "TEEN" to 839863 between 6:00pm-9:00pm PST to receive person teen-to-teen education and support.**
  - **Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-888-506-5991**
  - **Exodus Crisis Stabilization Center (Adults): 559-512-8335**
  - **Exodus Crisis Stabilization Center (Child/Youth): 559-512-8700**
  - **Exodus Psychiatric Health Facility: 559-453-5199**
  - **Community Behavioral Health Center: 559-449-8000**
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## Active Listening and Communication Tips

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Children, teens and young adults face pressures and stress growing up. Without healthy tools and ways of coping with them, they could potentially take a risk with substance use. Many young people feel like they don't have the space or ability to talk to someone about what they're going through or feeling, which is why it's important to start creating a safe space. A safe space is a place where anyone can relax and fully self-express, without fear of feeling uncomfortable, unwelcomed, or discriminated against on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability. It requires open and honest communication as well as active listening. Active listening is a skill that directs the focus from what's in your head to the words coming from the other person. By being able to

# PARENT



# TIPS

focus on what another person is saying, you can understand needs and information more accurately. In other words, listening to understand rather than listening to respond. It requires no interrupting, summarizing what they said, repeating what you hear back to them, and reading their body language. Active listening needs a judgment free space to really understand what the person has to share and therefore helps foster a safe space.

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We acknowledge every family is different and some communication strategies or advice may work for some but not others. As parents, there are many different ways to start a conversation about healthy choices and educating youth about substance use. It isn't always a one time talk, but can actually occur through frequent conversations. [Here](#) is a good resource on how to have those conversations with your child at any age. Lastly, we have listed some communication tips that you may find to be applicable to you and your family.

- Pick a time convenient for everyone involved. Rushing to other commitments or thinking about other responsibilities will distract the conversation or end it short.
- Find a distraction free zone away from phones, the television, company, or other electronics. This creates an open and comfortable space to talk freely.
- Body language is important. Large gestures with hands or arms during discussion could be intimidating.
- Share that you are asking questions because you care about their health, safety, and well-being.
- Emphasize them sharing honestly rather than telling you only what you want to hear.
- Open ended questions will help avoid yes or no answers.
- Let them know you're listening. Either by rephrasing, asking questions or by nonverbal cues such as nodding.

- Pay attention to their body language, facial expressions, and difficulty finding words to show you what or when they start to feel upset or uncomfortable.
- Always thank them for sitting and talking with you even if the conversation didn't go as planned.
- Praise and feedback for things they do well shows you see beyond what they did wrong.
- Give them assurance that they can always call you when they need you or lean on you

If you need help with non offensive terminology to hold these conversations, [here](#) is a good resource on the importance of communicating about substance use.

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# KNOW THE



# FACTS

**“People who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are four to seven times more likely to develop a marijuana use disorder than adults”**

**- National Institute on Drug Abuse  
(NIH)**

**Marijuana can be addictive. The younger people start using it increases the risk that they are to become dependent, in which a person feels withdrawal symptoms when not taking the drug. Withdrawal symptoms include: irritability, mood and sleep difficulties, decreased appetite, cravings, restlessness, and/or various forms of physical discomfort. Marijuana use disorder, or problem use, becomes addiction when the frequent use interferes with everyday life and responsibilities and the person cannot stop using the drug.**

**Use the information in this newsletter to start or maintain the conversation about substance use and making healthy life choices. Untreated mental health issues are a main cause of substance use. Open**



and honest communication is important to foster a safe space for youth to address their mental health concerns.

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## Happening This Month...

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👂👂 Coming soon! The Asian Pacific/Islander Partners & Advocate Countering Tobacco (API PACT) Program is excited to finally introduce to you something that have been in the works for some time now behind the scenes! It's an IGTV series called "Spill the Tea" which is a platform where the CALI Youth Coalition (Livingston & Visalia) and local community voices come together to prioritize health equity! Be on the lookout for the first episode coming soon on Instagram @api.pact



The Youth Making Change Against Tobacco (MCAT) Project has officially been around for a year! It began in October of 2019 with the goal to mobilize youth to create policy, systems, and environmental changes in an effort to decrease the availability and promotion of tobacco products in unincorporated Fresno County. Over the last year, there have been 9 youth (representing Easton and Caruthers) actively involved in collecting public opinion polls, interpreting data, and meeting with Fresno County elected officials to move their efforts forward. In December, the group will host a strategy session to identify their goals and activities for this upcoming year.

# REACT!

## REGIONAL ADVOCATES COUNTERING TOBACCO

Regional Advocates Countering Tobacco (REACT) will be hosting a Youth Winter Academy from January 4th-7th, the workshops available will be focused on spokesperson training's, career development, advocacy and much more! if you know any youth who would benefit from any of these workshops please contact Muriel Gobeia at [mgobeia@healthcollaborative.org](mailto:mgobeia@healthcollaborative.org)



Performing Above The High Project (PATH) and Lock It Up Project have been working hard prepping for the 2021 Fresno County Youth Summit happening on **Saturday, January 30th, and February 6th, 2020, via Zoom**. This annual event is designed to provide Fresno County youth with an opportunity for empowerment, education, and enlightenment on relevant youth issues important to our community. The Fresno County Youth Summit will bring forth various community partners willing to provide their expertise and knowledge on youth chosen topics, including but not limited to; substance use prevention, mental health, and professional development opportunities. This event is for Fresno County youth only, so save the dates and look out for the registration for it coming soon.



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