



# Rand Park High School

*Integrity and Commitment*

Asgaai Avenue, Randpark Ridge • 011 793 1246 • [www.randparkhigh.co.za](http://www.randparkhigh.co.za)

## COUNSELLING NEWSLETTER

### Anxiety and Teens

28 September 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians and Learners,

***Why do there seem to be so many cases of stress, anxiety, depression and other psychological and mental disorders amongst the youth today?***

Many parents and teachers ask me this question as there is a growing concern that today's youth seems to be plagued with countless conditions, disorders, syndromes and labels. There is no simple answer to this question and various explanations can be considered as to why psychological problems seem to be more prevalent amongst our young people today.

It is important to remember that most of the disorders we hear about have been in existence for decades. The difference is that in today's society, there is definitely a larger awareness of psychological disorders and conditions and it is generally being viewed as more acceptable than it was in previous years and generations. TV shows, movies, magazines and social media create more awareness and information is readily available all over the Internet. It is no longer a taboo topic and therefore seems to be talked about more and more.



Image source: [newsapi.com.au](http://newsapi.com.au)

Together with the greater awareness, there is, unfortunately also the factor of misdiagnosis. So many young people "diagnose" themselves by "Googling" symptoms or completing a checklist on the Internet. Parents often "diagnose" their children based on something they read somewhere. Many general practitioners also tend to make quick diagnoses and prescribe medication without investigating a differential diagnosis or referring to the relevant specialists. This is a concern since many children and teenagers are placed on medication that isn't necessarily right or even helpful for them.



Image source: [www.momjunction.com](http://www.momjunction.com)

Furthermore, young people follow current trends and tendencies amongst the youth and it has, in some way, become a trend or fashionable to be "mentally ill" or to have a psychological problem of some sort. In some friendship circles it becomes a competition to see who is most unstable; who needs the most treatment; who has the most and deepest cuts; or who is more suicidal. This trend-following behaviour tends to distort symptoms and makes it difficult to make proper diagnoses as many teenagers embellish and even fake symptoms. That is why it is so important that differential diagnoses be made by psychologists or psychiatrists.

# COUNSELLING NEWSLETTER

## Anxiety and Teens

28 September 2017

### Reasons or causes of stress that lead to psychological disorders:

We live in a global community and are no longer isolated in a corner somewhere in Southern Africa without any contact with the larger world. Information regarding global trends and issues is readily available and we are seeing a greater awareness - and even sensational reporting - around issues such as depression, self-harm, suicide games and applications like "Blue Whale". Movies about teen depression and suicide such as "Thirteen Reasons Why" create awareness but also have the power to trigger an unhealthy curiosity amongst vulnerable teenagers.

The youth of today not only struggle with typical peer pressure at school, but they are also subjected to peer pressure on social media platforms and the pressure to fit in, to be popular and to be accepted and "liked" in the public eye. The temptation is often there to act against their personal or family values and principles in order to be accepted or to get attention. Teenagers attach immense value to the recognition and response they receive on social media and many of them rely on it for validation.



Children and teenagers are not only bullied at school anymore but risk being bullied and ridiculed on social media at any time of the day or night. The public humiliation that happens on social media platforms can have a very harmful effect on their self-esteem and emotional well-being and many young people find it very hard to cope with.

Lack of parental support and general absent parenting also play a large role. Children don't know who to turn to for help and support anymore as their parents are either too busy or not present. Parents work long hours and have busy schedules and as a result of the massive economic pressure, there is often so much tension in households that kids are too scared to share with their parents when they need help. They then find other ways of trying to cope with their stress and problems and often turn to attention-seeking behaviour or harmful influences that mislead them.

### Advice for Parents:

- Create an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, love and support for your child. Avoid being judgmental and condemning, even when you feel disappointed in their behaviour or choices. They must always know that they can turn to you, regardless of the situation. Yes, there needs to be consequences for actions, but these can still be implemented with love and without condemnation.

*Create an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, love and support for your child.*

- Monitor your child's social media interaction and be aware of any inappropriate or unhealthy patterns or communication. Don't hesitate to set boundaries and even forbid it if you see that it becomes a source of unnecessary emotional distress or distraction for your child.
- When your child discusses topics such as depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorders and suicide with you, don't make light of it and don't hush them up. Listen and talk to your child and make sure s/he gets your input regarding these topics so that you can provide realistic information. Chances are that if they are talking to you about it, they have already discussed it with friends or seen it on social media or TV. These sources will, in most cases, create misperceptions or contain misinformation.

# COUNSELLING NEWSLETTER

## Anxiety and Teens

28 September 2017

- When you suspect that your child has an emotional or psychological problem, ensure that you consult an expert to obtain a proper diagnosis. Don't simply "Google" or rely on your general practitioner or pharmacist to make a quick diagnosis based on some symptoms. A psychiatrist or psychologist must make a differential diagnosis while taking all contributing factors and the holistic person into consideration. Even as educational or counselling psychologists, we often refer to clinical psychologists or psychiatrists to make a proper diagnosis in conditions or disorders of a serious and complicated nature.



Image Source: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org).

Let us be hands-on parents and teachers in guiding our youth by providing correct information and keeping an eye on their emotional and psychological well-being.

Remember that you can contact your child's Grade Tutor or the School Psychologist with any concerns you may have about your child and we will support, advise and guide you wherever possible.

Yours sincerely

L KLEINGELD (MRS)  
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

### RAND PARK HIGH SCHOOL



**School closes on  
Friday, 29 September  
directly after the exam has been  
written and re-opens on  
Monday, 9 October 2017.**

**Term 3 school reports  
will be distributed on  
Tuesday, 17 October.**

*Enjoy the holidays!*