

## The Struggle is Real: What Our Children are Faced With

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Each generation struggles with the current social climate thrust into their developmental path. This struggle is now uniquely and overwhelmingly global. Events, tragedies, sex, and “how to” smorgasbord of every parent’s nightmare is just a click away.

Our teens and young adults are living post 9/11, with threats of terrorism, national insecurity, mass shootings upon innocent civilians, and the social upheaval of diversion in our communities. Despite gains in education, the competition for jobs is soaring. These factors create a soup of psychological warfare on our youth.

There is no reprieve as technology keeps us ever so connected to global issues. Wickedly slanting youth experience is the role of social media. Vigilance is not required to discover exclusion. There’s cyberbullying, constant comparison to others, the obsessive need to document your moments, and the ever-elusive search for a flattering selfie.

So how have these factors affected our youth? We are in a crisis. A national survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

found 8.2% of youth between 12-17 years in 2001 were depressed, compared to 11.4% in 2014. Anxiety figures are similarly rising. Suicide is rising in youth, especially in girls. There has been an increase of 27% in suicide from 2006 to 2014 in the 19 years and under age group, with self-harm rising steadily in conjunction.

To further complicate the parenting dilemma of mental health issues, we know that these difficulties cut across every demographic statistic- city or suburban, every race, college bound or not, male or female, athlete or not, academically successful or not.

What is a parent to do during these difficult times? Parents can feel helpless, especially when technology is changing so rapidly. Sensible parenting practices include:

- **Stay educated** about the emotional struggles this generation is experiencing
- **Lead by example** and remain engaged and attuned to your children, which will mean staying reasonably unplugged from technology yourself
- **Share your concerns** with your child if you suspect self-harm, anxiety or depression in an honest, open and nonjudgmental way

- **Get help**, this is a difficult step to take for many reasons, but do not delay
- **Welcome family interventions**, not just interventions for your child alone