DROP IN ARTICLE

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Summer is wrapping up, and many are prepping to get back in the swing of things with school. If the thought of going back to school fills you with dread and anxiety, you're not alone.

If something just doesn't "feel right" and you aren't sure why, you may be dealing with a mental health condition.

Did you know that half of all mental health disorders begin by the age of 14, and about 75 percent begin by the age of 24? But it's also important to know that mental health issues are common and treatable.

Stress and loneliness can also impact your school year. While you aren't necessarily dealing with bills, difficult bosses, and frustrating commutes, there are plenty of situations that can cause stress. Things like getting good grades, preparing for the future, loneliness and body appearance all are things that can cause stress. When your stress starts impacting sleep or what you are eating, when you can't that sad feeling – it could be something more serious.

It's also normal to feel lonely sometimes, but when you are lonely a lot, it can affect you in a number of ways. Research shows that chronic loneliness can translate to poor sleep, high blood pressure, greater risk of suicidal ideation, and even alcohol and drug use.

Mental Health America (MHA) has also developed tools and resources to help increase your understanding of stress and loneliness and is providing materials on the topic for you, parents, and school personnel.

Don't suffer in silence! It's important to know the signs and symptoms of mental health issues and seek help. Free, confidential, and anonymous screening tools are available at www.MHAScreening.org to check in on your symptoms and to find resources to help.

While you do not get to choose what happens to you, you do get to choose how you respond. Learn more at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/back-school. This school year make smart choices about how to deal with stress and loneliness - and learn why your mental health matters.

Just like physical health, taking care of mental health struggles early can help to prevent more serious problems from developing in the future. If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental health problem, it is important to act before Stage 4. Start the conversation. Seek help from a trusted adult. Remember there is nothing to be ashamed of and that there is help and hope. Don't know how to start the conversation? MHA has tips and information to help get you started at bit.ly/tips4talking.

There are also serious signs that someone is in crisis and needs more immediate help. These include thoughts or plans of hurting oneself or another person. If you or someone you know is in crisis call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), text "MHA" to 741741, or call 911.