

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TOOLKIT 2023

Selfies, Social, & Screens:

Navigating Virtual Spaces for Youth



As we step into another school year, it remains crucial to recognize the mental health challenges our nation's school-age children face.

Going back to school can be an exciting time filled with new friends, new social events, and new extracurriculars. But returning to school also means re-entering the virtual spaces that exist in tandem with the classroom – which can be both helpful and harmful. For young people, online spaces can bring with them feelings of exclusion, body image concerns, misinformation, cyberbullying, harassment, and violent content – all of which have an impact on mental health.

The early challenges a child experiences, including traumatic events that might occur while online, play a significant role in their future mental health. That is why, in this digital world dominated by selfies and social media, it is important to foster a welcoming, supportive, and compassionate environment where young people feel comfortable discussing the unique difficulties and pressures that arise.

Mental Health America (MHA) is dedicated to providing quality resources that can be used to facilitate these kinds of conversations. Through this toolkit, we aim to equip you with the social media knowledge you need to support the young people in your life, whether that is as a parent, caregiver, teacher, coach, counselor, or school administrator.

As an adult, it may seem like you will never fully “get” the complex social dynamics that play out behind a young person’s phone screen, even after reading through the information in this toolkit. Remember that you do not have to understand every social media trend or new term that a young person uses in order to provide effective emotional support. Being a trusted role model that does their best to empathize with the issues in a young person’s life goes a long way.

If you do understand the ins and outs of today’s social media platforms and are an avid user of virtual spaces yourself, remember that young people constantly look to the adults in their life as they build habits. Parents, caretakers, and household members act as the main influence on a child’s use of technology. While you may be using this toolkit mainly to learn how to support a young person, you can use many of the tips and takeaways to model good habits in your own life.

We thank you for taking the time to educate yourself with this toolkit, we are grateful for the support you are providing, and we thank Walgreens and Otsuka for their commitment to youth mental health. By working together, we can build a more mentally healthy world for the next generation, both on and off screens.

Schroeder Stribling
President & CEO
Mental Health America





At Walgreens, we're committed to doing our part to help address the most pressing needs in health care and we're proud to have partnered with Mental Health America since 2016 to heighten mental health awareness and improve access to screening tools and a range of other resources.

We continue to build on this critically important work together, from our collaboration on improving workplace mental health and well-being to this year's back-to-school campaign and much-needed focus on youth mental health.

This isn't just an urgent need, it is a health crisis in our society today. We know the impact that social media and the latest technologies can have on the overall mental health of children and adolescents, especially. It's also why this is the focal point of the 2023 back-to-school toolkit, with tools and information to help support the young people in our lives while trying to navigate these spaces in a healthy way.

It is our hope that by providing more resources for teachers, administrators, parents, and others who play such an integral role during these pivotal years, it will be another step toward ensuring the health and well-being of our nation's youth and the communities we serve.

Holly May

Executive Vice President and Global Chief Human Resources Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc.

How To Use This Toolkit

SCHOOLS

- Provide teachers with a training session using information from the toolkit to guide the presentation.
- Have printouts of the fact sheets and resources for immediate help available in classrooms, counselor offices, and nursing offices.
- Provide handouts from the toolkit at PTA meetings.
- Use the sample newsletter content in your next school-wide parent email.
- Share resources from the toolkit in parent emails throughout the school year.
- Print posters from the toolkit and display them in the hallways, teacher lounges, and other youth and staff-facing spaces.
- Create a lesson plan for students guided by the information in the toolkit.
- Consider getting a copy of Mental Health America's "Where to Start" book for your school library.
- Check to see if there is a Mental Health America affiliate in your area. If there is, reach out to them about the possibility of them providing school training, assemblies, or helping to raise awareness with students and parents about what youth-facing programs they provide within the community.
- Post the social media images in the toolkit to your school's page to encourage awareness.
- Consider utilizing the Mental Health America Screening program within your school as a free resource for students and staff. Learn more in the MHA Resources section.
- Encourage staff to attend Mental Health America webinars that provide information on various youth mental health-related topics. See details on the Virtual Events page.

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Read the fact sheets and resources in the toolkit to learn more about your child's mental health and technology use.
- Watch for the signs that your child might be struggling. If you suspect they are, tell them they are not alone and encourage them to discuss it with you. Utilize the resources within the toolkit to find support and next steps.
- Talk to your child about their online habits. Encourage healthy social media use and inform them about safe and best practices. See the "social media do's" section of the toolkit for guidance.

This toolkit includes

- **Key Messages**
- **Drop-in Article**
- **Sample Social Media Posts and Images**
- **Resource Guide**
- **Fact Sheets for Adults**
- **Fact Sheets for Youth**
- **Posters**



- Educate yourself on mental health topics. By learning more about mental health, you can best support the young person in your life. Reading through the toolkit, gathering the resources provided, and attending online learning events can help prepare you to meet your child's evolving needs.
- Utilize Mental Health America's online screening program. If you suspect your child is struggling, go to mhascreening.org. There you will find free, quick, and easy online screens to determine whether they are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. You will then be provided with a series of resources and next steps you can take.
- Check if a Mental Health America affiliate near you provides youth-focused programming that your child could benefit from. See the MHA Affiliate Programs section of the toolkit for guidance.
- Consider purchasing a copy of MHA's "[Where to Start](#)" book for your child.
- Follow Mental Health America on social media to stay updated on information, resources, and events.
- Attend Mental Health America webinars, listen to the In the Open Podcast, or keep up to date with our blogs. These free resources provide information on various youth mental health-related topics. See details on the Virtual Events page.
- Share the toolkit and its resources with other parents or parent groups you are connected to.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Review the "Social Media Do's" list to help you build a healthier relationship with social media and technology.
- If you are struggling and need support, look at the immediate help resources, Mental Health America resources, and MHA partners to help best support your current needs.
- Take a mental health test at mhascreening.org to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Our screening provides quick and free information, resources, and the next steps you can take.
- Consider asking a parent, guardian, or local library to purchase the "[Where to Start](#)" book. This book can provide you with some direction and resources if you are struggling.
- Check if there is a Mental Health America affiliate program in your area that could help you feel connected and improve your mental health.
- Participate in the Walgreens Expressions Challenge. This program encourages you to use your voice creatively through art, writing, spoken word, and multimedia to provide your perspective on mental health topics. Get more information in the Resources section.
- Visit the new youth section of MHA's website at mhanational.org/youth for more information and resources designed for you.

