

# Mental, emotional and behavioral disorders can be prevented in young people

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Around one in five young people in the U.S. have a current mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder. About half of all adults with mental disorders recalled that their disorders began by their mid-teens and three-quarters by their mid-20s. Early onset of mental health problems have been associated with poor outcomes such as failure to complete high school, increased risk for psychiatric and substance problems, and teen pregnancy.

A new article by Mary E. Evans, RN, PhD, FAAN, published in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* assesses the recently released government report on preventing these disorders among young people. Dr. Evans' paper concludes that using certain interventional programs in schools, communities and health care settings, risk for mental illness can be better identified and treated.

The article highlights the fact that specific risk and protective factors have been identified for many disorders. For example, certain thinking and behavioral patterns are risks for the development of depression. Nonspecific factors that increase risk for developing disorders also include poverty, marital conflict, poor peer relations, and community violence. Also, certain neurobiological factors contribute to the development of disorders in youth, but this is also influenced by environmental factors.

A key risk factor for externalizing disorders is aggressive social behavior that begins in early childhood. A number of interventions have been

developed to provide training in parenting skills to prevent the development of aggressive and antisocial behavior. In addition, some preventive interventions have targeted specific disorders such as depression and schizophrenia. Cognitive behavioral treatment for high-risk adolescents has lowered the rate of major depressive symptoms. Also, a number of community-based programs have been shown to be effective in promoting healthy behaviors.

"For all nurses, this report will increase our understanding of risk and protective factors related to the healthy development of children and youth," Evans concludes.

Source: Wiley ([news](#) : [web](#))

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