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**Beyond the Shadows: Navigating the Landscape of Teenage  
Depression and Crafting a Compassionate Future**

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## **Beyond the Shadows: Navigating the Landscape of Teenage Depression and Crafting a Compassionate Future**

"The intensity of mental anguish may lack the visible drama of physical pain, yet it is a far more pervasive and challenging experience. The inclination to conceal emotional suffering compounds the burden, as articulating 'My tooth is aching' is simpler than admitting 'My heart is broken.'"

-Adapted from C.S. Lewis, "The Problem of Pain"

In the dynamic landscape of adolescence, where dreams are conceived, and identities are sculpted, a silent but pervasive challenge threatens the well-being of our youth. Globally, these stark statistics come from the World Health Organization (WHO): one in seven 10-19-year-olds wrestles with a mental disorder, constituting a formidable 13% of the global burden of disease within this age group. Amidst the array of mental health challenges faced by adolescents, depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders emerge as formidable adversaries, casting a shadow over the vibrant years of growth and self-discovery.

Consider this alarming fact: suicide, a tragic outcome of untreated mental health conditions, now stands as the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds, according to WHO. These figures paint a poignant picture of a global crisis affecting the very demographic poised on the brink of their futures.

The harrowing statistics emanating from Kota alone, the hub of coaching in India paint a stark reality of the profound consequences of teenage depression on individuals, particularly in the high-pressure environment of competitive education. The recent surge in suicides, with five students taking their lives in Kota in August alone, underscores the urgency of addressing the mental health crisis faced by students. Tragically, this adds to a distressing trend, with a total of 23 reported suicides in Kota this year. Delving deeper into the disconcerting numbers reveals a distressing pattern, as 15 students succumbed to the extreme step in 2022, emphasizing the persisting nature of the issue. The years preceding 2022 witnessed a distressing trajectory, with one student in 2021, four in 2020, eight in 2019, 12 in 2018, and 10 in 2017. The common thread weaving through these tragedies is the distressing prevalence of stress over low test scores as a stated reason for these suicides. This alarming

pattern not only highlights the immediate emotional toll on these individuals but also points to the systemic and societal dimensions that demand urgent attention. As we confront the rising incidence of depression among teens, these distressing occurrences serve as poignant reminders of the critical need for comprehensive interventions, encompassing not only academic support but also mental health resources and societal awareness to prevent further loss of young lives.

However, the gravity of the issue extends beyond mere statistics. The consequences of failing to address the mental health challenges faced by adolescents reverberate into adulthood, impairing not only their physical and mental well-being but also limiting their opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults. As we delve into the rising incidence of depression among teens, it is imperative to recognize that the stakes are high, and the need for meaningful change is urgent. Our exploration seeks not only to understand the roots of this crisis but also to illuminate a path towards a more resilient and empathetic future for the youth grappling with these profound challenges.

Teenage depression exerts a profound impact on both individuals and society, shaping emotional well-being, academic achievement, and social dynamics. On an individual level, the emotional toll is considerable, with persistent feelings of despair, low self-esteem, and disinterest in once-enjoyed activities. These emotional challenges can translate into academic struggles, affecting concentration and performance in school. Socially, depression strains relationships with peers and family, isolating individuals and hindering the development of crucial support networks. The societal repercussions are far-reaching, burdening educational and healthcare systems with increased demand for mental health services. Untreated teenage depression may also lead to long-term economic consequences, limiting individuals' potential contributions to the workforce. The collective well-being of society is intricately linked to the mental health of its youth, emphasizing the need for comprehensive approaches that address both individual struggles and broader societal implications. In exploring the rising incidence of teenage depression, we aim to shed light on avenues for intervention, prevention, and the cultivation of a more supportive and empathetic societal framework. In the tumultuous journey of adolescence, the weight of various pressures can cast a shadow on the delicate minds of our youth, leading to the profound and heart-wrenching reality of teenage depression. The relentless pursuit of academic excellence, exemplified by cities like Kota in Rajasthan and pockets of Delhi, such as Mukherjee Nagar, reveals a disturbing correlation

with soaring suicide rates. In these educational pressure cookers, young minds grapple with the burden of expectations, often succumbing to the weight of competition and perfection.

The pervasive influence of social media, a ubiquitous companion in the lives of today's teens, paints a nuanced but distressing picture. The story of 16-year-old Queer Artist Priyanshu Yadav from Ujjain is a painful testament to the dark side of virtual spaces. His creative expression in a saree on Instagram Reels, a celebration of identity, turned into a nightmare as hate comments poured in. The tragic outcome of his suicide underscores the devastating impact of online vitriol on the mental health of vulnerable adolescents, illuminating the dire need for a compassionate and empathetic online culture.

Bullying, an age-old tormentor, extends its reach beyond the confines of the schoolyard. The heart-rending tale of Arvey Malhotra, a Class 10th student in Delhi NCR, amplifies the insidious effects of bullying. As the only child of a single mother, Arvey faced relentless torment from schoolmates, culminating in a desperate leap from a building. His story encapsulates the desperation and isolation that can result from unchecked bullying, demanding urgent attention to create safer environments for our youth.

The intimate realm of family life, often underestimated in discussions about teenage depression, carries its own weight. In my own journey, constant relocation due to my mother's transferrable job became a silent harbinger of despair. Stripped away from the familiarity of friends and a stable environment, I found myself grappling with depressive tendencies and contemplating the unthinkable. The absence of a consistent support system and the profound impact of familial dynamics on mental health underscore the need for a holistic approach to addressing teenage depression.

These poignant narratives reflect the emotional toll of teenage depression, weaving a narrative of struggle, isolation, and desperate cries for understanding. As we confront the rising incidence of depression among teens, these stories serve as both a call to action and a reminder of the profound human cost of overlooking the multifaceted sources of adolescent despair. In this exploration, we embark on a journey not only to understand the roots of this crisis but also to pave the way for a more compassionate and supportive future for the youth battling these profound challenges.

The repercussions of teenage depression are profound and extend across various dimensions, each leaving an enduring impact on an individual's life. In the academic sphere, the weight of

depression manifests as a formidable obstacle to success. The emotional burden translates into a lack of motivation and focus, culminating in a tangible decline in academic performance. Struggling with overwhelming emotions, adolescents find themselves caught in a cycle where the challenges of depression and academic setbacks reinforce each other, creating formidable barriers to educational achievement.

This struggle doesn't unfold in isolation; it intricately weaves into the fabric of social relationships. The strain on friendships becomes palpable as individuals grapple with the isolating nature of their emotional turmoil. Friendships may be tested, and social activities may lose their allure as depression fosters withdrawal from the external world. Family relationships, too, bear the brunt of this internal struggle, often strained by a breakdown in communication and an overarching sense of isolation.

Yet, the impact transcends the immediate sphere of academics and social connections, casting a shadow over long-term prospects. Left unaddressed, teenage depression can reverberate into adulthood, limiting educational and career opportunities. Academic setbacks may become lasting hurdles, closing doors that could lead to personal fulfilment and success. The persistent strain on social relationships can extend into the fabric of adult connections, hindering the development of a robust support system essential for navigating life's challenges.

Recognizing these multifaceted consequences emphasizes the urgency of comprehensive and empathetic interventions. Timely support, understanding, and targeted strategies are vital not only for alleviating immediate symptoms but also for mitigating the potential long-term ramifications of teenage depression. In addressing this complex issue, the focus must extend beyond surface manifestations, delving into the intricate interplay of emotional well-being, academic pursuits, and the formation of meaningful social bonds that shape the trajectory of an individual's life.

Addressing the rising incidence of teenage depression necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves systemic changes and targeted interventions. Cultivating social media awareness is imperative in a digital age where virtual platforms play a significant role in shaping adolescent experiences. Initiatives such as campaigns and educational programs can be instrumental in promoting healthy social media usage. By fostering awareness about the

potential impact of online interactions on mental well-being, we empower teens to navigate digital spaces more mindfully and resiliently.

To combat the insidious effects of bullying, implementing anti-bullying initiatives within educational institutions is paramount. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment requires concerted efforts to address and prevent bullying behaviours. This involves not only disciplinary measures but also proactive educational programs that promote empathy, understanding, and tolerance among students, fostering a culture of kindness and acceptance.

Recognizing the pivotal role of mental health in overall well-being, there is a pressing need to integrate mental health education into school curricula. By destigmatizing conversations around mental health and providing students with tools to navigate their own well-being, we can empower them with the knowledge and skills necessary for resilience and self-care.

Equally vital is ensuring that teens have access to mental health resources when needed. This involves dismantling barriers to access and fostering an environment where seeking help is encouraged and supported. By enhancing the availability and visibility of mental health services, we can create a safety net for adolescents, enabling timely intervention and support on their journey towards mental well-being.

In effecting these changes, we embark on a transformative journey towards a more empathetic and supportive environment for adolescents. By addressing stressors within the education system, promoting responsible social media use, fostering inclusive spaces, integrating mental health education, and ensuring access to support services, we lay the foundation for a future where the mental well-being of teens is prioritized and safeguarded. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been instrumental in spearheading initiatives to address the burgeoning challenge of teenage depression globally. At the core of these efforts is the Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, initially adopted in 2013 and subsequently extended until 2030. The plan, updated in 2021, establishes a robust framework, outlining clear actions for Member States, the WHO Secretariat, and international partners to promote mental health, prevent mental health conditions, and ensure universal coverage for mental health services.

In tandem with this overarching plan, specific tools and guidelines have been crafted to address the unique needs of adolescents. The "Guidelines on promotive and preventive mental health interventions for adolescents - Helping Adolescents Thrive (HAT)" provide

evidence-informed recommendations to promote mental health and prevent mental disorders among this demographic. This initiative aims to inform policy development, service planning, and the mainstreaming of mental health promotion and prevention strategies across various sectors.

Moreover, the WHO recognizes the pivotal role of schools in fostering mental health among adolescents. The training manual, "Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice," underscores the significance of schools investing in the mental health of their students. This comprehensive manual offers insights into social-emotional childhood development, mental health-promoting schools, and strategies for early identification and intervention to promote well-being and mental health.

Considering these global initiatives, Member States are urged to effect changes that resonate with the unique challenges faced by their adolescent populations. Education reform emerges as a key avenue, aligning with the WHO's emphasis on effective leadership and governance for mental health. Restructuring the education system to mitigate stressors and promote a more holistic approach to learning is imperative. Simultaneously, campaigns and educational programs to promote healthy social media usage, aligning with the WHO's focus on mental health promotion and prevention strategies, become crucial in an era where virtual platforms significantly impact adolescent experiences.

Anti-bullying initiatives, inspired by the WHO's emphasis on creating supportive and inclusive environments, are essential. Schools should actively work towards fostering empathy, understanding, and tolerance among students, cultivating a culture of kindness and acceptance. Integrating mental health education into school curricula is another pivotal change, aligning with the WHO's commitment to strengthened information systems, evidence, and research.

Ensuring access to mental health resources is a linchpin in this transformative journey. Member States should work towards dismantling barriers to access and fostering an environment where seeking help is encouraged and supported. By enhancing the availability and visibility of mental health services, Member States align with the WHO's goal of achieving universal coverage for mental health services.

In amalgamating these global initiatives with specific changes at the national level, Member States contribute to the creation of nurturing environments. These changes address the

multifaceted challenges of teenage depression, including academic pressure, social media influences, and the need for mental health education and resources. The synergy between global guidelines and localized reforms fosters a comprehensive approach to safeguarding the mental well-being of adolescents worldwide.

In the profound words of Rollo May, "Depression is the inability to construct a future." As we grapple with the multifaceted challenges of teenage depression, these words encapsulate the essence of the struggle faced by adolescents worldwide. The statistics, stories, and global initiatives outlined in this exploration converge to illuminate a path forward—one that acknowledges the gravity of the issue but also heralds the potential for positive change.

While the statistics may paint a challenging reality, they also illuminate the path forward. The transformative journey towards a more empathetic and supportive environment for adolescents is not an insurmountable task. As we delve into the stories of struggle, isolation, and desperate cries for understanding, they serve as poignant reminders of the human cost of overlooking the multifaceted sources of adolescent despair. In this exploration, we embark not only on a mission to understand the roots of this crisis but also to pave the way for a more compassionate and supportive future for the youth grappling with these profound challenges.

Positive change begins with awareness, and the world is waking up to the pressing need for mental health advocacy. Globally, initiatives led by organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) underscore the commitment to promote mental health, prevent mental health conditions, and ensure universal coverage for mental health services. The Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030 lays a robust foundation for Member States to align their efforts with global guidelines, fostering a nurturing environment for adolescents.

As we conclude this exploration into the rising incidence of teenage depression, let us heed the call to envision a future where mental health is prioritized, and the stigma surrounding it dissipates. In the face of depression's challenge to construct a future, our collective efforts become the architects of hope. The stories of struggle recounted here are not merely tales of despair but calls to action, beckoning us to forge a path towards a more compassionate, understanding, and hopeful world for the youth. Together, we can transform the narrative, creating a brighter future where every adolescent can construct a future filled with resilience, empathy, and the promise of emotional, academic, and social well-being.



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