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<p style="text-align:center">Why is Mental Health Getting Worse?</p>

Times are changing and so do people. Decade's worth of research has been done. Mental health has been changing and becoming more prominent. People who were born in the 90s and on have shown an increase in mental illness. Why is it worse than back then? "Americans born in the mid- to late-1990s, are experiencing mental health problems at a rate higher than previous generations" (Twenge). The growth continues and it will not stop without action. Future generations are going to be affected. Mental health is a hot topic now as most of the younger generation struggles from it. The question is, why is it getting worse?

Travel back in time to the Roaring 20s. It was a time of change, jazz and flapper dresses. Mental health was misunderstood back then. Medicines were not advanced and many of the experiments done on humans were unethical simply because doctors did not understand what was happening. Now there has been research done and medicine improvements, but even with all the progress why is there still an increase in mental illness.

All the signs are there but no one is noticing. After many years there is a steep incline in mental health illness. Identify the changes in the world since the 1920s, the development of technology, smart phones, and new ways of communication. Trauma is also included. More people have entered the military and there is also an increase in abuse. Post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) is under the category of mental health. Veterans who fought in Iraq or kids who were in the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 have suffered from PTSD as well. Health facilities and public schools are accused of not providing help to students and patients when asked. "College counseling centers reported sharp increases in the number of students seeking treatment for mental health issues" (Twenge). And most recently, Covid-19. People needing to stay home and secluded from others.

Too many people and not enough help and resources. Population around the world continues to increase. The population went from an estimated amount of 200 million in 1 A.D. to 7.9 billion in 2021. Around 790 million people around the world suffer from mental illness. The number of specialists is not close to the number of people suffering from mental illness. "In U.S. public schools today, it's estimated there is one school psychologist for every 1,381 students" (Strauss). The percentage of those students who need psychologist help more deeply is unmatched. Students are not receiving the care they need to help with their mental illnesses. Some students need more attention than others. The psychologist is overloaded with work, but this ratio can never be lowered enough. The government tries to lower it, but there is not enough money in public schools to fund more specialists. Time will continue to go on and the number of people suffering from mental illness will increase. As there are plenty of reasons why there is an increase, everyone has their own opinions. People have their own experiences as well with mental illness.

Part II

Mental Illness affects people of all ages. People can start from a young age or develop it when they are older. More and more people are diagnosed with mental illness everyday. Why is mental illness increasing? As technology and science advance why are people not healed of their suffering?

Beginning with the most popular, people think social media is the worst problem for mental health. Social media has become an addiction. Children are tech savvy and love to look at screens. Screen time, a new way to keep track of children's phone use. Being young, children learn very quickly and can be exposed to inappropriate things easily. Some say social media should monitor their content more closely. Parents worry about what their children are exposed to. Anyone can create a social media account. There are "report" options on posts, but not all are always taken down. What people post online can be toxic. People post their "best lives" on social media. A goal is to get the most likes and comments or become famous. "There's no doubt that Instagram played a part in Molly's death" (Freeman). Molly was a young girl who committed suicide because of her depression. Social media is considered a social life to the younger generation. Even millennials, who did not grow up with technology have become addicted. Online communication has become more popular than in person conversations. People have lost their social skills with people in the real world. People use technology for everything. People can get any answer they would like by searching on Google. People seek out pictures that could be harmful to them. This is what Molly did. She was given these ideas from social media. Even after someone dies, social media platforms continue to send ads and pictures that an individual previously looked up.

This brings up the side of people who say if social media effects a person, they should just completely get off the platform. People know the harms of social media and some say it is the persons' decision on how they handle it. In today's world, social media has become the center. People from all ages are on social media platforms. To be considered "cool" or "popular,"

people need to be on social media. If a person does not have social media they are considered "weird" or "odd." If people got off social media and technology their lives would be better and happier. Some parents do not let their children have social media at all to avoid possible problems. Other parents limit their children's screen time or what they can see, so their children can be monitored more closely. What are the other possibilities for the dramatic mental illness increase today?

As time goes on, more people are traumatized. Another side to this story is that people are traumatized either from a young age or in their adulthood. From abuse to war, people's lives are affected. Every year there is a new school shooting, or another member of the military being taken out for traumatic events. These events will last in the mind for as long as someone lives. The question is, what can be done about it? Some people go to therapy, take medications, have service animals, or do all of these. Is there something that can be done? Or is it inevitable and someone will live with this problem forever? What counts as trauma is more than what is originally thought of. Childhood trauma from parents or bullies in school, orphaned children, abusive relationships, sexual assault, divorce, even COVID-19. The list keeps going. "[It is estimated] that COVID-19 may [have] lead to anywhere from 27,644 to 154,037 additional U.S. deaths of despair, as mass employment, social isolation, depression and anxiety drive increase in suicides and drug overdoses" (Gruber). COVID-19 affected everyone all around the world. There are so many treatments available for the effects the events have on your mental health, but not treatments that can take away the event entirely. Childhood trauma has been found to increase the likelihood of poor adult outcomes, "it is well established that child maltreatment and other childhood adversities are associated with poor outcomes later on in life" (Finkelhor). The other

side of the debate is trauma cannot be fixed, it will live inside someone and is dealt with the rest of their lives.

Once again, another side to the argument. It is the schools and hospital's fault for the increase in mental illness. Schools and hospitals should be provided with more money to staff their faculty with the appropriate amount of doctor to patient or counselor to student ratios. School budgets have been decreased and this means less help. With schools not able to offer higher payments the desire to work is decreasing. "It's estimated there is one school psychologist for every 1,381 students" (Strauss). The ratio between school counselors and students is drastic. As said by Freeman, "mental health trust budgets and funding for early intervention services have been slashed, and rate of depression and self-harm in young people have skyrocketed. We are now in what is widely agreed to be an adolescent mental health crisis, with waiting lists for psychiatric services as long as 18 months." Places like prisons do not have enough help to account for the prisoners who need mental help. There are actually more mentally ill patients in prisons than in hospitals. As said by Bozelko, "prisons are called the new asylums and house more mentally ill people than hospitals do." People have been found to go to prison because they needed treatment and it was better in there than in a hospital. Prices for treatments [must] go up and the percentage of people who can afford the treatment is small. As seen in the article by Jones, explaining that because mental illness is often blamed for wrong doings, "lawmakers' uses of mentally ill people as scapegoats are disingenuous because they blame mental illness for mass shootings while also taking actions that make mental health care more difficult to access and afford." This brings the other argument into play, the faculty at schools and hospitals are at fault. The doctors or medical professionals do no care enough about their mentally ill patients, or when someone comes for help, they deny them treatment.

There are a variety of reasons for the increase in mental health. From social media to trauma to poor health care. All these reasons do have something in common. They blame

something. Mental illness does not just happen there is something that causes it. Mental illness is

a serious problem today. This problem needs to be addressed to everyone. Stopping mental

illness starts with awareness.

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