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Why is Mental Health Getting Worse?

Times are changing and so are people. Decade’s worth of research has been done and 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 now than it was 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 struggle 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 as advanced and many of the experiments done on humans were unethical simply because doctors did not understand what was going on. Now there has been extensive research done and medicine improvements, but even with all the progress why is there still an increase in mental illness?

All of 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 needed. “College counseling centers reported sharp increases in the number of students seeking treatment for mental health issues” (Twenge). And most recently, Covid-19, with people needing to stay home and stay secluded from others.

There are too many people and not enough help and resources. Population around the world has continued 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 some sort of mental illness. Whether it be depression, anxiety, PTSD, or an eating disorder. The number of specialists available is not enough compared to the amount 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, and psychologists are overloaded with work. The ratios needed 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 which contributes to their own formed opinions.

### 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 as the days continue. Why is mental illness increasing? As technology and science advance, why are people not healed of their suffering?

People think social media is the number one contributor for mental health problems. Social media has become an addiction. Children are tech savvy and love to look at screens. There is now something called screen time, which is a new way to keep track of children’s phone use. Being young, children learn very quickly and can be exposed to inappropriate images and media quickly. Some believe social media should be monitoring their content more closely. Parents worry about what their children are doing and what they are exposed to as anyone can create a social media account. There are “report” options, but not all social media posts are taken down. What people post online can be toxic. People post their “best lives” on social media. The goal is to have the most likes and comments or to 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. Social skills with people in the real world have been lost because technology is used for everything. People can now get any answer they would like by searching on Google. They can seek out pictures that could be harmful to them. This is what Molly did, because 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 other side, who say if social media effects a person, they should not use 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 of people’s lives. 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 would get off social media and using technology for everything their lives would be better and happier. Some parents do not let their children have social media at all to avoid possible problems while 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 serving. These traumatic events last in the mind until the person’s death. 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 that someone will live with this problem forever or take their own life, as suicide rates have skyrocketed? 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 unemployment, social isolation, depression and anxiety drive increase in suicides and drug overdoses” (Gruber). COVID-19 affected everyone all around the world in some way. There are so many treatments available for the effects the events have on your mental health, but not enough help 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 and it will live inside someone for the rest of their lives.

Once again, another argument is that 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 and faculty with the appropriate amount of doctor to patient or counselor to student ratios. School budgets have decreased and this means less money to help. With schools not able to offer higher wages the desire to work is decreasing. 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 inmates who need mental help. There are 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 accessible 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, so when someone comes in 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. However, all of 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.

Part 3

Mental health awareness is not being talked about as much as it should be. Time goes on, things change, but are people aware of the mental health crisis that is going around the world? People would think that the constant increased rate in mental illness would result in more talk about it. People are glued to their phones, only worrying about what is put out on the media. If a problem is not put out by celebrities or the biggest news station, people do not know it exists. People from all over the world suffer from mental health problems, and the United States has one of the highest rates for people diagnosed with a mental illness. Though there are many causes and variables that contribute to the mental health crisis, there is not *one* thing that has caused the major increase in mental illness.

The world cannot blame one individual for the world’s mental health crisis. Social media is readily available around the world. So many people have access to it, and this contributes to the mental health crisis. People from young ages are given phones or tablets and download the most popular apps available. Though some apps have age limits, some kids find their way onto a social media platform. There is constant comparison between individuals. The new generation has grown up with technology and this is all they know. People of every age are on social media posting what is happening in their lives. No one is ever “good enough.” They feel as though they need to be as pretty or popular as the other kids. If they do not have a lot of “likes” then they are not “cool.” And this is only part of what contributes to the mental health crisis that affects millions around the world. Some kids or teenagers will take it a step further and self-harm. This can sometimes give them the attention that they need among their peers or even their parents. People post their experiences and sometimes these experiences are from traumatic events that they have went through or are going through at that time.

Trauma is not caused by the victim. Trauma happens at random times and the victims did not choose for this to happen to them. The effects of trauma can vary. Depression and anxiety are some of the biggest ones. Doctors have not found a simple answer to help people with these conditions. The people who respond to peoples’ traumas include doctors and counselors. They are not at complete fault for the mental health crisis either. There are doctors and counselors who do everything in their power to help. They will share resources that they have, and help with medications and therapy. But sometimes it is just not enough. These few doctors will not turn someone away or deny them treatment, as some people cannot afford to treat their mental illness and it progresses. These counselors or therapist show that they really care about their patients and will do whatever in their power to help. However, this is not the case for everyone. There are also doctors and counselors out there who do not care to help. What they do is just another paycheck for them. How is this the patient or victims' fault? That’s because it is not their fault, some treatments cost more than others. People sue schools for bad things that happen to their children, but the school is not always at fault. There are some school counselors and psychologists who try their hardest, but with having so many other students, they are not able to help as if there was a one-to-one counselor to student ratio. Schools can barely afford to hire more counselors with the strict budgets they are given. This is one of the biggest problems in the health care system.

It is from the mixture of all the variables in peoples’ lives that increase the number of people suffering from mental illness. Mental health is a serious problem today. Between the toxic social media posts, PTSD, and the unwavering anxiety and depression in the world, no wonder the mental health crisis is increasing at a rapid rate. There needs to be more help in this world to help either diagnose a mental illness or care for those who have already been diagnosed. However, we need the right resources available for those who really need it. If we cannot help those struggling now, the problem is just going to get worse and then, where will it be?

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