

**DISTRICT
204**

MENTAL HEALTH
SYMPOSIUM



SATURDAY, MARCH 4

PRESENTED BY:



Keynote: “Protecting Our Children: Understanding and Monitoring Youth Mental Health”

Presented by: KidsMatter, Naperville Police Department, Linden Oak Behavioral Health, and Fox Valley Institute

Keynote Session Q&A

I have a teenager who is good academically and participates in clubs at school, but he/she spends a couple of hours on online games almost every day. When he/she doesn't play games, he/she is often on the phone watching YouTube about games. It is hard to get him/her to be interested in other things. What would you recommend to help him/her start to do other things besides games?

Answer provided by Dawn Forkner, SEL & Wellness Coordinator – Indian Prairie School District

It sounds like your teen is maintaining a pretty sensible balance. Digital entertainment in any form is a huge part of all of our lives and it is really difficult to balance for both teens and adults. Spend time with your teen by asking questions about what they are viewing or playing. Offer to play the game with your teen. Listen to the music or watch the video with them. There is so much power in simply showing interest in their hobbies! If they are enjoying and showing interest in school clubs and doing well academically, allow them to use screen time as a way to unwind. The key is helping your teen keep a healthy balance between the digital world and the real world.

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC - Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

When we consider that gaming is a growing part of adolescent culture (and beyond) we would encourage parents to consider the question, “how does participation in this activity hinder social connection, academic achievement, or adherence to family values we are instilling in our family?” In our presentation there was a [slide regarding behaviors parents can demonstrate to connect with their children](#). What is being described in this question is a great example of an opportunity to demonstrate *Acceptance* and *Negotiate Differences*. Most research around screen time indicates that youth that spend a couple hours in front of a screen each day are within a healthy window of this activity. First, provide *Encouragement* to your child for what they are doing well. Praise their hard work academically and acknowledge that they are participating in other social outlets. Often, getting a youth interested in another activity may require that you partner together and do something with them. Inquire about what interests them. If your son or daughter is fascinated by certain types of games, maybe they would like to do something of that sort in the real world (i.e. learning how to make armor, learning slight of hand or magic, wood working, etc.). Identifying an activity that can be done together with parents or with other friends may help motivate a decision towards participation.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

A great place to start is expressing your concern to him/her. Note all the good things you see him/her doing and celebrate his/her successes. Ask him/her how he/she is doing and how he/she is managing his/her stress levels because you understand the work it takes to be a good student and participate in all his/her activities. Then note your concern that his/her only way to decompress is through games/YouTube. Talk about the need to find other ways to decompress and offer to engage in those activities with him/her whether it's going for a walk, creating an art project, or cooking dinner together. Either way, check in and check in often. Make sure the focus is on listening and connecting.

During the regulating emotions and managing crises presentation some strategies were shared but because of time limitation we were not able to ask about impacts of parents having completely different approaches while educating kids. I believe that is giving an extra stress factor to the kid's life and want to know if this is something that can be addressed through therapy even when the parents might remain disagreeing?

Answer provided by Dawn Forkner, SEL & Wellness Coordinator – Indian Prairie School District

When parents have different parenting beliefs and responses to their child's challenging emotions and behaviors, it can become an issue of greater distress for the entire family. This is an issue that can be addressed through therapy. When seeking outside help, be clear to communicate that this is a challenge for both of you, as parents, so that you can become connected with the appropriate help. It is likely a therapist will want to address this issue between the parents before, or in conjunction with, seeing the child for help.

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

Different approaches to parenting may be one of the most challenging aspects that partners encounter. It is important that parents can find mutual ground to support the family values. It's not necessarily about agreement, but rather, the willingness to support your partner in front of your children. Disagreements about interventions needs to happen away from the children, and support for how your partner intervened in that moment is of utmost importance. Couples therapy aimed at negotiating a middle path for parents can be helpful. The Fox Valley Institute (630-718-0717), led by Dr. Bokar, or Linden Oaks Medical Group (630-305-5027) are great places to call and schedule an appointment.

Resource: [How to Cope With Parenting Differences](#)

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

Yes, this is a great topic for therapy. Having parents on the same page regarding how they will parent makes it easier for their children to understand expectations. I know that schedules can often get in the way of therapy so another idea is to read some books together as a couple and discuss what is being learned or ideas you may want to apply.

Resources: *Hold On To Your Kids* by Dr. Gabor Maté
Brainstorm by Dr. Dan Siegel

I would suggest that the next mental health symposium could be open to coming with our kids. This first one was advertised as a parent event. I saw some parents bringing their kids, I am strongly surprised of how well the kids shared their point of views. It is something that helps us to connect and understand more of their situations. It is another way to improve and learn.

Answer provided by Dr. Adrian Talley, Superintendent – Indian Prairie School District

Thank you for your suggestion. We will open the event to students next year and see how we might incorporate them into the discussion.

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

This is a wonderful idea. I would love to see a panel of students and parents and some healthy discussion about stresses teens face and the different viewpoints.

My tween (12) is too sweet. A straight A middle school student. I am worried that he/she might be struggling to face the real world. Am I worried too much? How can I make sure he/she is ready to face the world?

[Answer provided by Dawn Forkner, SEL & Wellness Coordinator – Indian Prairie School District](#)

It is impossible not to worry about our kids! There is plenty of time to get him/her “ready for the world”. Finding a balance between keeping a sweet spirit and bolstering our kids for a tough world is tricky. Using lived experiences of yourself or others is a great way to demonstrate that life can be full of disappointments. Even if your sweet child has not had these difficulties, you can still talk through how to respond to and live through difficult times. Using movie or television scenarios could also be a way to have a conversation. Asking questions like: How does the character handle disappointments? Do you think that would work in real life? How do you handle a conflict with a friend or family member? The good news is that you get to parent your child well into their adulthood!

[Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health](#)

Facing the real world requires the opportunity to make real world decisions and experience the consequences of those decision. We often see parents want to protect their children from any negative outcomes of their choices. There is a lot of research on the benefits of failure and the ways in which children develop resilience when they work through that. Facing the real world requires less sheltering and more preparing. Have open discussions with your child about current events, political unrest, sexuality, war, freedoms, diversity and inclusion, and the values to which your family holds fast. You may find that your child is more informed on some of these issues than you are. Nurture independence.

Resource: [How Allowing Children to Fail Helps Them Succeed](#)

[Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute](#)

This is a wonderful thing. Hard times will happen, and it is more important that he/she feels safe to share these moments with you vs. preparing him/her. Let your focus be on letting him/her know he/she is cared for no matter what. That way when the hard times hit, he/she will come to you for comfort, advice and problem solving. Connection is the most important way to prepare him/her for this world because if he/she knows he/she has a support system, he/she will be able to address any hardship.

Can we get a soft copy of the PowerPoint presentation from the Keynote speaker presentation?

Links to the presentation slides from each of the sessions can be found below.

[Keynote: Protecting Our Children](#)

[Mental Health and Law Enforcement Response](#)

[Parenting Matters](#)

[Helping Students Feel and Perform Better](#)

[Mindful Heart, Mindful Home](#)

[Regulating Emotions and Managing Crises with Adolescents and Teens](#)

[Navigating Peer Relationships & Conflict](#)

[Stressed Brains Can't Learn](#)

[Road to a Successful Career Path](#)

[Supporting Your Middle School Child](#)

[Coaching Your Child Through Big Emotions](#)

Are there any free counseling services offered?

Answer provided by Dawn Forkner, SEL & Wellness Coordinator – Indian Prairie School District

As a part of Indian Prairie School District 204's commitment to mental health equity, no cost counseling services can be accessed in two ways. First, through a generous grant provided by Edward-Elmhurst Hospital, Indian Prairie School District is able to offer no cost mental health services to any family who has a student attending Georgetown Elementary School, Longwood Elementary School, Granger Middle School, Fischer Middle School, or a feeder school of any of these buildings. Please see the link below for additional information about IPSD CARES. Through a second generous grant provided by the Illinois Department of Health, families with students who attend Neuqua Valley High School, or a feeder school of NVHS, may access no cost mental health services. Please see the link below for additional information about Wildcat Wellness.

Resources: [Indian Prairie CARES](#)
[Wildcat Wellness](#)

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

There are some counseling services that are offered on a sliding scale. Please see information below for some great resources.

Resources: [SamaraCare Counseling](#) (620-357-2456)
[360 Youth Services](#) (630-961-2992)
[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

Yes! Many practices like Fox Valley Institute have programs that offer low cost to free counseling. These are often facilitated by interns who are in the process of attaining their Masters and licenses to practice.

We need experts in teenage emotions to explain them to the children so that the kids will know that some of those emotions are totally ok and they are not abnormal!! Please make it a requirement at least in high schools!

Answer provided by Dr. Adrian Talley, Superintendent – Indian Prairie School District

We have a variety of people in the schools who can work with children about their emotions. Our high schools have professional school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists. Additionally, our high schools have mental health therapists who can support our students. As a district we will continue to be focused on mental health supports and will work to communicate those supports to the students.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

As a therapist I am biased and always say let's learn more about emotions! I will also say, I have been impressed by the SEL programs that are in place, especially in elementary and middle school. They are doing a good job giving an overview of emotions and how to manage them. But also as a therapist, it is important to remember that the expert of your teens emotion is your teen and you the parent/caregiver. Make sure you are talking to them and helping them understand their thoughts and feelings. Everyone's experience is unique. Schools cannot tailor to individual learning about emotions. That is more the role of a therapist.

There is always a new app. How do parents keep up with all new tween/teen apps? Is there a place online that police department posts apps (new) and especially the ones that are used by child predators?

[Answer provided by Detective Stock – Naperville Police Department](#)

This is an excellent question regarding online safety. Both the Apple App Store and Google Play Store offer well over a million different apps and games for their users. This creates an incredibly difficult challenge to stay up to date on the apps that are available and being used by our children. To know what apps a child is using, I encourage parents to regularly check their child's device(s), use online parent resources/blogs, and engage in frequent conversations about online use. This is an opportunity to find out your child's interests and engage. If you need help getting started, you can find some conversation starters at the Illinois Attorney General's online safety page for parents:

<https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/onlinesafe/forparentsnew.html>

These are some great online parent resources:

- <https://www.webwise.ie/>
- <https://www.common sense media.org/>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- <https://www.missingkids.org/HOME>
- <https://www.thorn.org/>

As for online child predators, there is no "safe" app. Think of the online world as being similar to the physical world. We know child predators can be anywhere (parks, stores, etc.), so we monitor where our children go until they are old enough to be on their own, and we teach our children about "stranger danger." Apply these basics to online activity as well: discuss online "stranger danger," discuss what appropriate online behavior is (both your child's and others'), create an online usage agreement with your child, follow app age requirements, only allow your child to use the internet / apps in your presence until you've determined their ability to follow the guidelines you've set for them, and set limitations on the content they can access. Online child predators can be on any app or online game. I encourage parents to check the apps their children want to download prior to allowing them to be downloaded. I always suggest only allowing apps and games that are based in the United States. Apps and games that are provided by foreign countries do not have to comply with our laws and legal orders. This can inhibit an investigation if a child (or adult) is victimized online. Many times, offenders are aware of this and choose apps specifically because of this.

[Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute](#)

[Common Sense Media](#) is a great resource to go to and get information on different apps. I would also encourage parents to download and use an app before allowing your child to do so. This way you will have the most information and first-hand knowledge of the app.

Chief Arres: How many teenage suicides does the Naperville PD deal with/yr?

[Answer provided by Social Worker Ali Smith – Naperville Police Department](#)

The Naperville Police Department responds to approximately 1,000 mental health calls per year. The last call any officer wants to respond to is the report of a suicide, especially one involving a child. In 2019, the Naperville Police Department responded to two youth suicides. Since 2020, we have responded to one youth suicide each year. The loss of even one young life is too much. If you think your child is struggling and you don't know where to start, you are not alone. The Naperville Police Department has four full-time clinicians who are here to assist you. They can help you navigate this difficult time and put you in contact with the resources you and your child need.

- Social Worker Ali Smith, MSW, LSW – (630) 305-7061
- Social Worker Jamie Horner, LCSW, CADC – (630) 420-4165
- Victim Advocate Gianna Trombino, LCSW, CDVP – (630) 305-5488
- Counselor Eirene Boulougouris, LCPC, CDVP – (630) 420-6174

More information for parents on teen suicide prevention can be found at:

- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Ten-Things-Parents-Can-Do-to-Prevent-Suicide.aspx>
 - <https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/>
 - <https://dph.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idph/files/publications/publicationsowhfsyouth-suicide-fact-sheet-1.pdf>
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Detective Stock: How prevalent is sextortion in Naperville?

Answer provided by Detective Stock – Naperville Police Department

Unfortunately, reports of sextortion are rising across the country, and Naperville is no exception. The FBI recently released a joint warning about the rise of sextortion cases:

<https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/international-law-enforcement-agencies-issue-joint-warning-about-global-financial-sextortion-crisis>

Many times, we think of girls being the victims of these crimes. However, our male children are also very vulnerable, and there has been an increase in Naperville sextortion reports involving male victims being financially sextorted. In general, financial sextortion crimes follow a very fast-paced pattern:

1. The suspect contacts the victim via social media and presents themselves as a female.
2. The suspect engages in sexual conversation and sends nude images of a female to the male victim.
3. The suspect requests nude images of the male victim.
4. After receiving the victim's nude image, the suspect threatens to send out the victim's nude images unless payment is made.
5. This process usually happens within hours!

I encourage parents to help keep their children safe by engaging in conversation about this topic. More information and resources can be found at:

- <https://www.ice.gov/features/sextortion>
 - <https://www.thorn.org/sextortion/>
 - <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/topics/sextortion>
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Is there any way the school district can look into enforcing the nonuse of phones during class time? This type of enforcement would need to be consistent across all buildings in the District.

Answer from Indian Prairie School District 204

Phones are supposed to be "back in the pack" during class time. Students' phones are not patrolled during lunch or passing periods; that is impossible to monitor due to the number of students.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

I cannot answer for the district, but I know some districts have tried to put in these rules which have come up against legal action as phones are not the property of the school. Instead, as a parent/caregiver, I would encourage you to set clear expectations and boundaries with your child. There are also many parenting apps that allow for you to turn your child's phones off and on during the day.

Exams are a big part of teenage anxiety, especially for advanced kids. Teachers need to be aware of this and spread-out exams. My teenage had six exams in one day. It's ridiculous. Teachers need to communicate with each other regarding exams/quizzes etc.

Answer provided by Dr. Adrian Talley, Superintendent – Indian Prairie School District

It is hard to respond to this question without knowing the specifics of the exams. At the high school level, students have only two or three end of semester exams per day. Advanced Placement exams are also spread out so that the testing load is manageable. At the middle school level, the grade level teams work together to know when exams are being given. I would suggest that a parent always contact the child's teacher or school administrator to gain an understanding of the testing schedule.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

The pressures of school are high and can take a toll on students. As a therapist, I often note that as parents we do not have control over how teachers/schools/governments dictate how student classes are run. What we do have control over is how we advocate for our children. I would encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher and develop a relationship with them and get the information needed to help your child organize for the school day or to advocate for accommodations as needed. I find most teachers are willing to build accommodations if they understand the context of the students' situation. I would also talk to your child about how they view exams. There is often an unhealthy view that they need to attain a certain grade on an exam over viewing it as an opportunity to work hard and see it as an evaluative process of where they may need more direction from the teacher.

As parents we limit what they read & watch when they are young (elementary). But the books in schools, especially elementary schools need to be monitored. "Psychology – Freud doesn't belong in elementary school library – Period."

Answer provided by Dr. Adrian Talley, Superintendent – Indian Prairie School District

Our teachers are very thoughtful about the books that they have available for the students to read. A variety of age appropriate books may be found within each teacher's classroom and in the media centers for children to check out. Books are selected based upon reading levels of the children and also those that are known to be of interest to children. If you have a question about a book, it is important that you raise that question with the media specialist in the school or the school principal. Either one will be able to listen to your concern and then share why that book is available for students to read.

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

I am so grateful for the comment "As parents we limit what they (our children) read and watch..." This is true for most of our life. There may be shows that you watch today that you would not share with your parents? It's a good reminder for all of us to focus our energy on things we can control. Although, I would not disagree that there should be reasonable age limits for the content of literature in our schools, that is not within my control. Perhaps at a school board meeting there can be discussion to influence the decision makers regarding what is allowed in school, however, after I've exhausted all my well-formed, research-based arguments, the decision is made by others. What I can control is the monitoring of my child. Being involved in my child's life provides me opportunity to see what books they are bringing home and how have discussions about our family values as it relates to what they are learning or reading in school. That time spent with your child is worth more than any book that ends up in our schools.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

Book banning in school has often been a divisive issue and cannot be solved by this therapist. What I do recommend to parents is to talk to your child. If they bring home a book that you do not want them to read, talk to them about it. Explain your value system and how the book does not match yours. Listen and understand their curiosity. It can be a great connecting point especially if approached from a teaching vs. scaring conversation. If a book has been assigned to

read by a teacher that you do not agree with, talk to the teacher and advocate your point. Teachers are often willing to assign alternatives if they have an understanding and context of where you are coming from as a parent.

One of the presenters in his slide included an option in 7 ways to connecting behaviors "Negotiating differences". I want to know more about the good or bad use of win-win strategies while educating kids. Is it good to use or not very useful in their kid's mind.

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

Negotiating differences is a refrain from compromising. Compromising suggests that the parties involved gave up something and leave the discussion less than satisfied. Because I didn't get what I really wanted. The language of "negotiating" has a different emotional impact in that we walk away feeling satisfied with an outcome, because I'm focused on the underlying need. Curfew is an easy example. My daughter wants to stay out until 1am on the weekend, but the Naperville City curfew for her is midnight. When she is out past midnight, she is now breaking the law. Since she is 17, my goal is not to control my daughter, but rather help her make thoughtful choices and consider consequences. She knows, I expect her home at midnight. Negotiating differences does not mean we do away with limits. She has to decide if she wants to build trust by following that expectation, or if she wants to exert her independence and accept the consequences of choosing to do something different. That to me is a win-win. Our relationship wins when she comes home before midnight and builds trust. And when she chooses to stay out past curfew, we win because as parent I helped my child gain confidence to exert her independence, and she learns about natural consequences and to accept responsibility for her actions.

It's hard to know what is useful to a teenager. Research shows that most teens want a healthy relationship with their parents. Fighting about limits isn't going to achieve that. Setting a limit and teaching your child to accept the outcome of their choices is a path that can foster critical thinking skills, help navigate failure and successes, and build togetherness. Exerting our power over our kids and saying things like, "because I said so," or "I'm the parent and you're the child," builds more resentment towards authority than it does resilience to tackle tougher issues in the future. We need to redefine winning so that it reflects the understanding and implementation of our values we want to instill in our children. The more connected they are to us in relationship, the more willing they will be to follow whatever structure we put in place.

<https://www.amazon.com/Unhappy-Teenagers-Parents-Teachers-Reach/dp/0060007982>

If we have an A+ student who suddenly is not into getting together with his/her friends, spending hours in their bedroom, sleeping for long hours, not willing to do anything or helping at home and they don't accept the need of professional help, should we force it?

Answer provided by Ryan S. Lauterwasser, LCPC, CADC -Linden Oaks Behavioral Health

Mental Health Counseling is for everyone. Finding someone to connect to and sharing our burden does help. I've often heard teenagers say that they were angry at their parents for "forcing" them to go to counseling, and then weeks later express how grateful they were that their parents made the appointment and brought them to see someone. As discussed before, joining your child in this activity may be a way to increase their willingness. As parents we can humble ourselves and let our children know that we can learn how to be a better support and how to attend to their emotional needs differently. One of the messages I tell my kids is that if I'm going to error as a parent, I'm going to error towards safety and being too involved in your life. I don't want to hear my child say I was never there, or I saw that they were struggling, and I didn't do anything. Our kids need us to make the difficult decisions, demonstrate that we care, and show them we accept them no matter what they are going through.

Answer provided by Christina Maki, LMFT - Fox Valley Institute

I have found in these instances force rarely works. An alternative strategy is to invite them into family therapy with you. A good family therapist will help start the conversations and even if your student is not participating, they will be

listening. If you get to the point you are concerned about their safety, take them in for an evaluation at a place like Linden Oaks. The antidote to isolation is connection. Create moments of connection daily, whether it's at the dinner table, during a long drive (I find teens talk more in cars. Whether it's the soothing movement or the fact they don't have to look you in your eyes directly, some of the best conversations can happen in cars!), or even going for a hike. Let them know they are loved unconditionally but that you are also concerned.