



## PROVIDER'S GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS IN ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT MALES

**This health screening tool is meant to suggest questions for your next young male (ages 16 -20) clinical visit. Prime questions for each domain are highlighted. Explore less personal topic areas before moving to discussions around sex, relationships and mental health.**

Traditionally, prevention and intervention for mental health disorders among adolescent and young adults has been largely non-gender specific. To the extent that these types of measures have been gender specific they have focused on conditions among AYA females. Recently, however, research into mental health disorders has identified a number of conditions that are more common, or expressed differently, among AYA males than among AYA females.

Certain behaviors that are indicators of mental health disorders among AYA males, as distinguished from AYA females, are elevated rates of suicide, conduct disorder, substance use and interpersonal violence.

One example of how a mental health condition is expressed differently by gender is depression. Whereas, among AYA females, depression is typically manifested by “internalization”, among AYA males it is manifested by “externalization”; that is, among AYA females depression is often expressed through, for example, self-

doubt and withdrawal, whereas among AYA males depression is often expressed through, for example, risky behaviors and violence.

Additionally, norms of masculinity can lead to complicating factors such as stigma among AYA males surrounding help-seeking behaviors for mental health disorders.

It's critical to develop trust with young males. To encourage a frank conversation and build rapport:

- ▶ Interview the adolescent outside the presence of his parents. If the parents are reluctant to leave explain that building trust and conveying respect to the adolescent encourages an open, honest dialogue.
- ▶ Emphasize your privacy policy to the patient at the beginning. We suggest you tell him “As your healthcare provider, I am obligated to respect your confidentiality. What we talk about will remain just between us. The only time I would share our discussions is if I am concerned about your safety or the safety of others.”
- ▶ Ask about life goals and aspirations. Talk about how healthy behaviors impact the pursuit of those goals (e.g., consistent use of contraception to avoid becoming a parent before they're ready).

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

### ADHD

- Do you have trouble concentrating or staying focused? If so, when do you notice this the most? (in school? When doing homework? When watching a movie?)
- Do you have difficulty finishing tasks, like homework? Do you have trouble starting tasks (do you procrastinate)?
- Do you have trouble organizing (your time, your belongings, prioritizing things you have to do)?

### Bipolar Disorder

- Do you ever feel the opposite of depressed—very cheerful, happy, productive? Does it last more than a week and impact your relationships, school work, and ability to function? Do you find that during these periods you do not need much sleep to feel rested? Do your thoughts race?
- Do you ever have extreme mood swings? Like you feel very very happy or very very irritable, and other times when you feel extremely depressed, like it's hard to function?

### Depressive Disorders

- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- How is your appetite?
- Are you having any trouble concentrating?
- How is your mood, in general? Are there times when you feel down, sad, angry, irritable?

- Do you have someone you can talk to when you are feeling down?
- Do you have the kinds of friends that you want?
- What type of friendships do you want? Why?
- Do you have any thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself? (If so, have you ever done so? If so, when and how?) If positive response, probe with self-injury questions in Suicidal and Self-Injurious Behaviors below.
- Have you ever thought that you didn't want to live anymore or wanted to end your life? If so, how recently have you felt that way? *If suicidal ideation is present, probe with the suicidal ideation questions in the Suicidal and Self-Injurious Behaviors section below.*

**NOTE:** Active suicidal thoughts, particularly with a plan, necessitate an emergency evaluation for possible hospitalization. If the thoughts are passive (no intent or plan, like “sometimes I wish I was dead.”) this at least necessitates a safety plan incorporating involving others who can be of support, emergency numbers to call, and strategies to get the person through until help arrives. The provider may need to call an ambulance or fill out a commitment paper to get the person to an emergency department where they can be assessed for admission to a hospital.

## Anxiety Disorders

- Do you worry a lot? Is it hard for you to control? Does this worrying affect your relationships, school work, extracurricular involvements or ability to function?
- Have you ever felt panicky or had a panic attack? (describe symptoms: heart pounding, shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, chest tightness, tingling in extremities, feeling of going crazy or fear that you are dying) If so, how often and in what circumstances? (panic disorder)
- Do you have anxiety in social situations? crowds? just in general? (social anxiety, agoraphobia, general anxiety disorder)
- Is there anything you are really afraid of? i.e. Heights? Illness? germs? needles? (phobias)

## Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders

- Do you have any habits that you do that are not necessary, but you do them anyway? If so, what are they (handwashing? Counting? Checking)?
- Do you have thoughts that you don't want but they keep coming back? If so, what are they?

## Disruptive, Impulse-Control and Conduct Disorders

- Are you having any thoughts of wanting to hurt or kill anyone else?
- Have you ever been arrested? For what? Do you frequently have run-ins with law enforcement?
- Do you sometimes do things that you wish you had not done on an impulse? Are you frequently getting into conflicts with others or into trouble with authorities?
- Do you have trouble controlling your anger?

## Psychotic Disorders

- Do you see or hear things that other people do not see or hear?
- Do you ever feel that people are following you or trying to hurt you?
- Do you feel that someone else is controlling your mind?
- Do your thoughts seem jumbled or confusing?

## Suicidal and Self-Injurious Behaviors

**NOTE:** Self-injurious and suicidal ideation screening may be a part of a screen for depressive disorders, discussed in the Depressive Disorder section above. If a full depressive disorder screen is not done, the following screen should be.

- Do you have any thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself? (If so, have you ever done so? If so, when and how?) If positive response, probe with the following questions:
- How have you injured yourself?
- Do you know what triggers your self-injury?
- Why do you hurt yourself?
- How do you feel when you hurt yourself? Afterward?
- Is your self-injury a suicide attempt?

- Do you hurt yourself badly enough to need medical treatment?
- Have you ever had counseling or been hospitalized for self-harm?
- Have you ever thought that you didn't want to live anymore or wanted to end your life? If so, how recently have you felt that way?

*If suicidal ideation is present, probe with the questions below:*

- When was the most recent time you had suicidal thoughts?
- Do you know what caused them?
- How often do they occur?
- Have you ever made a suicide attempt? If so, what and when?
- Have you ever been in therapy or hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or a suicide attempt?
- Do you currently have suicidal thoughts?
- If so, why are you feeling this way?
- If so, have you thought of how you would kill yourself?
- Do you have a particular time in mind?
- Do you think you would actually kill yourself?
- Do you have access to a gun or other means of killing yourself?
- If you have suicidal feelings, would you tell anyone? If so, who?
- Do you have others in your life who can help or support you?
- How do you deal with the thoughts when you have them?

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## Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders

- Have you ever been abused, neglected, or in a situation where you were seriously injured or your life was in danger?
- Do you think about it a lot? Do you experience thoughts, images, or dreams related to this event? Do you avoid reminders of this event?

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*This guide is provided by the Partnership for Male Youth, a national non-profit organization whose sole focus is on the unique and unmet health related needs of adolescent and young adult (AYA) males. Visit our website at [www.partnershipformale youth.org](http://www.partnershipformale youth.org). More detail on screening young males for mental health disorders can be found at [www.aymalehealth.org](http://www.aymalehealth.org) and [www.adolescenthealth.org/Resources/Clinical-Care-Resources/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Resources-For-Adolesc.aspx](http://www.adolescenthealth.org/Resources/Clinical-Care-Resources/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Resources-For-Adolesc.aspx). This tool was produced under an unrestricted educational grant from the Allergan Foundation.*

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