

Students' Perspectives on Education and Screening for Depression & Suicide

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BACKGROUND

Youth suicide has increased more than 50% in the past ten years, a 76% increase for youth ages 15-17 (Curtin & Heron, 2019). School-based postvention programs are an important youth suicide prevention approach. Suicide postvention guidelines (Berkowitz et al., 2011) have not been extensively researched (Andriessen et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2013). This study explored the perspectives of students who had received postvention services (Signs of Suicide education program and depression/suicide screening).

METHODS

Students answered the following open ended questions on a depression screening tool:

1. How was your experience of filling out the screening tool?
2. How can schools better help support students?
3. How do you take care of yourself?

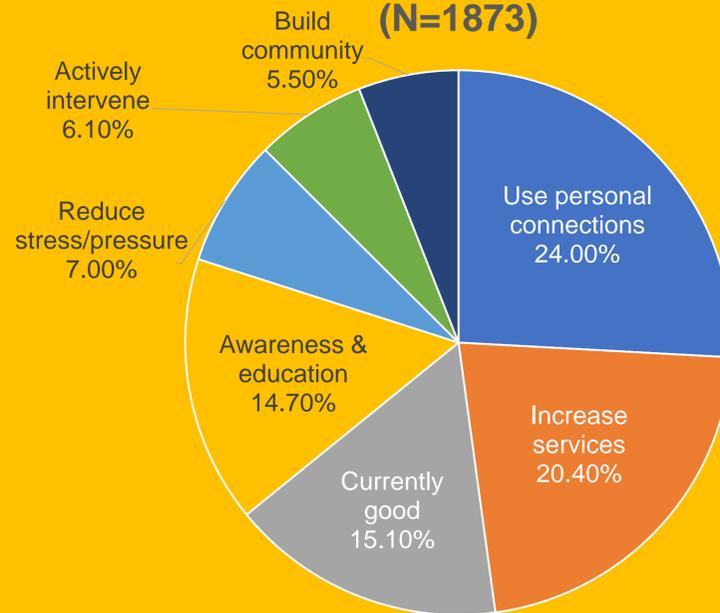
Thematic analysis was used to group the responses into categories.

Frequencies were used to determine percentages of responses in each category. Responses which were illegible or incomprehensible were excluded from the analyses.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Most youth don't find screening stressful or harmful
- Youth believe schools should use and build on personal connections (e.g. teachers reaching out to students)
- Youth suggest schools facilitate create supplemental support services and facilitate access to current supports
- Youth most commonly described utilizing these strategies for self-care: friends/social supports, exercise, sleep, and hobbies and doing things they enjoy.

How Can Schools Support Students (N=1873)



STUDENT QUOTATIONS

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More support and communication that depression isn't a weakness & there's always support.

Therapy dogs

Kids may not want to go to guidance so teachers should reach out.

Have surveys [screenings] 2-3 times a year.

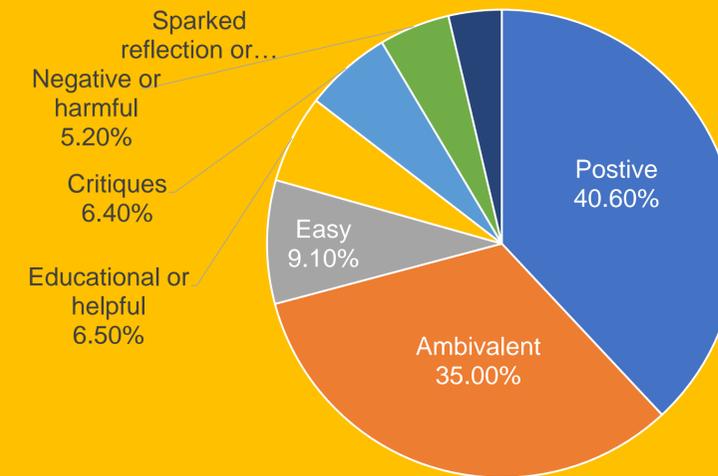
Have teachers a student trusts talk to them

Emphasize that mental health is more important than school or sports.

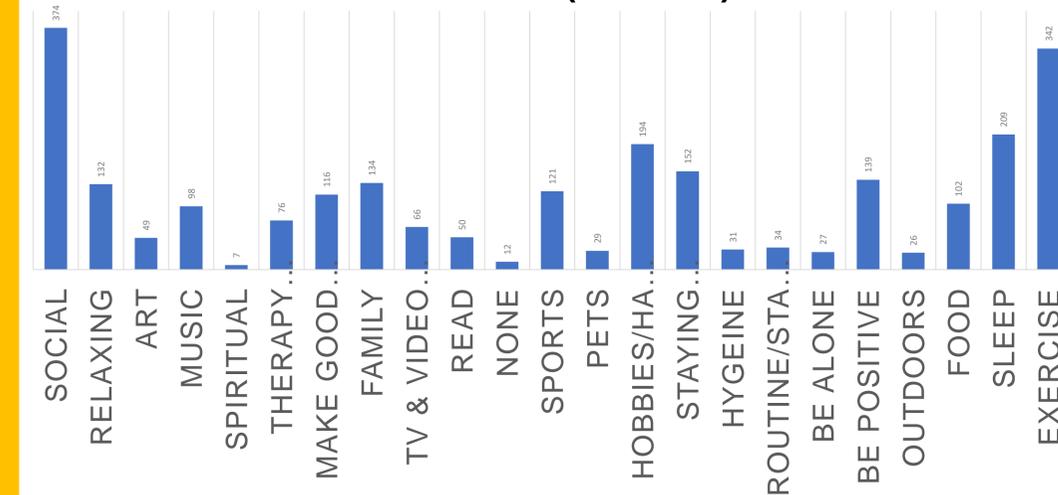
School should go to students instead of waiting for us to go to them.

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Screening Experience (N=1474)



SELF CARE (N=1600)



IMPLICATIONS

- The lack of distress reported encourages schools to conduct more screenings
- Teachers & staff should actively reach out to at-risk youth, using existing relationships.
- Schools could support the use of more sophisticated self-care strategies.

REFERENCES

- Andriessen, K. et al. (2018). Pre & post loss features of adolescent suicide bereavement: A systematic review. *Death Studies, 40*(4), 229-246.
- Berkowitz, L. et al. (2011). Riverside Trauma Center Postvention Guidelines.
- Curtin, S.C. & Heron, M. (2019). Death rates due to suicide and homicide among persons aged 10-24: United States, 2000-2017. NCHS Data Brief (No. 352).

- Robinson, J. et al. (2013). A systematic review of school-based interventions aimed at preventing, treating, and responding to suicide-related behavior in young people. *Crisis, 34*, 164-182.