



Society and Mind

 MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health at school

A warm, plain guide for a student whose mind feels heavy at school: what it is really telling you, how to tell someone, how friends can help, and where to find free support.

Who this is for: students who feel heavy at school, and the parents, teachers, and friends who want to help.

Cited: peer-reviewed research on young people and mental health.

Languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada.

Read it free at weave.clinic/family

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✿ WHEN SCHOOL FEELS HEAVY

School when your mind is heavy

✿ IN SHORT

If some days school feels like too much, and you cannot say why, you are not weak and you are not the only one. A heavy mind is real, it has reasons, and it can get better with the right help.

Maybe you used to enjoy things and now they feel flat. Maybe you cannot sleep, or you sleep all day. Maybe your chest is tight before every class, or small things make you cry, or you snap at people you love. Maybe you are just tired in a way that rest does not fix. School keeps moving, exams keep coming, and inside you are struggling to keep up.

This heaviness is not a character flaw and it is not laziness. It is your mind under strain, the way a body gets a fever. And here is something important: these struggles often begin young. Studies from around the world find that about one in three mental-health difficulties start before age 14, and about half before 18, right in the school years.

That is exactly why noticing it now matters. A heavy mind during school is not the end of your story. It is a sign, and signs can be answered.

about half

begin before age 18

Most mental-health difficulties start young, right in the school years. If your mind feels heavy now, you are not alone and it is not too early to get help.



A quiet moment in a busy day. The weight is real, and it can be shared.

Aditya is sixteen. From the outside he looks fine: he shows up, he turns in most of his work, he laughs at lunch. Inside, mornings have become hard to face. He lies awake worrying, then drags through the day feeling nothing much at all. He has not told anyone. He keeps thinking he should be able to handle it, and that if he says something, people will think he is making a fuss.

Aditya is not making a fuss. What he is carrying is real, and carrying it silently is making it heavier. A heavy mind does not mean something is wrong with you as a person. It means something is going on that deserves care, the same way a fever or a broken bone would.

● TRY THIS

For the next few days, just notice, without judging yourself. When does the heaviness get worse, and when does it ease a little? Morning or night? Around certain classes, certain people, certain thoughts? You are not fixing anything yet. You are learning your own pattern, and that is the first real step.

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✿ NORMAL, AND WHEN IT IS MORE

What students go through

✿ IN SHORT

Stress, nerves, and low days are a normal part of growing up. But when the heaviness stays for weeks, or starts blocking your sleep, your friendships, or your school, it may be more than an ordinary rough patch.

Everyone has hard days. Exam nerves, a fight with a friend, feeling low after a bad result, these are part of being human, and they usually pass. Feeling stressed sometimes does not mean something is wrong with you.

So how do you tell an ordinary rough patch from something that needs more attention? A useful guide is time and reach. If low mood, worry, or emptiness stays for weeks, and starts to block your sleep, your eating, your friendships, or your ability to study, that is a signal worth taking seriously. It is not about being dramatic. It is about noticing when the struggle has grown bigger than you can carry alone.

An ordinary rough patch.

You feel low or stressed, but it lifts in a few days. You can still enjoy some things, sleep mostly okay, and keep up with life.

Worth taking seriously.

The heaviness stays for weeks. Sleep, appetite, or focus are off. Things you used to enjoy feel flat. You are pulling away from people.

Ask sooner, not later.

You feel hopeless, or you have thoughts of hurting yourself or not wanting to be here. This is never something to face alone. Tell a trusted adult today.

Either way, telling helps.

You do not have to be sure it is serious to ask. Talking early makes everything easier, whichever way it turns out.

If any part of you is thinking about hurting yourself, or feels like life is too much to keep going, please reach out today, to a trusted adult, a counsellor, or a helpline. You deserve support right now, not later.

More, if you want it

There is no exact line where a normal low becomes something more, and you do not have to work it out on your own. That is what teachers, counsellors, and doctors are for. Your only job is to notice when the heaviness is not lifting, and to tell someone. Working out what it is, and what helps, is a job you get to share.

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✿ TELLING SOMEONE

Telling a teacher or counsellor

✿ IN SHORT

Telling an adult can feel impossible, especially the first time. But most students who reach out find it far less frightening than they feared, and a good first experience makes every next step easier.

If the thought of telling a teacher makes your stomach drop, you are in good company. When researchers ask young people why they stay silent, the same answers come back: shame and embarrassment, not being sure if what they feel is a real problem, and wanting to handle it alone. Those feelings are normal. They are also, quietly, the thing that keeps struggles going.

Here is the hopeful part from the same research. Young people say that being encouraged by someone they trust, and a good experience the first time they open up, makes telling much easier. The first conversation is the hardest. It also tends to be the one that changes things.

You do not need perfect words. You can keep it simple: "I have been feeling really low lately and I do not know what to do." A counsellor or a teacher you trust will take it from there. In many Indian families we are taught to keep problems inside, that log kya kahenge, what will people say. But telling one safe adult is not airing your troubles to the world. It is a private step toward feeling better.



One trusted adult, one honest sentence. That is how it starts.

Aditya finally told a teacher he trusted, almost by accident, staying back after class. He did not have a speech ready. He just said the mornings had been really hard. She did not panic or lecture him. She listened, thanked him for telling her, and helped him find the school counsellor. Afterwards Aditya felt lighter, and a little surprised, because the thing he had dreaded for weeks had taken five minutes.

REMEMBER

Telling a trusted adult is not weakness and it is not "making a fuss". It is one of the bravest, most useful things you can do. The adult's job is to listen and help you find support, not to judge you.

TRY THIS

Think of one adult you trust: a teacher, a counsellor, a coach, a relative. Just one. You do not have to talk to them today. Picture the one sentence you might say, something as simple as "I have been feeling low and I could use some help." Keeping that sentence ready makes it much easier to use when you are ready.

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✿ FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

When a friend is struggling

✿ IN SHORT

When students hurt, they often turn to a friend before any adult. Being that friend matters. Your job is not to fix or diagnose anything, it is to listen, stay kind, and help them reach an adult.

Friends matter more than we tend to think. Young people often turn to a friend before any adult, and a friend's job is not to fix or diagnose anything, it is to listen, stay kind, and help the person reach an adult or counsellor. You do not need to be a therapist. You need to be a good friend, which you already know how to be.

If a friend tells you they are struggling, or you notice them pulling away, going quiet, or seeming hopeless, you can help just by being there. Listen without rushing to fix. Do not laugh it off or repeat it to others. And gently, kindly, help them tell a trusted adult, because some things are too big for friends to carry alone. School programmes that train students to support each other really can help.



Listening well is help. You do not have to have the answers.

When Aditya's friend Rehan noticed him going quiet at lunch, he did not make a big deal of it. He just sat with him one day and said, "You have seemed off lately. I am here if you want to talk." Aditya did not say much at first. But a few days later, it was Rehan who walked with him to the counsellor's office, and waited outside. He did not fix anything. He just made sure his friend did not have to go alone.

There is one more thing, and it matters. Carrying a friend's pain can weigh on you too, especially if they ask you to keep a serious secret. You are allowed to tell a trusted adult if a friend is in danger, even if they asked you not to. Keeping that kind of secret is too heavy for anyone your age, and telling is an act of love, not betrayal.

 IF A FRIEND IS IN DANGER

If a friend ever talks about hurting themselves or not wanting to be alive, do not keep it to yourself, and do not try to handle it alone. Tell a trusted adult, a counsellor, or a helpline the same day. You are not breaking their trust. You are helping keep them safe.

More, if you want it ^

Being a supportive friend does not mean being available every hour, or having all the answers, or feeling responsible if things are hard. You can care deeply and still have limits. Point your friend toward the adults and helplines who are trained for the heavy parts. That way you can stay their friend, which is what they need most, instead of becoming their only lifeline.

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✿ A TEAM AROUND YOU

A parent, teacher, counsellor team

✿ IN SHORT

Help works best when the adults around a student pull together, rather than each trying alone. A parent, a teacher, and a counsellor working as a team can hold far more than any one of them.

The strongest support is a team effort, not one person's job. The best school programmes, guided by global health advice, teach students skills like handling stress and solving problems, and at the same time make the whole school a place where it is safe to ask for help. Parents, teachers, and counsellors pulling in the same direction can hold a student far better than any of them alone.

For you as a student, this is good news. It means you do not have to choose one person and hope they can fix everything. You can have a small circle: a parent who understands, a teacher who makes room, a counsellor who guides. Each one carries a part.



When the adults work together, the student stops falling through the gaps.

After Aditya opened up, his counsellor, with his agreement, spoke with his parents and one teacher. They kept it simple and respectful. His parents learned to ask "how are you really doing" instead of only "how were your marks". His teacher gave him a little more time when things were hard. The counsellor checked in weekly. None of them carried it alone, and Aditya stopped feeling like he was falling through the cracks.

In Indian homes, bringing parents in can feel risky, especially if you fear blame or a lecture. It helps to let a counsellor guide that first family conversation, so it starts with understanding instead of scolding. And school programmes that teach these coping skills genuinely help: a large review found that lessons given in schools led to small but real drops in low mood and worry among students.

More, if you want it ^

A team does not mean everyone knows everything about you. You get a say in what is shared, and with whom. A good counsellor will ask your permission before talking to parents or teachers, and will share only what helps you get support. Being part of a team is not losing your privacy. It is gaining people who are on your side.

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✿ GETTING HELP

How to actually get help

✿ IN SHORT

You do not have to figure this out alone, and help is closer than you think. There are free, confidential routes made exactly for students like you, and reaching out early opens more doors.

Getting help is not an admission of failure. It is the opposite: it is the smart, brave thing to do, and it works. Learning ways to cope at school gives you a genuine head start, not a cure for everything, but a real one. The hard part is usually just the first step, and there are more doors than most students realise.

In India, many people who struggle never reach any help at all. A national survey found that for most conditions, three-quarters or more of those affected were getting no treatment, and shame and stigma were big reasons people stayed silent. Struggling is common; not asking is even more common, and that is the part we can change. You reaching out is exactly how that changes.

Your school counsellor.

If your school has one, this is often the easiest first door. Confidential, free, and right there. Just knock, or ask a teacher to help you reach them.

A trusted teacher.

No counsellor at your school? A teacher you trust can listen and help you find the next step. You do not need the perfect person, just a safe one.

A parent or relative.

One understanding adult at home can make a big difference, and can help you reach a doctor if you need one.

A free helpline.

You can call for free, from anywhere, without giving your name. Trained people will listen and guide you, day or night.

There are free national helplines made exactly for this. You can call Tele MANAS on 14416, any time, from anywhere in India, and talk to someone trained to help. It is free, and you do not have to give your name. Whether it is a heavy week, a scary thought, or you just need someone to hear you, that number is there.

ONE SMALL STEP

You do not need to have it all figured out before you ask. Bring what you have noticed: what feels heavy, when it started, what makes it worse or better. That is exactly what a counsellor or doctor needs. Asking is not the end of handling it yourself. It is you handling it, well.

● TRY THIS

Pick one door from this booklet and take one small step this week. Save the Tele MANAS number, 14416, in your phone. Or write down the name of one adult you could talk to. Or send one honest message to a friend. You do not have to fix everything at once. One step is enough to start, and starting is the whole thing.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

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FURTHER READING

- NHS: Every Mind Matters - support for young people
- WHO: Mental health of adolescents

This guide helps you recognise and understand. It is not a diagnosis. For that, see a professional.

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- Feeling like it is all too much? **Read the crisis card.** Help is one page away.