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What we know about adolescent mental health

- Recent research has revealed staggering increases in adolescent anxiety and depression due to contemporary cultural and technological trends (Twenge et al., 2019).
- For example, diagnoses of adolescent major depressive episodes increased by 52% between 2009 and 2017, and rates of adolescent anxiety and depression increased by at over 60% between 2011-2018. In addition, emergency room admissions for self-harm as well as suicide ideation or suicide attempts more than doubled between 2009 and 2015 (Burstein et al., 2019).
- A more recent study by Twenge (2020) found that adolescents who spend at least five hours per day using electronic devices were 66% more likely to have at least one risk factor for suicide.
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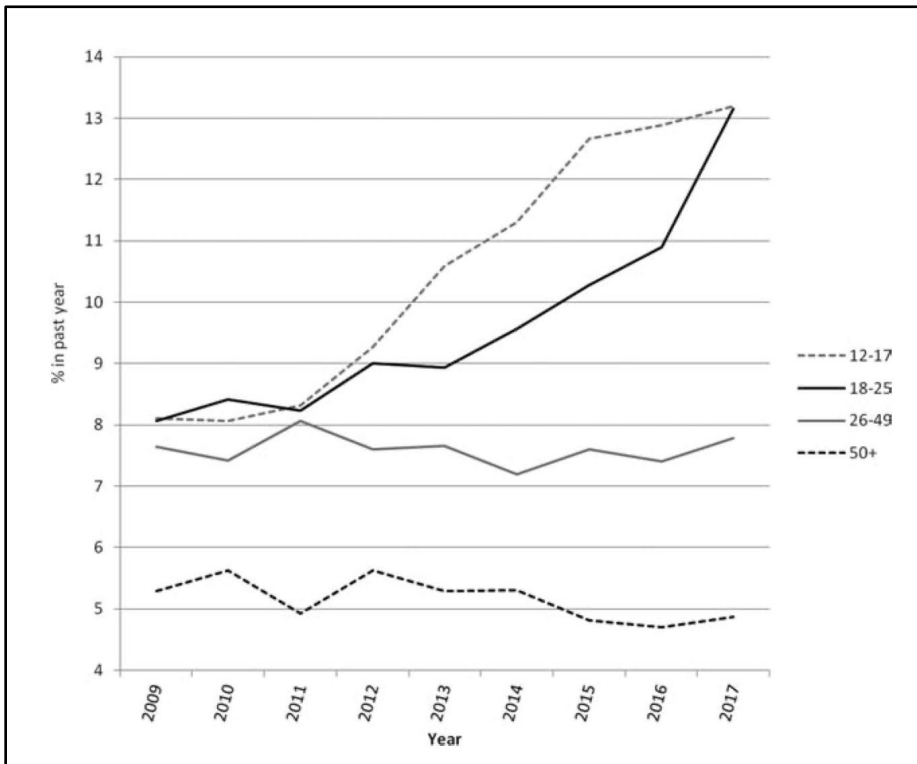

Figure 1. Twenge (2019). Percent with major depressive episode in the past 12 months, by age group, 2009-2017, by Twenge et al., 2019. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 128*(3), p. 191. Copyright 2019 by the American Psychological Association.

What we know about the positive effects of SEL through the vehicle of music education on adolescent mental health

- Some of the more significant skills involved in SEL include collaboration, self-regulation, self-awareness, and decision making (Schafer, 2020). While these skills can be cultivated in the general classroom, they are an integral part of the school music classroom experience, whether live or online.
- The social climate that is forged in the music classroom plays an important role in relationship building, social development, and individual student well-being (Adderly, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003).
- These skills are nurtured over time as students work with peers and teachers through co-curricular music activities that require project collaboration both during school and outside of the school day, as well as multiple years of enrollment within the same class or program (Carter, 2011; Gregory & Ripski, 2008).
- The brain consists of three areas known as the "triune brain"
    - "Reptilian: outer world through motor sensory experience (subjective body)"
    - "Limbic: inner world through emotional relational awareness (subjective feelings)"
    - "Neo-cortex: inner world through abstract thought processes (objective mind)"
    - People who have experienced trauma often have cognitive processes stay in their reptilian brain, or the "fight or flight" state of arousal
    - The arts engage all three areas of the brain, which are also needed for learning. (Burrell, 2010)
- The arts are associated with preserving ethnic and racial diversity in urban neighborhoods, lower rates of social distress, and reduced rates of ethnic and racial harassment. The presence of cultural assets in urban neighborhoods was associated with economic improvements, including declines in poverty (Stern, M. J., 2012).
- The ability to create music together can positively impact mood states and offer opportunities to increase self-awareness. Opportunities to learn new music that may be helpful also can result from group music making (Stewart, J., Garrido, S., Hense, C., & McFerran, K., 2019).
- Existing brain research suggests that experiences in the arts – particularly extended musical experiences – contribute to a fully functioning brain and body. Students' explorations in the arts can be enriched through the use of web-based and other information technologies (Upitis, R., 2001).

What we know about building communities within our music classrooms: Live and online

- Four Core Priorities of Trauma-Informed Classrooms include: predictability, flexibility, connection, and empowerment (Newhouse, 2020). These are in direct alignment with music teaching practices.
- Through the practices of e-learning, critical elements of the "Communities of Practice" model, socio-cultural learning framework where concepts including collaborative learning, negotiated goals, shared repertoire, the importance of shared knowledge (as opposed to individual knowledge) and social interaction, help to define the community dimensions of "mutual engagement," "shared repertoire" and "joint enterprise" (Wenger, 1998), are still active and thriving (Kenny, 2013).
- Evidence supports the idea that, for people who regularly participate in online community, the experience derived from belonging to a virtual group is as meaningful as being part of an offline community (Baym 2010; Hine 2009) as reported in Waldron (2011).
- In early Internet studies, researchers tended to focus solely on online settings with the assumption that what happened online was strictly separated from offline contexts – referred to as 'in real life' or IRL (Rheingold 1993). Now, researchers recognize that the two are, in many cases, 'not separate, but thoroughly intertwined' (Hine 2009: 15) as reported in Waldron (2011).