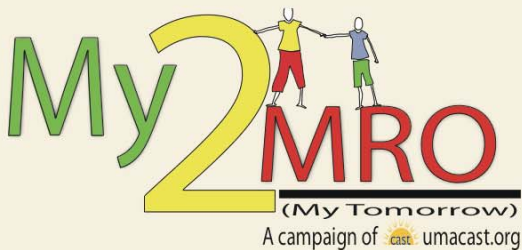


# TOMORROW'S NEWS

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## Am I Normal?

**YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE 50% MORE LIKELY TO SMOKE, INITIATE ILLICIT DRUG USE, AND DEVELOP OBESITY AS A DEPRESSED TEEN**

Mental health is one of the few physical functions most people take for granted. It's not missed until it ceases to function. You probably do not think about the air molecules filling the space around you, but you sure would miss them if they were all of a sudden gone! Likewise with mental health: it is essential, but very few deliberately care for our mental health. CAST's mental health awareness campaign is called

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### UMA Stats

Precursors to depression among youth is more prevalent in the Upper Merion Area than you think! According to the Pennsylvania Youth Survey taken during the 2007-2008 school year, 1,105 UMA students report the following behaviors:

<u>6th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>10th</u>	<u>12th</u>
<i>Sometimes I think that life is not worth it</i>			
<b>16.1%</b>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>
<i>At times I think I am no good at all</i>			
<b>21.8%</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	<b>36.6%</b>	<b>35.1%</b>
<i>All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure</i>			
<b>8.7%</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>



## Resiliency: the Gift that Keeps Giving

The mother of resiliency, Nan Henderson, M.S.W, travels the globe declaring to school district staff, teachers, and parents that resiliency is a necessary trait for youth to develop into positive, contributing adults. How a child reacts to a failing grade relates to how they will react to their first argument with their spouse. Nan has a great love for children and desires to see them thrive and flourish in every way possible. Her love for children motivates her as she shares about the power of resiliency in every area of a young person's life, from academics to friendships to dealing with crises. Her favorite definition of resiliency, in fact, was given by a 15-year-old high school student who, after a semester of resiliency training, described resiliency as:

"Bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts."

Researchers are concluding that each person has an innate capacity for resiliency, "a self-righting tendency" that operates best

when people have resiliency-building conditions in their lives. Honestly, who wouldn't desire a self-motivated and self-directed child who tackles problems with tenacity and vigor?! The world is full of stress, problems, and various forms of trauma. Adversity can sometimes be the trigger for mental health issues because of poor or inadequate coping mechanisms. The fact that life is unpredictable, unfair, and sometimes a bit raw, does not undermine a young person's ability to cope. Turning to drugs, alcohol, and violence is a quick way for youth to truncate their future. Why not equip the youth in your life to be able to recover from these worldly woes and pull through with uninjured mental health?

Be bold and seek help for life's toughest problems. Have the youth in your life take the resiliency quiz and determine how many resiliency building conditions are present in their life. Visit [www.resiliency.com](http://www.resiliency.com) for more information on the book, Resiliency in Action, and other tools to assess youth.

"Bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts." -15 year old high school student

## Sunny Thoughts

The saying goes that you are what you eat. The same principle is also true about our thoughts. We are what we think. If this premise is true, then when is the last time you evaluated your thoughts? Have you ever thought about what you are thinking and if it was productive or not?

Do you think in extremes? "I am never going to find a part-time job!" or "I always make a fool of myself in front of her!" Do you think with distorted perceptions? "Gosh, I have nothing to offer, so I will not even try." or "No one wants to be my friend because I am hideous!"

Your thoughts are a powerful instrument that can shift our moods and

perspective on any situation. Use your thoughts to promote a positive self-image and a hopeful outlook on life. There is always a silver lining to any situation and you might be surprised as to how easy it can be to identify that twinkle of hope.

Try reciting affirmations everyday that encourage, motivate, and support you as the unique individual that you are. Remind yourself of these truths: "I am valuable." or "I am a work in progress." or "I am making strides toward my life goals". You have so much to offer the world- think it and believe it!



Your words  
can be a  
catalyst for  
change.  
Help make  
the change  
for the  
better.

*Continued from the Cover Page*

My 2MRO. It reads like a text message and is pronounced 'My Tomorrow'. The campaign was designed to encourage the community, especially youth, to identify ways their tomorrow will be brighter if they manage and invest in their mental health.

Do you love being you? Does your future include doing things that will make your child smile? Does your tomorrow include sharing your secret with a trusted adult? These are the actions steps towards quality mental health. The My Tomorrow campaign is geared toward youth and parents alike, as mental illness does not discriminate based on age or stage in life. The hope is that all of the promotional materials, seminars, flyers, and projects will spark people's interest in their own mental health and begin the conversation with their

children. Mental health maintenance is a positive step at any age!

Mental health is not just about major psychological disorders, but is about the way we handle all decisions in our life. It's the process of handling life's problems- great and small. All these decisions add up to our perspective on life and the situations thrown at us. Do your mental processes induce futility or hope? Self-loathing or self-worth? Dread or anticipation?

We have the power to change the stigma around seeking help for mental health issues. Be the change: get help or help another get help. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues and would like to talk to someone, please call your local guidance counselor or access the free counseling services offered at the Lincoln Center in Audubon at (610) 277- 3715.

## Silence, the Black Hole

APPROXIMATELY 10% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS REPORT HAVING SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE WITHIN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Silence is deafening, but it can also be fatal. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those aged 15- 24 years old and the fourth leading cause of death among children aged 10-14 years old. To someone struggling with thoughts of suicide, silence- their own or of others they seek help from- can deepen their resolve to follow through on their plans. The Minding Your Mind (MYM) Foundation reports that four out of five youth who need mental health services do not receive them (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

Break through the silence and open up the lines of communication. Have you tried talking to your pastor, older friend, parents, or guidance

counselor? If you are a caregiver, does your son or daughter know that they can come and talk to you about anything without feelings of shame, being ignored, or getting punished? The Upper Merion Area is rich in support resources that are waiting to serve you! Talking about the elephant in the room can save a child's life!

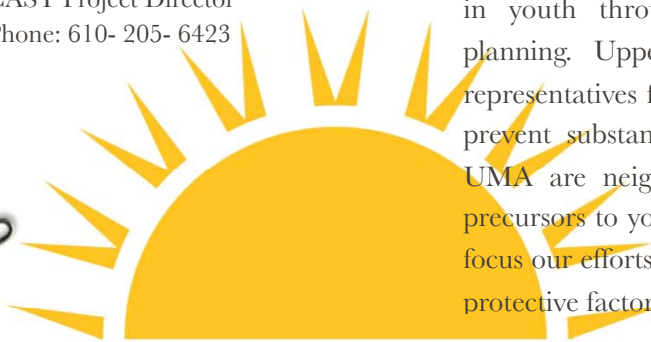
Ross Szabo, a speaker, director, and author from MYM, encourages parents to trust their instincts and begin the conversation with their children. His life was spared because his father asked him to share his feelings and talk at a critical time in his life. Are you unsure of what to say? There is no need to be perfect in your technique, but a genuine heart of concern is unmistakable and will

set the tone for a safe place to discuss feelings of despair, hopelessness, and extreme loneliness. Will you be that person to a child in need? It all starts with an earnest "How are you doing?"

Today's popular culture says that it is "cool" to go along with your friends and drink until you get sick and to hold all your most genuine, feelings inside. This understanding of what is emotionally normal is detrimental to 21st Century youth who are clearly struggling with mental health issues. Mental health is not a diagnosis, but the way we all make decisions in our lives and should become a normal part of our everyday language.

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Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a risk and protective factor focused approach to reducing problem behaviors in youth through community mobilization, awareness, and planning. Upper Merion Area residents work together with representatives from all sectors of the community to decrease and prevent substance abuse and violence. The risk factors for the UMA are neighborhood attachment, family management, and precursors to youth depression. For the next two years, CAST will focus our efforts on decreasing these risk factors and increasing the protective factors that already exist.



*Today is the day we make choices about tomorrow!*