

Connecting with children and teens in these uncertain times

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February 18th, 2022



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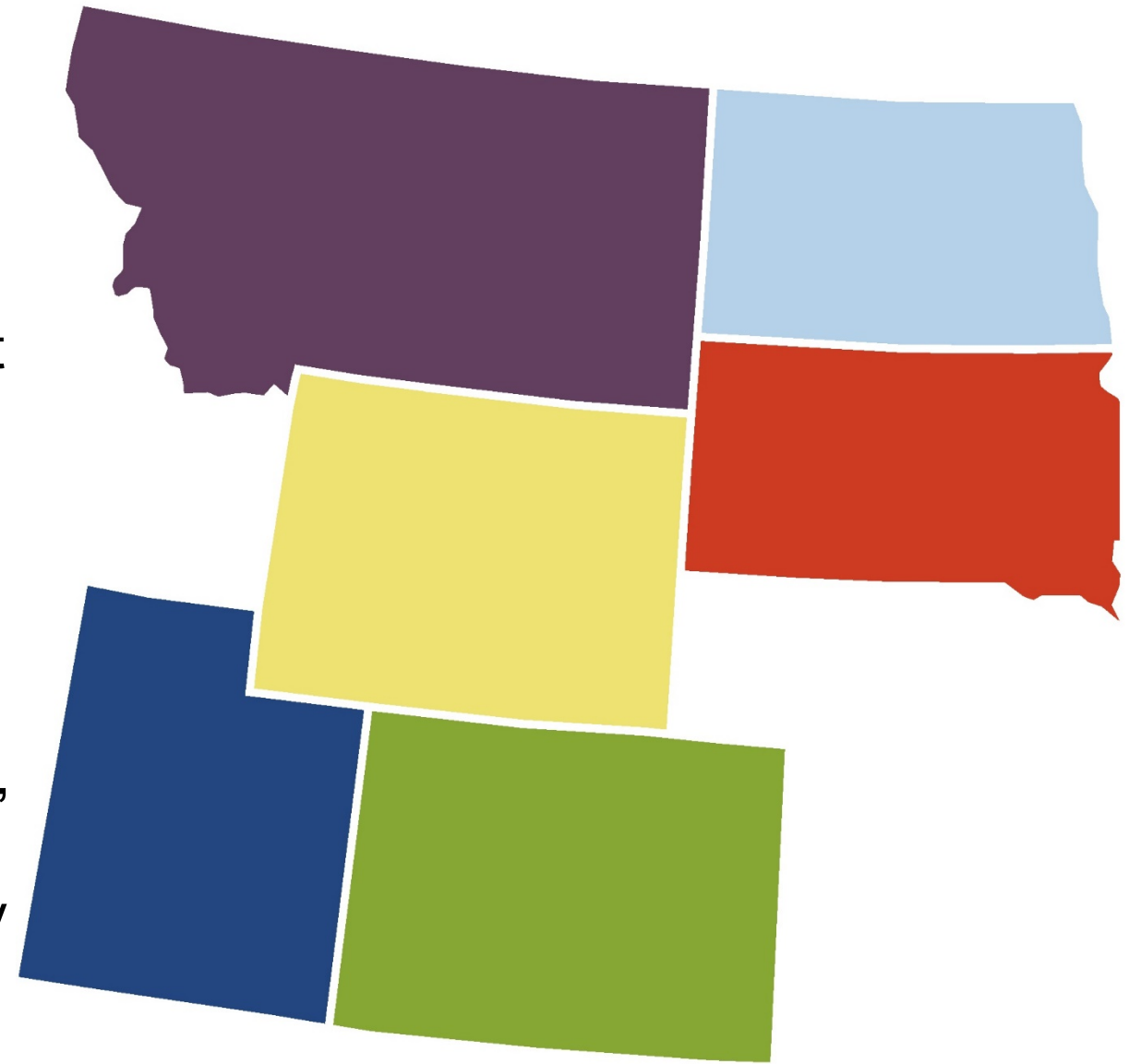
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The work of the Mountain Plains MHTTC is supported by grant H79SM081792 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

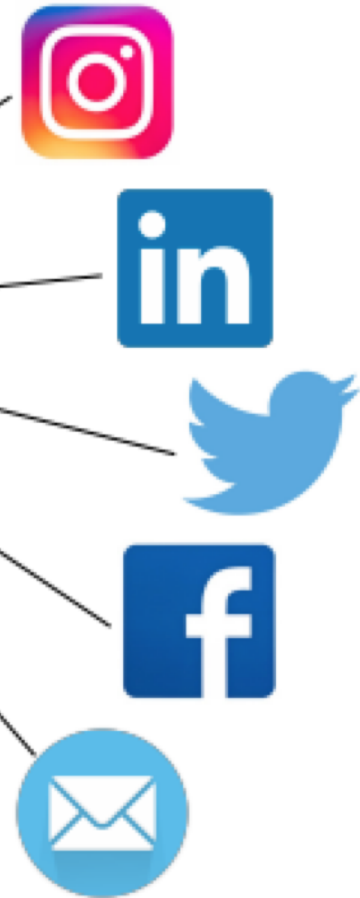
CONSISTENT WITH
OUR ACTIONS,
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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When We Were Your Age

What are three things you can still relate to when you see a child or teen struggling and needing support?



Some Reasons They Don't Engage

Children Reported:

My counselors are nice but I don't think they understand or can help me. Counselors are awkward or don't know how to just play. They are always so busy, distracted on their phones, or are doing other things when I'm trying to share. Sometimes they use words I don't understand and I feel embarrassed. They don't know how I feel and I'm too shy to tell them. They are always in a rush.

Teens Reported:

Counselors talk to much and they are always asking about my feelings. I don't even know how I feel how am I supposed to share. I can't trust them. They either talk to people I already don't trust or they always try to fix things. They don't help me they make it worse. There is no privacy. Other people can hear what we talk about or my counselor shares with the other adults. There is minimal confidentiality with schools so my parents have the right to see everything. I don't feel safe sharing how I really feel.

**“Play is an adventure. It isn’t a chore.
There is no right way to play.”
-John Gottman**



Where Do We Even Start?

Tools For Engaging With Young Children

Respect Their Space: Children have been told, reminded, and sometimes yelled at about social distancing. Ask how much space the child is comfortable with.

Be Flexible With Time: Children are learning to be social again and may take more time to open up. Offer different options on time, be mindful of body language, offer for them to draw or write down things and send to you or drop under your door when they are ready.

Get Comfy With Technology: Play games in your off time, be silly, ask them for help, test out different games online and accept feedback.

Be Positive: Thank them for trying, point out things they did well, encourage imagination and creative play.

Child Therapy Basket: Bag Full Of Wonder

Scavenger Hunt: Ask the child to go on a scavenger hunt around your office or their home to find things they would like to use for therapy.

Hoberman ball/ball or toys that expand, expanding breaths, giving stuffed animals a ride on their shoulders or belly.

Adventure Land: Your office space is special, create somewhere they want to be and explore and share. Loud colors and things to explore.

Board Games/Cards/Coloring Books/Drawing Supplies/Worksheets that are ready to be sent home

Create a special home file folder for children to keep their work, keep in a special place, and take out when they are there with you.

Ooops! Where Did You Go?

Tools For When Your Kiddo Gets Distracted

It is normal for children to have a short attention span, get bored easily, or check out from talking about things that may be traumatic or hard to talk about. Try to keep their mind and body engaged.

Movement Breaks Are Very Important:

Put on a song and do a silly dance

Take them for a walk

Ask them to help you find something

Do some yoga stretches, breathing exercises, or make silly faces



Please Name One Person
You Respected or Wanted To Be Like
During Your Teen Years

Tools for Working with Teens:

“Adolescence is like gravity, It is much easier to work with it than against it.”

Ask How Their Week Is Going How would they describe top three or bottom three events for themselves this week?

Make it About Them Inviting teens to think about ideas, concepts, or people from their perspective?

Let Teens Teach You The only thing teenagers like more than being able to show off they know something, is being able to show off they know something adults don't.

Use Culture Culture is a pervasive force in the lives of most teenagers. It is through their identification with various music, fashion styles, celebrities, and other cultural icons that adolescents explore and express their identity, their sense of who they are.

Tools for Working with Teens Continued

Do Something Active Take a walk, throw the ball back and forth, create something artistic or artsy, allow doodling or music to play.

Get Them To Perform Ask them to act out what happened using body language or different tones of voices.

Give Them A Choice Rather than asking, or telling teens to complete a certain task in a certain way, give them a range of options.

Challenge Them Give teens a challenge. Give them the chance to realistically compete against an adult with a chance of winning and they will become very, very focused on whatever the task might be.

Technology Is Not A Subject Ask them to use technology as a tool. Using technology in order to achieve other tasks is one of the best ways of creating high levels of engagement and multiple learning outcomes.

Best Piece Of Advice From Teens: Be Yourself

The myth that adults need to be cool or hip in order to connect with teenagers has been around forever, and despite copious amounts of evidence to the contrary it never seems to end.

Teenagers don't need you to be trendy, they want you to be genuine. They are highly sensitive to people trying to pull the wool over their eyes. Adults who try too hard to get teens to like them will achieve the exact opposite.

Engaging with teenagers is about being yourself. Being genuine and sincere, while not taking yourself too seriously will go a long way towards developing meaningful rapport with teenagers.

Supports Are Out There

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433) or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Both free, 24-hour, confidential hotlines with trained counselors and nearest crisis centers.

Safe Place: 1-888-290-7233 Project Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for young people in crisis through a network of qualified agencies, trained volunteers and businesses.

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill: 1-800-950-6264 free, confidential hotline operating Mon.-Fri., 10 am- 6 pm (EST). Volunteers provide information, referrals, and support questions about mental illness.

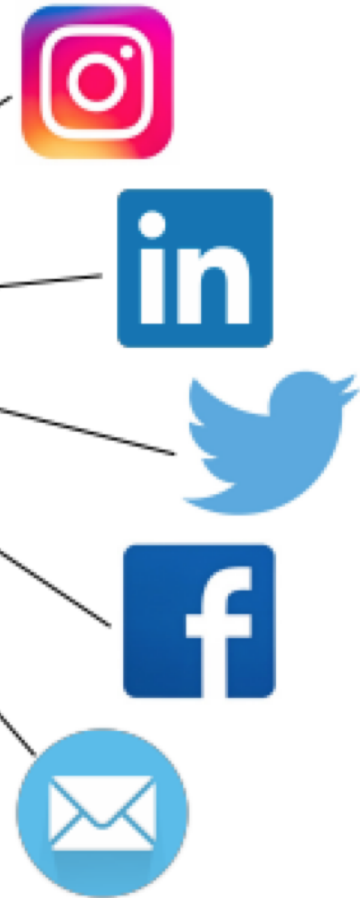
Girls and Boys Town National Hotline 1-800-448-3000 for parents and teens. Free and confidential call is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They offer problem solving on any issue and encourage teens to talk to their parents or caretakers about issues that may require professional assistance.

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Thank You!

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Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

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