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Helping Adolescents Thrive Toolkit

Strategies to promote and protect adolescent mental health
and reduce self-harm and other risk behaviours





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Helping adolescents thrive toolkit: strategies to promote and protect adolescent mental health and reduce self-harm and other risk behaviours

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Contents

P. v Foreword

Acknowledgements vii
 Acronyms and abbreviations ix
 Index of boxes x
 Key definitions xi

P. xiv Executive summary

P. 1 Introduction

Helping adolescents thrive (HAT): the vision 2
 HAT toolkit scope and development process 2
 The four HAT strategies and two implementation approaches 3
 Who is this toolkit for? 4
 How does the HAT toolkit complement and link to other WHO/UNICEF frameworks and resources? 4
 The HAT toolkit and the social ecological model 5
 Guiding principles 6
 References 10

P. 11 Strategy 1: Implementation and enforcement of policies and laws

Rationale 12
 Approaches 13
 Example policy and law approaches at-a-glance 23
 What works best when... 25
 Focus exercise 27
 Implementation considerations 28
 Resources 29
 References 32

P. 33 Strategy 2: Environments to promote and protect adolescent mental health

Rationale 34
 Approaches 38
 Example environment approaches at-a-glance 49
 What works best when... 51
 Focus exercise 52
 Implementation considerations 53
 Resources 54
 References 56

P. 58 Strategy 3: Caregiver support

Rationale 59
 Approaches 60
 Example psychosocial approaches for caregivers at-a-glance 72
 What works best when... 74
 Focus exercise 76
 Implementation considerations 77
 Resources 78
 References 79

P. 82 Strategy 4: Adolescent psychosocial interventions

Rationale 83
 Approaches 87
 Example adolescent psychosocial interventions at-a-glance 111
 What works best when... 113
 Focus exercise 115
 Implementation considerations 116
 Resources 121
 References 122

P. 126 Key implementation approaches

Multisectoral collaboration 126
 Resources 135
 Monitoring and evaluation 136
 Resources 142
 References 143

P. 144 Annex. HAT indicators

Foreword

Promoting mental well-being, preventing mental health conditions, and reducing self-harm and other risk behaviours among adolescents.

Most of us remember our teenage years. The excitement that comes with the first flashes of independence as we are given more freedom, develop new relationships and often receive our first pay packet. Likely we also remember feelings of uncertainty, and perhaps anxiety, as the pressure to do well in exams builds and the reality of soon having to make our own way in the world hits home.

During the last year, as we have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have watched with concern as young people navigate their way through an environment that was not at all what they expected, an environment where physical contact with friends, family and teachers has been largely replaced by a voice and a face on a screen, when tensions at home have often come to the fore due to illness or financial worries and when job prospects look more uncertain than ever.

Many young people have really struggled to cope with the pressure; some have slid into depression and anxiety; tragically some have even taken their own lives.

We must do everything in our power to support young people, and to equip them with the skills and knowledge to cope even in the most challenging circumstances.

The Helping Adolescents Thrive programme, jointly conceived by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, focuses on the promotion of mental well-being among adolescents and the prevention of mental health conditions.

The Helping Adolescents Thrive toolkit, the latest material of the programme to be released, provides programmatic guidance for people working in the health, social services, education and justice sectors on how to implement mental health promotive and preventive interventions that are appropriate to local needs and the contexts where adolescents live. The toolkit covers the legal foundations required for such programmes to succeed, the features of environments that are conducive to the well-being of adolescents, what support should be provided to parents and other caregivers, and psychosocial interventions that work.

The complementary Teacher's Guide and Comic Book can be used in schools as part of mental health promotion programmes to facilitate understanding and discussion of mental health issues.

Now, more than ever, WHO and UNICEF are committed to improving the mental health of adolescents, and indeed all young people. Ensuring their mental well-being is critical not only for their future, but for all our futures.

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