

More Than Just Stress



Sofia returns home from volleyball practice. The school year has recently started. She sits at her desk, slumped over and tired, realizing exactly how much homework she has to do. She takes her books out of her backpack and begins studying.



I'm so tired...but I just can't sleep. I'm too nervous. There's just so much to do!

Ugh, I can't believe I decided to take 5 AP classes this year. What was I thinking?



The next day at school...



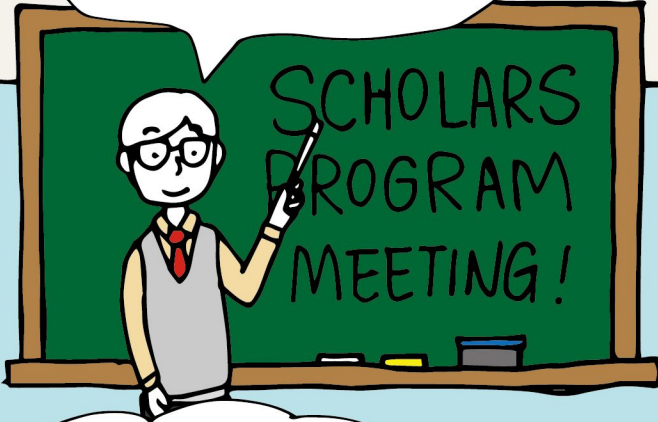
Oh, I just couldn't sleep. I was stressed about getting my lab report done.

Whoa, Sofia... you look so tired! What's up?

Ugh, I know, so much work, right? At least it's over now.

Sofia goes to her Scholars Program meeting during lunch, an organization that she loves.

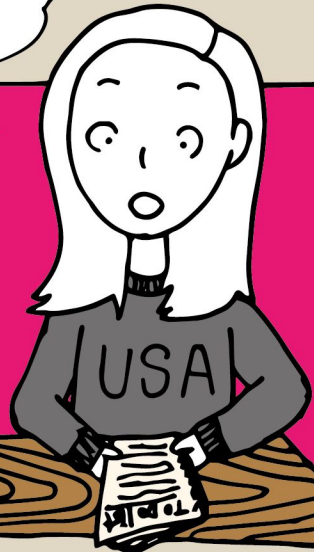
Okay everyone, let's get our meeting started! This year, we really want to focus on how we can help the community, so we're asking that every member commit to 15 hours of volunteering this semester!



Where am I going to possibly fit in 15 hours of community service with the rest of my schoolwork and activities?

To do list

- * volleyball practice
- * Chemistry quiz
- * History quiz
- * math homework
- * dancing lesson
- * book report
- * work
- * volleyball match



Unique Stressors for Asian American Youth

Asian American youth face unique stressors that can impact their mental health:

Difficulty balancing two cultures: Navigating the culture of the home country with family as well as the American culture at school

Discrimination or isolation: Can mostly occur at school, sometimes in the form of bullying, due to different cultural or racial backgrounds

Pressure to meet expectations: Striving to meet parental expectations, succeed academically, and strive for certain career paths

Source: AAHI 2008 Needs Assessment

That night, Sofia, her brother Sam, and their parents are eating dinner. Sofia is shuffling food around her plate, not saying anything. Her parents are talking.



Yes, you're going to be a doctor right? How can you be a doctor if you don't get good grades? We never had these opportunities back home. You have to make us proud! Have you applied for summer internships yet?



I think it's still too early...

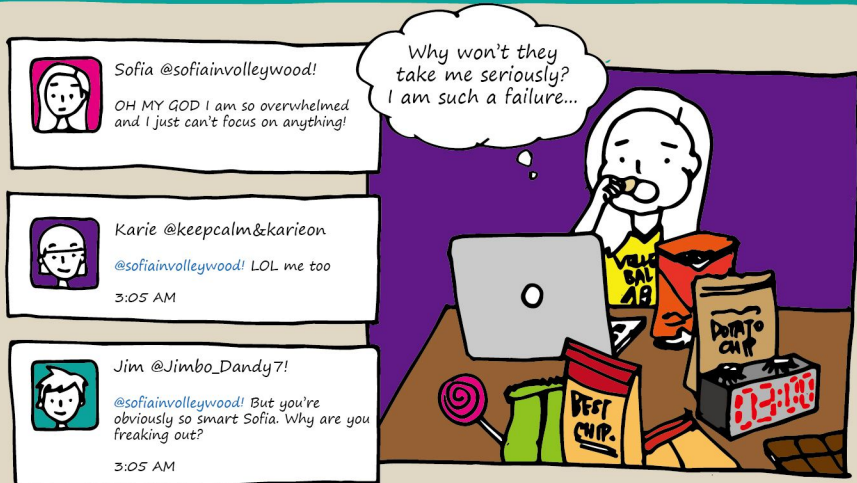
Nonsense! It's never too early! You have to make sure they can accept you for good internships so that colleges can see all the impressive things you did.



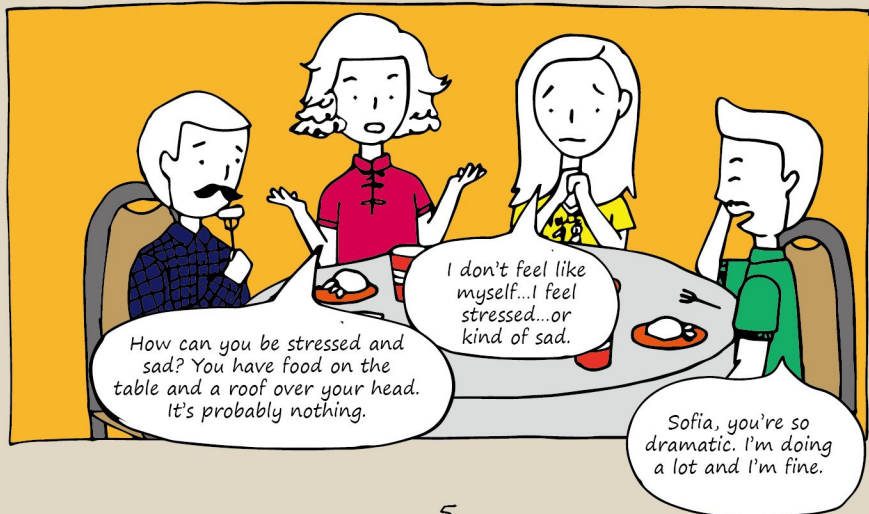
All the test scores are important too. You have to start studying now. If you wait too long, it will be too late and then you will fall behind.

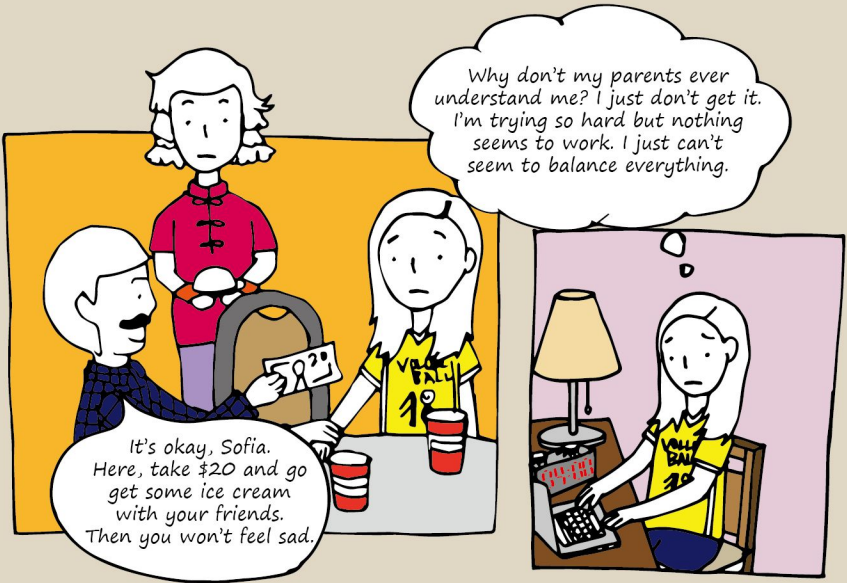
I'm not going to fall behind...

After dinner, Sofia finds herself unable to sleep. Instead, she binge-eats to bring herself some comfort and goes online.



Two months later, Sofia has gained weight because of her over-eating. She is no longer doing well in volleyball because of her fatigue and lower energy. She has trouble sleeping. She is struggling in school because she has difficulty concentrating. Suddenly, the activities Sofia used to love: volleyball, Scholars Program, school, spending time with friends and family, none of that seems fun anymore. One night at dinner, Sofia tries to talk to her parents about it.





The next morning, Sofia wakes up, and she thinks "What if I just stopped?" She doesn't want to go anywhere, do anything, or see or talk to anyone.



The next day, Sofia still does not feel well. She feels tired and hopeless. Her body is aching. She just wants to stop moving and doing her activities. Sofia asks her parents to stay home again and immediately goes back to bed. At some point, she hears her phone buzzing, but has no interest in checking to see who is texting her. Sofia just wants to sleep.



Common Mental Health Disorders Among Teens

Anxiety Disorders:
Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, or other anxiety disorders

Disruptive Behavioral Disorders:
Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct Disorder, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Mood Disorders:
Depression

Stress-Related Disorders:
Acute Stress Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Eating Disorders:
Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge-Eating Disorder

Sources: National Institute on Mental Illness, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Association for Children's Mental Health

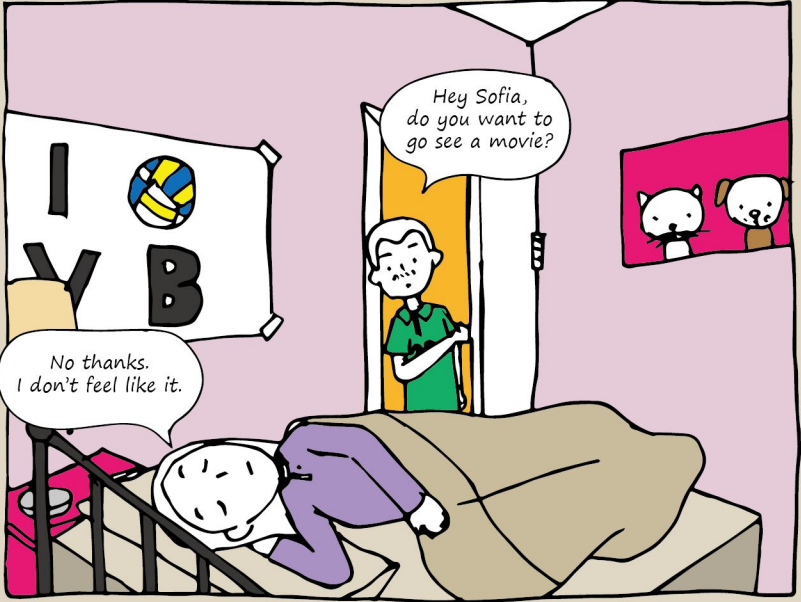
Meanwhile, Sam is worried about Sofia. He thinks something serious is going on with her. He decides to look up Sofia's behaviors and symptoms on the internet and finds a lot of information about mental health and depression. Sam even finds a phone number for a local mental health hotline. He writes down the number and goes to Sofia's room.

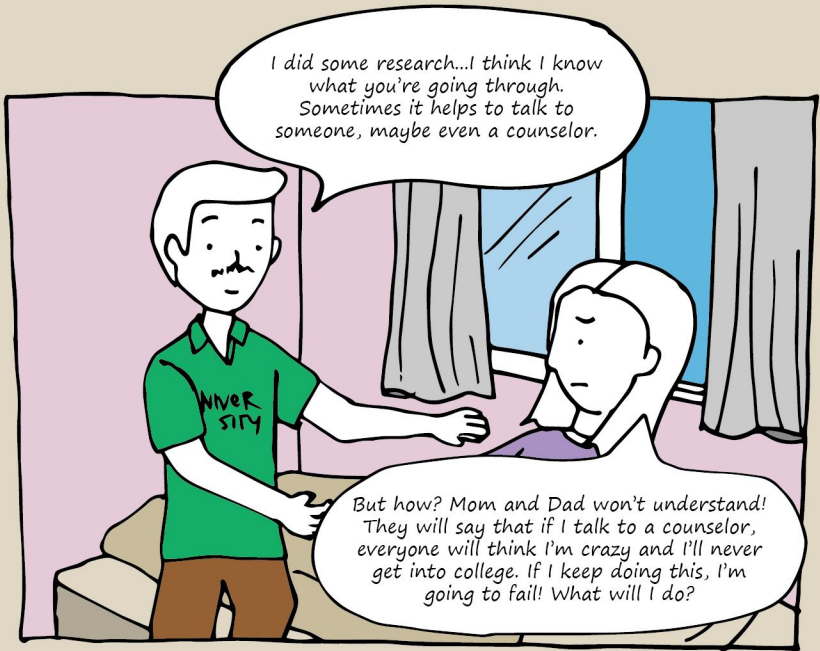


Did you Know ?

It is not unusual for someone to have more than one mental health condition at the same time. In fact, about 45% of individuals who have any mental disorder meet the criteria for two or more disorders.

Source: National Institute on Mental Illness







Everyone goes through stress, but when that stress begins to interfere with your daily life, it may be time to reach out to some resources that can help you to feel like your usual self.

Resources for Teens

- * **Montgomery County Hotline (EveryMind):** 301.738.2255 (24/7)
- * **Montgomery County Text Line (EveryMind):** Text 301.738.2255, Monday through Thursday, 4pm-9pm
- * **Montgomery County Crisis Center:** Open 24 hours, 7 days a week telephone, walk-in and mobile outreach services.
240.777.4000 OR 240.777.4815 (TTY)
1301 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850
- * **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) School Counseling Services:** There are certified, professional school counselors available to you within each elementary, middle, and high school within MCPS.
- * **Access to Behavioral Health Services:** Offers screening, referrals, and linkages to services for Montgomery County residents of all ages.
240.777.1770
- * **Other Strategies:** Track gratitude & accomplishments in a journal, enjoy hobbies, exercise, practice meditation & relaxation, and use mental wellness smartphone apps. (Recommended by Mental Health America)

Mental Health MYTHS and FACTS

MYTH: You're not depressed.
You just feel sad.

FACT: Depression is NOT a temporary state that will just go away or that someone can easily "snap out of."

MYTH: People fake mental illness, or they are just doing it for attention.

FACT: People do not choose to have a mental illness. The symptoms of a mental health condition might not always be visible, but it is real.

MYTH: If you feel better, you are cured.

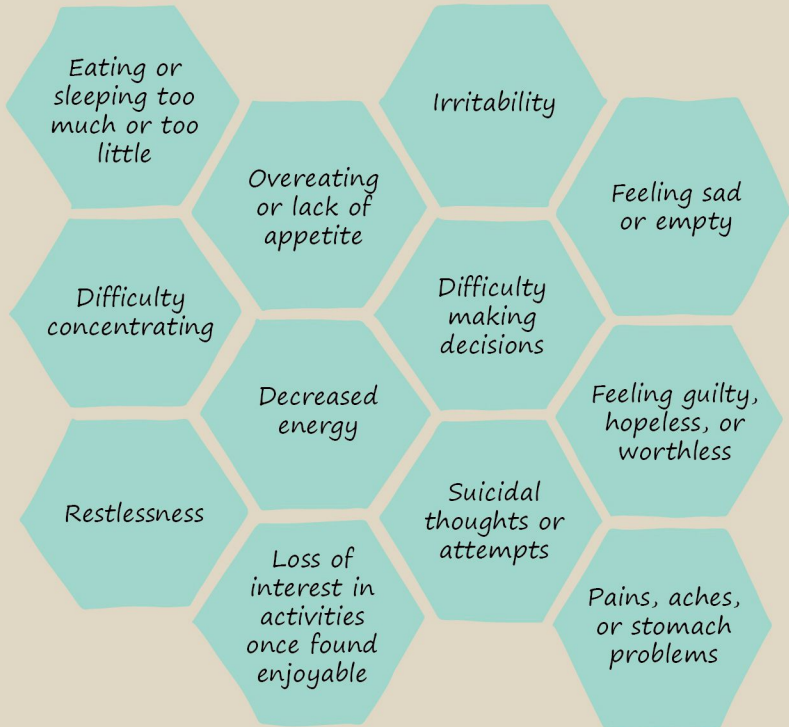
FACT: Mental health conditions do not go away on their own. With treatment, symptoms may improve, but this doesn't mean you are "cured." You may need to continue your treatment plan for a long period of time after feeling better to ensure it is effective.

MYTH: Adolescents don't experience mental health problems. They're just moody.

FACT: Teens can have mental health conditions. One in five people between the ages of 13 and 18 have or will have a mental illness. If left untreated, mental health conditions could become more severe over time.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness, Johns Hopkins Medicine

Signs and Symptoms of Depression



Did you know ?

- * Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Asian Americans between the ages of 15-24
- * 17.7% Asian American high school students reported seriously considering suicide (21.3% women, 14.9% men)
- * 7.8% Asian American high school students reported having attempted suicide (11.1% women, 5.2% men)

Source: American Psychological Association, Office of Minority Health

There are linguistically and culturally sensitive mental health providers available to the Asian American community. For more information, please contact the **Asian American Health Initiative** at 240-777-4517.

Acknowledgements

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) would like to express its deepest appreciation to its community partners and staff for their dedication and support in making this publication possible.

Special Thanks to:

Asian American Mental Health Youth Ambassadors

AAHI Steering Committee

AAHI Health Promoters

Cross Cultural Infotech (CCIT)

International Cultural Center (ICC)

The Asian American Mental Health Youth Ambassadors are a group of young advocates who volunteered their time to inform and direct this photonovel project, ensuring it aligned with and captured key mental health and wellness issues facing Asian American youth. Ranging in age from 13 to 18, the Youth Ambassadors met on weekends to discuss a plot and storyline to make this photonovel project possible. Without their gracious time and effort, this mental health educational tool would not be the unique and invaluable community-driven project that it is. Thank you to all the Youth Ambassadors!

Disclaimer: The characters, places, and incidents depicted in this photonovel are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is entirely coincidental.

July 2017



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Together To Build A Healthy Community



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