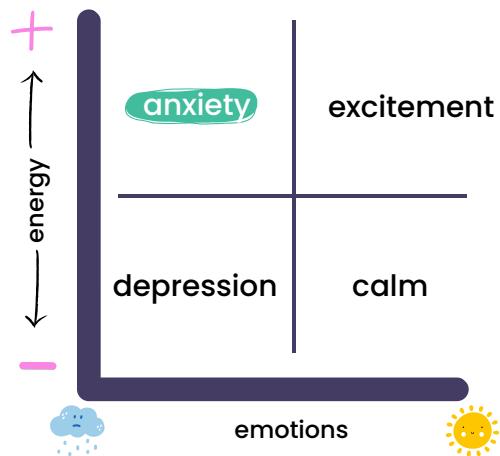


# FACT SHEET

let's get real  
about  
teen mental health

50% of mental health issues are established by age 14, and 75% by age 24

We can intervene early to prevent mental illness and crisis



anxiety and depression combine negative emotions with high or low energy respectively

## why do mental health issues appear in teens?

- the brain is undergoing a wave of major changes – and sex **hormones** directly affect brain development
- rejection sensitivity** is at its peak due to changing attachments and relationships
- frontal lobe** (“thinking brain”) is still developing until age 25
- genetic heritability isn’t the biggest driver: 50–70% of mental health issues are **environmental**

- 25% of contacts to Kids Helpline involve **mental health**
- 25% involve **emotional wellbeing**
- 16% of contacts are about **suicide**, and suicide-related contacts have more than **doubled** in the last 5 years

DID YOU KNOW...?

## why teens don't tell...

### parents

- preference for self-reliance
- fear of parental response
- to ‘protect’ their parent

### teachers

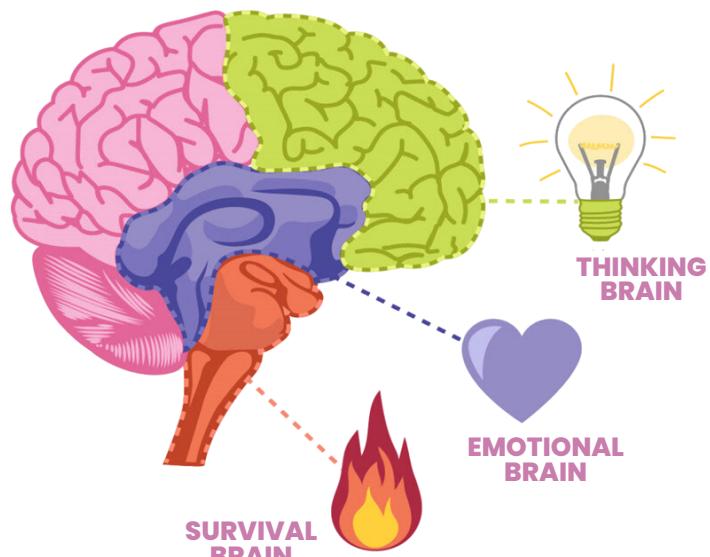
- desire to stay ‘in control’
- avoiding emotional facial expressions

## counsellor tip #1

### it's your relationship that counts

when talking to teens about their troubles...

- be **curious & neutral** – stay calm and remember, they're in their "emotional brain"
- any next steps should be **collaborative** – ask them what they think their options are



## counsellor tip #2

### understand teen behaviour

- **stress & anxiety** are an expression of not having the skills needed to cope
- "survival brain" is often in **fight/flight/freeze** which manifests in conflict/avoidance/withdrawal
- **social skills & connections** can have a big impact on mental health – foster the improvement of these for better outcomes

**anxiety is...**



## counsellor tip #3

a GP visit  
can be a  
good first  
step!

### get the environment 'basics' right

- **lifestyle factors** – getting enough movement & sleep
- **physical health** – issues with hormones, thyroid etc.
- **nutrition** – consider diet, test for deficiencies



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