

Show Notes - NOVEMBER 2021 Episode:

Mental Health & Special Needs

SHOW OPENING (JM)

Welcome to Let's Chat, an ongoing conversation with youth workers and leaders about student ministry and whatever else we end up talking about. Thanks for joining us!

Today's episode will focus on **Mental Health and Special Needs** and as part of our discussion, we're going to be talking about Mental Health as it relates to youth workers as well as students and we are going to take some time to talk about how to engage students with special needs by making our ministries and events as accessible as possible

INTRODUCTIONS

I'm your host, J.M. McGinnis and today I'm thrilled to be joined by:

Carlos Portillo who is currently Ministry Director for Suncoast Youth For Christ in Bradenton, Florida

David Goodwin who is Pastor to Youth and Families at Central Church of the Nazarene in Lenexa, Kansas

EPISODE PREVIEW (HOST)

In this episode we're going to be asking. . .

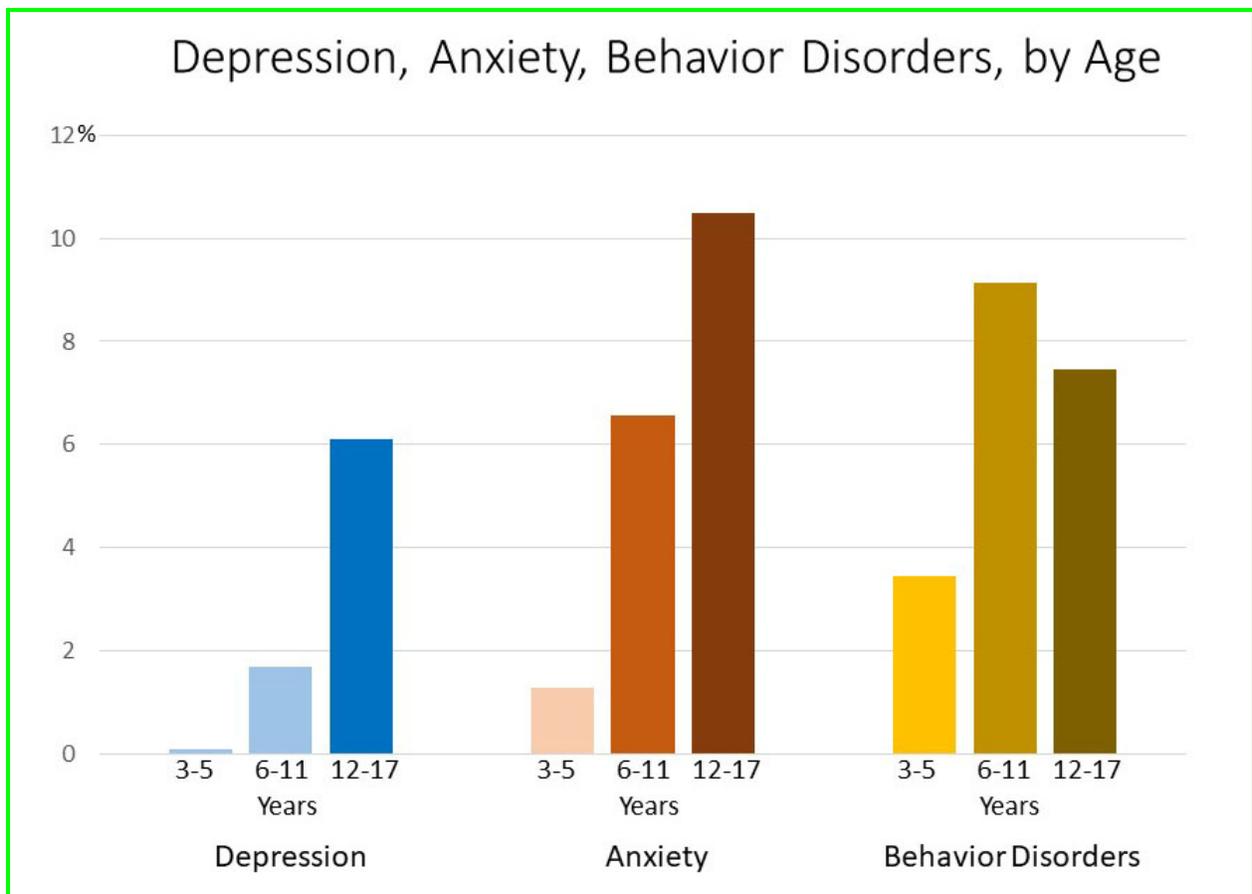
- What are the mental health issues facing our students and their families as well as youth workers who are doing life alongside them?
- How should we think about mental health when it comes to self-care as a youth worker?
- What are the ways we can increase the accessibility and engagement for students with special needs as well as talking about some best practices when it comes to creating an accepting culture while accommodating these students and their families?

HOST OUTLINE / QUESTIONS:

- **What trends are you guys sensing and seeing in students right now when it comes to mental health? (CARLOS)**
 - What are they struggling with and how are they coping in healthy and unhealthy ways?
- **What about youth workers? Are there mental health issues youth workers are dealing with that we can normalize or bring to light? (DAVID)**
 - How do we stay alert to our own mental health needs?
 - What does self-care look like?

- Are there some specific signs of burnout we should be aware of?
- **What about some guidelines about when to refer? How and under what circumstances should youth workers refer to a professional therapist? (CARLOS)**
- **Let's switch gears - for those youth workers out there who are excited about the possibility of engaging students with special needs, what are some things that are important to: (DAVID)**
 - Think about beforehand
 - Communicate to students and families
 - Adjust logistically / programmatically
- **What are some best practices or success stories we might pass on to our listeners? (DAVID)**

CARLOS' NOTES:



- **Many family, community, and healthcare factors are related to children's mental health**
 - **Among children aged 2-8 years, boys were more likely than girls to have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.⁵**
 - **Among children living below 100% of the federal poverty level, more than 1 in 5 (22%) had a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.⁵**
 - **Age and poverty level affected the likelihood of children receiving treatment for anxiety, depression, or behavior problems.³**

If you are in crisis, call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service is available to anyone. All calls are confidential.

There were nearly two and a half times as many suicides (47,511) in the United States as there were homicides (19,141).

- The age-adjusted suicide rate in 2019 was **13.93 per 100,000 individuals.**
 - The rate of suicide is highest in **middle-aged white men.**
 - In 2019, **men died by suicide 3.63x as often as women.**
 - On average, there are **130 suicides per day.**
 - White males accounted for **69.38% of suicide deaths in 2019.**
 - In 2019, **firearms accounted for 50.39% of all suicide deaths.**
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- Suicide is the **10th** leading cause of death in the US

- In 2019,
47,511
Americans died by suicide
- In 2019, there were an estimated
1.38M
suicide attempts

In 2019, adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had a suicide rate of 13.95.

Leading cause of death per age group

10-14	Suicide 534
15-24	Suicide 5,954
	Suicide 8,059

JM's NOTES:

120% surge in diagnoses between 2002 & 2012

- The key is to educate yourself!
- The biggest thing we can do for students and their parents with special needs is let them know we are on their team.
- Are we willing to do the work to reach their kids?
- Our job is to stretch ALL kids, but not all students can be held to the same standards of behavior and processing. That's the challenge, and the opportunity.
- We aren't going to "fix" something like this in one weekend retreat when their parents have been working on it for years.

If our mindset is that it is a problem or a bother, these kids will sense it and so will their parents and they will leave.

Ministering to students with special needs is an opportunity!

DAVID'S NOTES:

- **What about youth workers? Are there mental health issues youth workers are dealing with that we can normalize or bring to light? (DAVID)**
 - How do we stay alert to our own mental health needs?
 - Check out “Blessed Connections” by Dr. Judith Schwanz. We are not isolated selves, but deeply interconnected. When your close relationships aren’t healthy, you will not be healthy.
 - Check out “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” by Peter Scazzero to dive into some common healthy practices to incorporate into your life and ministry rhythms.
 - What does self-care look like?
 - Less about “treat yo’ self” and more about consistent life-giving connections and practices
 - Everyone can benefit from counseling
 - Keep learning, keep growing
 - Are there some specific signs of burnout we should be aware of?
 - Bob Goff proposes the question: “how is your life working for those around you?”
 - If your life isn’t working for the people around you, it’s not going to be working for you

Let’s switch gears - for those youth workers out there who are excited about the possibility of engaging students with special needs, what are some things that are important to: (DAVID)

Inclusion (retreat), enter their world, representation (The Chosen), Student Preaching

What are some best practices or success stories we might pass on to our listeners? (DAVID)

1. *Faithful ministry looks more like inclusion and less like separation.*
2. *Faithful ministry looks like personally entering the world of the student you are pastoring.*
3. *Faithful ministry includes diverse examples of Jesus-followers for students to emulate*

- **Develop a good relationship with parents**
- **Prepare the student ahead of time**
- **Printed guidelines for each ministry setting**
- **Facilitate interactions for students who have difficulty communicating**
- **Remember that inclusion is more about a mindset than a perfect set of strategies**

Resources:

<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/special-needs>

<https://youthministry.com/special-needs/>

“Blessed Connections” Judith Schwanz

“Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” Peter Scazzero

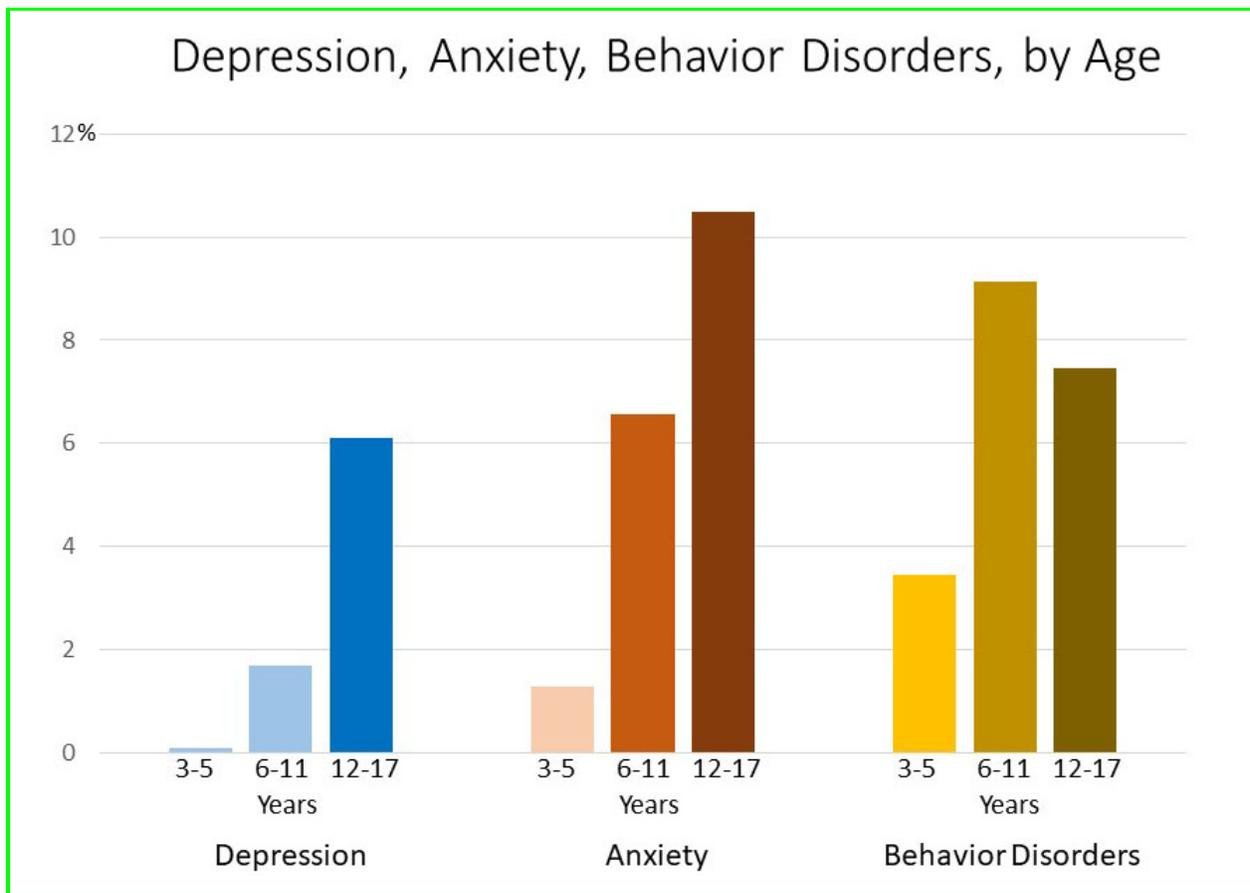
Bethesda Lutheran Communities <https://bethesdalca.org/events-and-resources/#.YXwTIJ5KiL0>

NEXT STEP

What are some resources we could point our listeners to who'd like to know more about MENTAL HEALTH & SPECIAL NEEDS?

<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/special-needs>

<https://youthministry.com/special-needs/>



SUMMARY

Host summarizes the discussion in a few sentences and then transitions into the show closing.

SHOW CLOSING

Thanks for joining us on Let's Chat!

- **FEATURE**

- For more on MENTAL HEALTH and SPECIAL NEEDS check out NYICONNECT.COM for blog posts and more.
- AND, if you'd like to check out or download the resources we talked about Then visit the show notes for this episode at NYICONNECT.COM

- **And if you enjoyed today's episode, we'd love for you to . . .**

- **ASK**

- Comment on the podcast! It lets us know who is listening out there and gives us the opportunity to connect and get feedback from you!
- If you have a friend who came to mind as you were listening to this episode who needs to hear this conversation, you can share the link with them or on your social media.

- Until next time, thanks for listening!
