

What Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions Search for Online

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, researchers from Pathways to Positive Futures conducted three focus groups of young adults (ages 18-28) with serious mental health conditions and asked them how they used the internet to access information about their mental health. Based on our focus group results, here are questions young adults have about their mental health that cause them to seek answers online.

Where can I go to get care?

Young people use the internet to look for places they can go that accept clients without insurance, or at low-cost. They look up doctor ratings or backgrounds. They also look up information about their diagnosis or treatment options in order to prepare for a health visit.



What is wrong with me?

Young people self diagnose by looking up the symptoms they are experiencing and finding a diagnosis that fits their experience. They do this because they feel like they have nowhere else to turn when they aren't feeling "right."

How can I manage on my own?

Young people look up strategies for living more independently—everything from how to develop good coping skills to where to get food stamps. To them, the internet provides information on how to successfully transition to adulthood and meet the challenges associated with living more independently.

What is the best treatment?

Young people want to be in charge of their health and treatment and want to know all the options to manage their conditions. They look up information on different approaches to treatment, often outside of medication.

What does this medication do?

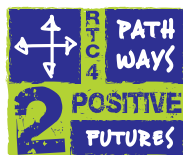
Young people are very concerned about the medications they are prescribed. They want to know about the side effects, the symptoms the medications are supposed to treat, and the diagnoses associated with the medications. They look up medication information after a trip to a healthcare professional (HCP) to get their own “second opinion,” further researching or sometimes challenging the HCP’s suggestion for a particular treatment.

Who else feels the way I do?

Young people use the internet to develop a community of peers and to seek out experiences of others like them who have “been there.” They want to read the stories of those with mental health conditions in blogs and online journals. They want to hear personal experiences regarding the side effects of medication. They want to know how common a particular diagnosis is. They want to know they are not alone.

NEW TRAINING COMING SUMMER 2011

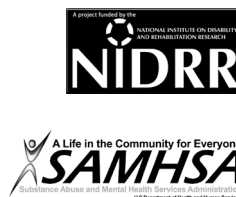
In response to these findings, Pathways to Positive Futures will be developing a training for transition-aged youth on how to search for quality mental health information online. This will be available on our website (www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu) during Summer 2011.



Fact sheet produced by L. Kris Gowen & Matthew Deschaine, eHealth Project, Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University, Portland, OR.

For more information, contact:

L. Kris Gowen, Ph.D.
gowen@pdx.edu



Project funded by National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, United States Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (NIDRR grant H133B090019).