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“Identify and discuss the defining issue of your generation. How do you believe it should be resolved?”

You just finished your test and turned it in. The kid in front of you is bouncing his leg, and so is the kid next to him. The girl to your left is biting her nails and tapping her fingers against the desk, similar to the way the kid in front of you is bouncing his leg. Anxiety. You were taught this in health class, but how does one handle it? Yoga helps anxiety,¹ but a student can't just pause the test and start doing a tree pose in class. Why weren't we taught how to regulate our emotions? What can help students? I got two solutions for you, teacher required moral evaluation assessments and a required emotion regulation course. Emotion regulation is the influence and control of emotions. Learning how to express them in a healthy way while also knowing when it's appropriate to express emotions.² This is especially important for teachers because they are going to impact a child one way or another. With bad emotion regulation, negative influence will sneak its way into the classroom.

Culture plays a big part in mental health stigma. Culture influences a child's mindset, its what they grew up with. Due to this, many kids inherit a stigma-based view on mental health. This leads to a lot of students believing their behaviour is normal when it can be from mental dysregulation. Minorities are the least likely to seek mental health treatment. Hispanic populations are reported for having the lowest rate of medical treatment, including mental health.³ I can report back that this is true, growing up hispanic with my immigrant family showed me how much stigma we hold in our culture. I saw the way my aunt called my cousin crazy for self-harming. I heard the way relatives talked about my mentally ill cousin. I felt like I couldn't ask for help. So I didn't, until it got severe. When I did ask my parents for treatment, I was called crazy and my mom told me that I was just going to be told a bunch of lies. I eventually got help, but many other minorities in my situation don't. Sometimes it's so engrained in their head that

¹ Mayo Clinic Staff. “Yoga: Fight Stress and Find Serenity.” Mayo Clinic, December 29, 2020. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/yoga/art-20044733>

² Chowdhury, Madhuleena Roy. “What Is Emotion Regulation? + 6 Emotional Skills and Strategies.” Positive Psychology, March 23, 2022. <https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-regulation/#:~:text=The%20definition%20of%20emotional%20regulation,inhibiting%20actions%20triggered%20by%20emotions>

³ Mental Health First Aid USA. “Four Ways Culture Impacts Mental Health.” Mental Health First Aid. National Council For Mental Wellbeing, July 11, 2019. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2019/07/four-ways-culture-impacts-mental-health/#:~:text=Cultural%20stigma.,openly%20and%20ask%20for%20help>

they don't even stop and think they could ever possibly need help, causing them to suppress their emotions. Resources can be limited for minorities because most minorities prefer a counsellor who shares the same religion, race, or ethnicity.⁴ Due to a bunch of stigma in minority populated cultures, not a lot of minorities get into psychology. Therapists will have a hard time understanding certain aspects of their life due to this. But with an emotion regulation course, they get a head start in realising harmful behaviour and learning to cope. So why not give them a basis, a head start to simply realising that all the negative emotions they feel can disappear. That there is hope.

Did you hear that kid who sits next to you in English cheated on their partner? Ah yes, gossip, the type of rumour that is fuelled on uncertainty. Of course, no matter who you are, you are going to deal with rude people and assumptions throughout your teen years, but how does that impact growth? Gossip isn't restricted to peers, teachers do it too. It may not be about your personal life but rather focused on your behaviour. "I cannot stand my fourth period class; they are the worst. I caught Sam copying off another student!" The teachers that'll hear this will take this into account and treat the "bad" students a certain way. "Sam, I've heard a lot about you. Please, sit in the front." That's a setup for failure. The student realises that this is how they are perceived, so it must be who they are, so why try to be different? This is the Pygmalion effect.⁵ We internalise the perspective of others and apply it to ourselves. This is why we need teachers to take moral evaluation assessments, to ensure this doesn't happen. We need teachers to be aware of effects like these and realise the harm they could be doing.

We have health classes where mental health is covered. Typically learning about depression, anxiety, and addiction but what about personality disorders or learning disabilities? We have psychology classes but they're optional and focus on the brain. I propose a required class that teaches how to manage emotions, especially since not every student is aware that their behavior is a product of emotion. With a required emotion regulation course, students can learn to cope and develop healthy habits which increases academic achievement and passion. It'll help the school develop a positive environment and strengthen communication and participation. I also propose that teachers should take an annually moral evaluation assessment. Why? To make sure students aren't afraid of coming to class. I've been humiliated and abused by teachers. Most memorable being in second grade when my teacher ripped my drawings in front of everyone. When the kindergarten assistant teacher tried to get me to vomit because she didn't believe I was sick. These stuff happen. The evaluation would analyze their beliefs and discipline rules. The evaluation can prevent abuse, humiliation, and negativity while also building a relationship with each other. It can help teachers reflect upon morality and fix any issues. Not only will an evaluation benefit the students, but also a teacher. Possibly enabling a teacher to seek help. When teachers are stressed and depressed, it impacts a child's ability to learn. Schools with high

⁴ Meyer, Oanh L, and Nolan Zane. "THE INFLUENCE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES OF MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT." National Library of Medicine . National Center for Biotechnology Information, November 12, 2014. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4228688/>

⁵ Bador, Selina. The Pygmalion Effect. Youtube. Sprouts , 2019. <https://youtu.be/4aN5TbGW5JA>

depression levels tend to rank low in academics.⁶ My proposals would help the community, teachers, and students.

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⁶ Issue brief. Teacher Stress and Health , 2017. <https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/rwjf430428-TeacherStress.pdf>