

## Chapter 7. Mental Health

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Mental health is defined as how individuals think, feel and act. It affects how one handles stress, relates to others and makes decisions. Since adolescence is a time of growth, change and added responsibility one's mental health can have life altering affects.<sup>1</sup> Suicide is of particular concern, as it is the leading cause of death among adolescents ages 15-24.<sup>2</sup> Generally, females report significantly more suicidal thoughts than males. In Wisconsin, twenty-two percent (22%) of females have considered suicide compared to 14% of males.<sup>3</sup> However, males have more completed suicide attempts than females due to the way they decide to take their life.<sup>4</sup>

Depression is another serious mental health problem. Depression has been linked to suicide, behavior problems and drug use.<sup>5,6</sup> Many factors including hopelessness, isolation, family problems and low self-esteem are shown to increase the symptoms of depression in adolescents. Feelings of depression and suicidal behaviors is shown to be reduced if one has strong social support from family, friends and peers.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter highlights the areas of psychological and physical well being believed to be important to adolescent mental health:

- How common are feelings of depression among southwest Wisconsin youth?
- How common are suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among southwest Wisconsin youth?
- Whom do our youth talk to if they have a personal problem?

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<sup>1</sup> Child & Adolescent health Problems-Fact Sheet for School Personnel (2004-2005)  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/doc/ebdmhfacts.doc>

<sup>2</sup> Rutter, Phillip A. & Behrendt, Andrew E. (2004) Adolescent Suicide Risk: Four Psychosocial Factors. *Adolescence*, 39, 259-302.

<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Executive Summary (2005)

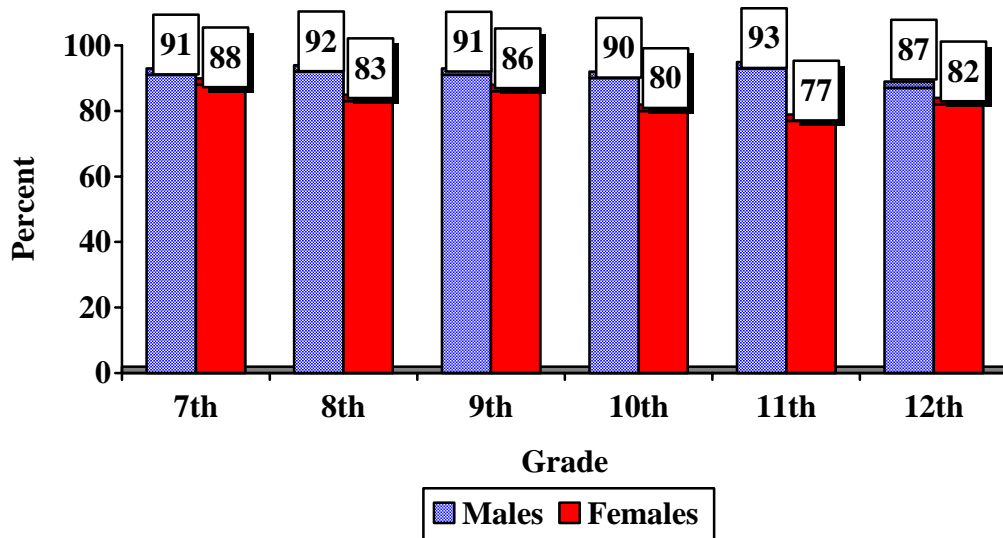
<sup>4</sup> Binge Drinking may Predict Teen suicide (2004) *Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly* 16, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Pullen, LM, Modrein-McCarthy MA, Graff, EV (2005) Adolescent depression: Important Facts that Matter. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 13, 69-75.

<sup>6</sup> Survey Finds Teens Experienced Major Depression in Past Year less than half received Treatment (2006) Brown University Child & Adolescent Behavior Letter 22, 1-7.

## FEELINGS OF SELF-SATISFACTION

Students who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself and take a positive attitude toward myself”:



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### Key Findings:

A high percentage of teens report being satisfied with themselves on the whole.

Females in 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades were the least confident about their self-image.

### Other Notable Findings:

More than 86% of teens in southwest Wisconsin are satisfied with themselves most of the time.

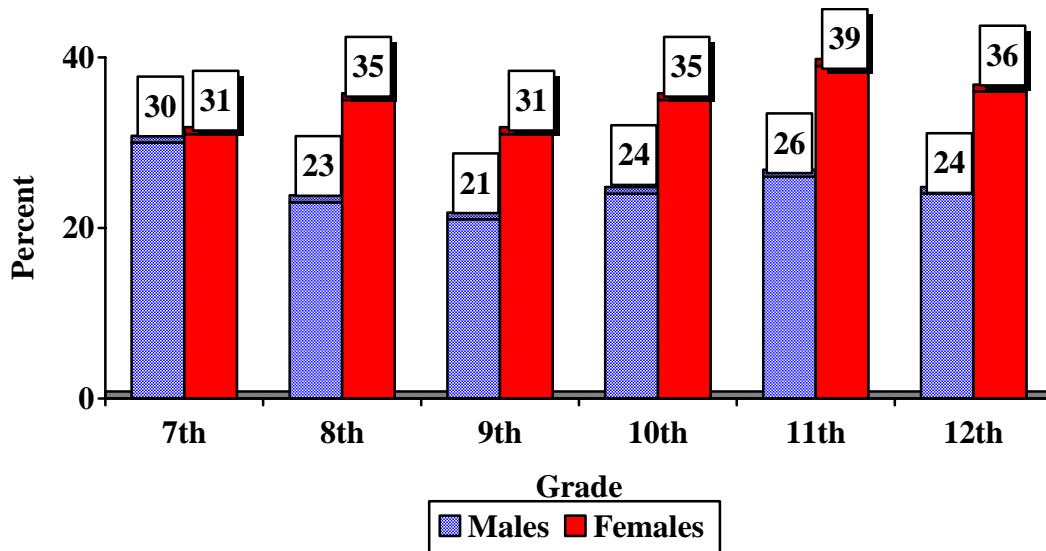
Although 82% of female students agreed with the statement, 91% of the males felt more confident about their self-image.

Overall, 35% of males and 23% of females “strongly agreed” with the statement “on the whole, I am satisfied with myself and take a positive attitude toward myself”.

Self-satisfaction is directly related to grades. Seventy percent (70%) of students with A’s, A/B’s, and B’s are satisfied with themselves.

## FEELINGS OF DISSATISFACTION

Students who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “Sometimes I feel my life has no purpose”:



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### Key Finding:

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of 11<sup>th</sup> grade females “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “Sometimes I feel my life has no purpose”.

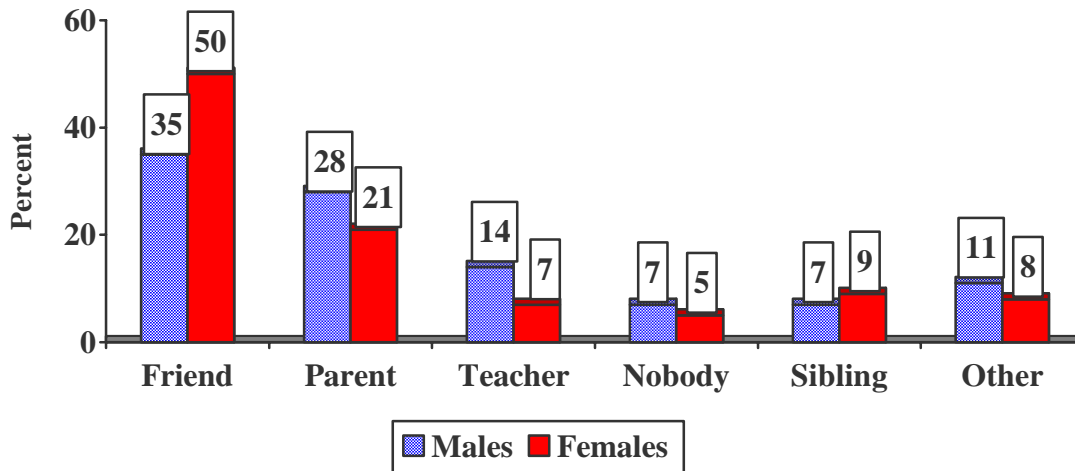
### Other Notable Findings:

Although most students have high self-esteem, 24% of males and 35% of females feel like their life has no purpose on occasion.

When looking at individual grade levels, anywhere from 10-13% of females “strongly agree” with the statement, “Sometimes I feel my life has no purpose”. Males who strongly agreed ranged from 6% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 12% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

## WHO TEENS TALK TO

Teen responses to the question, *“If you were having a personal problem and needed to talk, to whom would you most likely go?”*



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### Key Findings:

When they are having a personal problem and need someone to talk to 35% of males and 50% of females chose to talk to friends first.

Parents were the second most common choice with 28% of male and 21% of female teens choosing them.

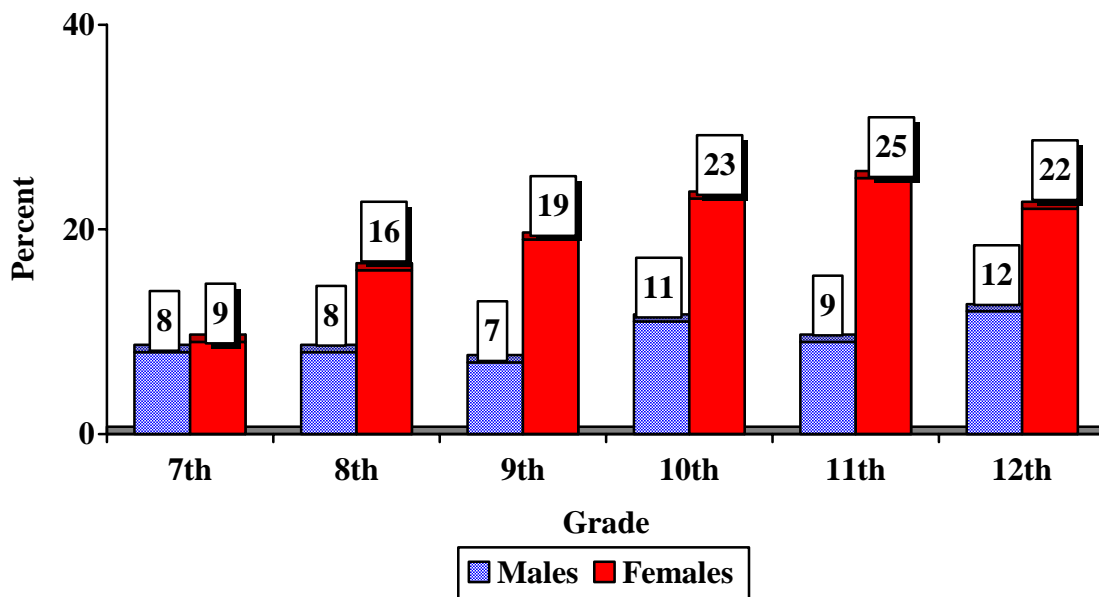
Males and females differed on their third choice with 9% of females choosing to talk to a sibling, while 14% of males reported they would talk to a teacher.

### Other Notable Finding:

The least common choices for teens that need to talk included law enforcement, clergy, youth group leaders, other adult relatives and adult friends, but some teens identified confidants in each of these groups.

## TEENS WHO HAVE ENGAGED IN CUTTING OR SELF-MUTILATION

Teens who have ever engaged in cutting or self-mutilation:



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### Key Finding:

Twenty-five percent (25%) of 11<sup>th</sup> grade females report having engaged in cutting or self-mutilation.

### Other Notable Findings:

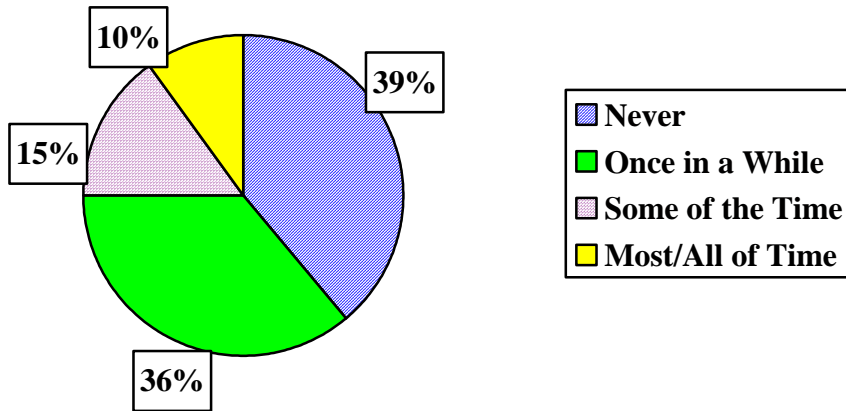
Eighty-five percent (85%) of students have never engaged in cutting or self-mutilation.

Twenty percent (20%) of the females and 9% of the males have engaged in cutting or self-mutilation some time in their life.

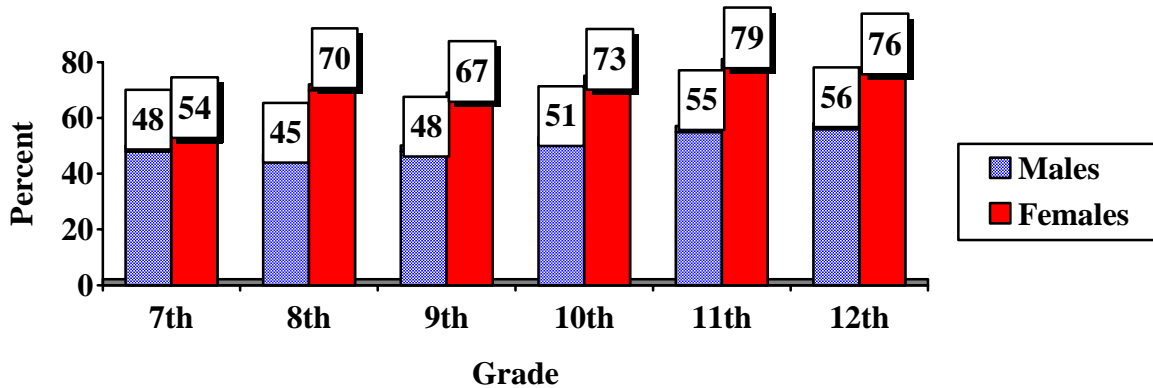
Seventy percent (70%) of students who get grades of B's or higher have never engaged in cutting or self-mutilation.

## FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION

Teens who report “feeling very sad or depressed” in the past month



Teens who report feeling sad or depressed at least once in awhile in the last month



### Key Finding:

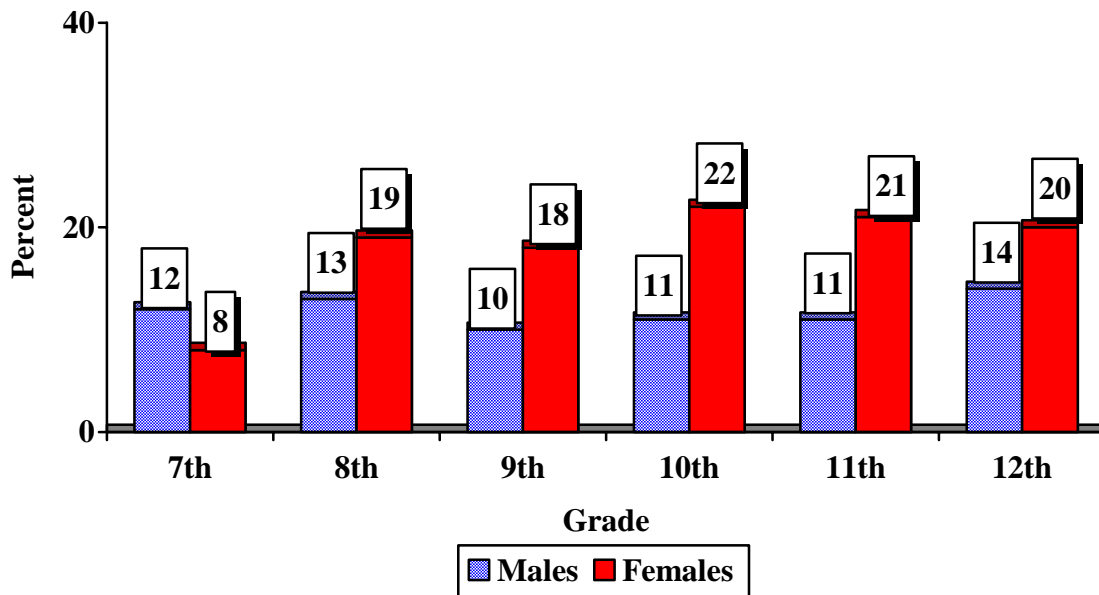
Nearly 45% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade females report not feeling sad or depressed, but 67- 79% of 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade females reported feeling depressed or very sad anywhere from “*once in a while*” in the month prior to the survey to “*all of the time*” in the month prior to the survey.

### Other Notable Finding:

While 49% of the males reported never feeling sad or depressed in the month before the survey, only 29% of the females never had that feeling.

## TEENS WHO HAVE THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

Teens who have had suicidal thoughts in the month prior to the survey:



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### Key Finding:

Fourteen percent (14%) of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 22% of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade females thought about killing themselves anywhere from once to all of the time in the month prior to the survey.

### Other Notable Findings:

Eighty-five percent (85%) of students had not considered suicide in the month prior to the survey.

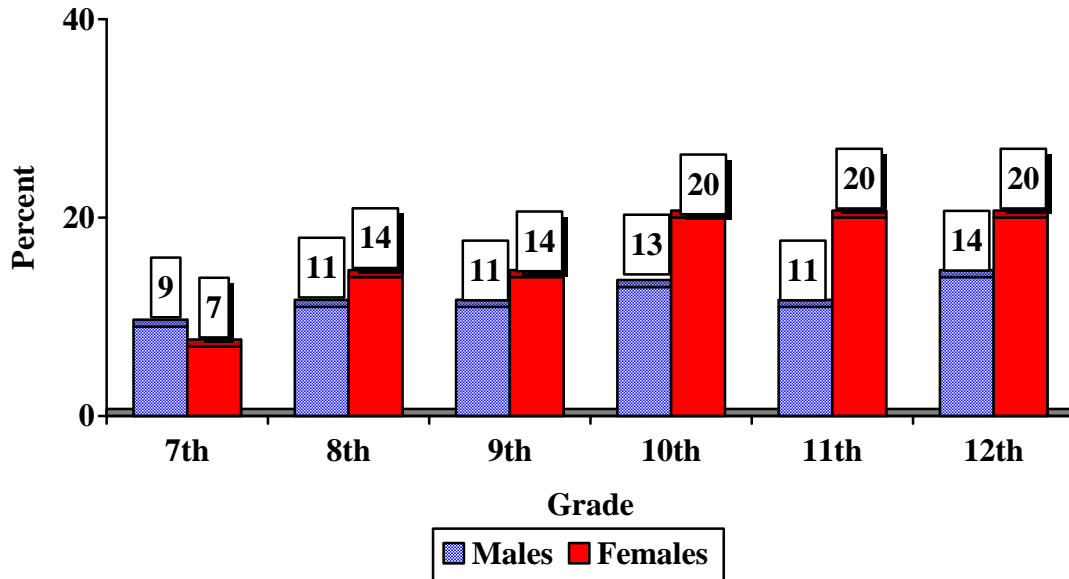
Of the 562 students who have thought about thought about suicide at some time in their life, 44% would talk to a friend about it. Twenty-four percent (24%) would not talk about it to anyone.

Ninety-two percent (92%) of teens who believe their families loves and gives them support when they need it, did not think about suicide in the month prior to the survey. Conversely, 50% of teens who did not feel they had family love and support did think about suicide in the month prior to the survey.

Of the students surveyed, 15% reported being both depressed and thinking about suicide in the month prior to the survey.

## SUICIDE PLANS

Teens who report “making a plan to kill yourself” at some time:



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### Key Finding:

One out of five (20%), 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade females have made a plan to commit suicide.

### Other Notable Findings:

According to the survey, 14% of teens in southwest Wisconsin have made a plan to kill themselves.

Ninety-two percent (92%) of teens report never having tried to commit suicide.

One percent (1%) of the teens report attempting suicide in the month prior to the survey. Three percent (3%) report attempting suicide in the year before the survey and 4% report attempting suicide more than a year before the survey. A total of 282 teens report they have attempted suicide.

Ten percent (10%) of the females and 5% of the males report having tried to commit suicide.