

# The Impact of Mental Health on Student Success

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# Presenter Background

- ▶ Licensed Psychologist
- ▶ Director of Counseling Center at SDSU
  - ▶ Clinical services for students
  - ▶ Training faculty and staff to support students
  - ▶ Consultation with parents
  - ▶ Development of behavior change programs
- ▶ University of Miami, School of Medicine
- ▶ Work with Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened individuals

# Overview

- ▶ College Student Mental Health
- ▶ Generational Aspects
- ▶ Other Factors
- ▶ Impact on Academics and Learning
- ▶ What To Do?

Have Things Changed?

# National College Health Assessment (NCHA II 2018)

## Reference Group

- ▶ Over 26,000 students
- ▶ 44 colleges/universities
- ▶ from NE, Midwest, South, West
- ▶ Public, Private
- ▶ Rural, urban

# Academic Impacts - NCHA

Impacts on academic performance, defined as: received a lower grade on an exam, or an important project; received a lower grade in the course; received an incomplete or dropped the course; or experienced a significant disruption in thesis, dissertation, research, or practicum work

- ▶ Stress 30%
- ▶ Anxiety 26%
- ▶ Sleep Difficulties 20%
- ▶ Depression 17%
  - ▶ Felt "so depressed that it was difficult to function" (in past year) 41%
- ▶ Cold/flu 13%
- ▶ Relationship Difficulties 8%

# Other Reported Experiences

## NCHA

- ▶ Very lonely in past 12 months 63%
- ▶ Felt things were hopeless 53%
- ▶ Felt very sad 68%
- ▶ Felt overwhelming anxiety 62%

# Traumatic or Difficult to Handle - NCHA

- ▶ Academics 48%
- ▶ Intimate relationships 30%
- ▶ Family problems 28%



# Generation Z (iGen) 1995-

- ▶ Growing up more slowly
- ▶ More tolerant
- ▶ Open-minded, forward-thinking, and prudent
- ▶ Preoccupied with safety
- ▶ Avoidant of risk-taking, alcohol, and sex
- ▶ Spend less time with friends and loved ones
- ▶ Less religious and spiritual
- ▶ Very different from millennial predecessors
- ▶ Unprecedented anxiety

# Mental health problems are on rise among American teens and young adults, study finds

January 15, 2019 / Mental Health

## Generation Z Most Likely to Have Poor Mental Health

New study shows protecting the young from harm also does harm



## Americans are lonelier than ever – but 'Gen Z' may be the loneliest


Gen Z or iGen, the youngest generation of adults, report feeling more lonely than previous generations. Here's how parents can help the next one.



# Factors

- ▶ Boomers raise children

# Factors

- ▶ Recession 2008
- ▶ Post-9/11, **orange** alerts
- ▶ Violence in schools, churches, concerts, malls, theaters
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Smart phones 
- ▶ Digital natives

# No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2002

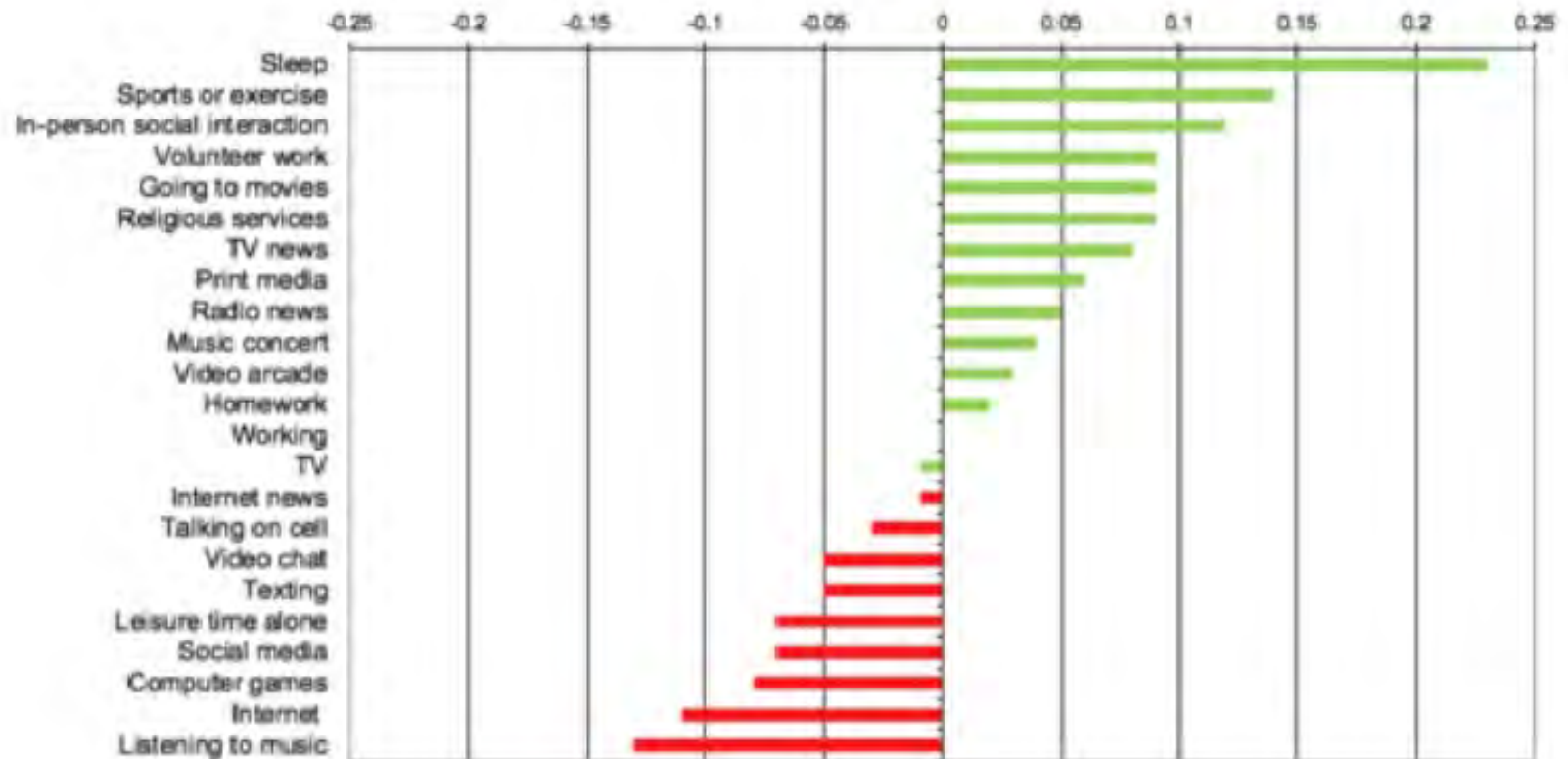
- ▶ Emphasis on standardized testing
- ▶ Reading and Math (narrowing focus)
- ▶ Teaching to the test
- ▶ Test anxiety
- ▶ Potentially diminished creativity, problem-solving

# Data

- ▶ More screen time = more loneliness
- ▶ More screen time is inversely related to feelings of happiness
  - ▶ *Homework* is more likely to increase happiness than screen time

## 8th and 10th graders

Jean Twenge



Correlation with happiness, 2013-2016 (controlled for race, sex, SES, grade level)

between activities and happiness Source: Jean Twenge

# Anxiety's Effect on Cognition

(distinguished from "stress")

- ▶ Dysregulated attention mechanisms (e.g., distractibility, impaired concentration)
- ▶ Memory difficulties
- ▶ Impairment of some executive functions, such as decision-making and spatial navigation



# What Can You Do?

## *For the Class*

- ▶ Let students know you care about their learning *and* their well-being
- ▶ Be exceedingly clear about expectations
- ▶ Reduce stress around tests as much as possible
  - ▶ Avoid time constraints
  - ▶ Drop one grade?
  - ▶ Extra credit options
- ▶ Encourage self-compassion and coping skills

## *For the Individual Student*

- ▶ Know the resources at the Counseling Center
- ▶ Suggest specific support
- ▶ “How do you cope?”
- ▶ Ask “the question”
- ▶ Follow up

Generational Differences Related to Disclosure

# *For Yourself and Your Department*

- ▶ Engage in self-care that is effective (you are the model)
- ▶ Consider having a department training around mental health and assisting students in distress (Mental Health First Aid, QPR, etc.)
- ▶ Process, brainstorm, support
- ▶ Professional development
- ▶ Develop plans for consulting and/or intervening

# Questions and Discussion

# References

- ▶ National College Health Assment II. Reference Group. Executive Summary (2018). American College Health Association.
- ▶ Twenge, Jean M., Martin, Gabrielle N., Campbell, W. Keith. Decreases in psychological well-being among American adolescents after 2012 and links to screen time during the rise of smartphone technology. Emotion, Vol 18(6), Sep 2018, 765-780
- ▶ Twenge, Jean (2017). iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us.