

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Lake Union Herald

Lake Union Herald

6-2024

Family Communication and Youth Mental Health

Alina M. Baltazar

Yazmik Cantillano

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>

Family Communication and Youth Mental Health



▲ ALINA M. BALTAZAR



▲ YAZMIK CANTILLANO

Mental health in young adults has been a prevalent issue, leading to increased utilization of services across the United States for the past 10 years. “An estimated one in three students meets criteria for a clinically significant mental health problem.”

Facing stigma and several other difficulties, the question lies in the factors that can either build a positive foundation or bolster this widespread problem. Literature suggests that there is a relationship between students who receive mental health services and family functioning concerns. Past research has indicated that poor family support and lack of communication with parents can increase the probability of emotional and behavioral problems. Common emotional and behavioral problems in college students can be identified as mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and substance use, which can often lead to suicidality issues or other adverse outcomes. Christian homes are not immune to these difficulties.

My colleagues and I conducted research last year with young adult Seventh-day Adventist college students using a survey and some follow-up focus groups. Results from the survey show when young adults feel comfortable talking to their parents about drugs, sex and alcohol not only are they less likely to do those things, but they are also less

likely to be depressed, have thoughts about suicide in the last six months, and are less lonely. Some common themes were discovered from the focus groups in relation to parents and mental health. The young adult Adventist participants want their parents to better understand the unique challenges they face growing up as Adventists in a post-modern American world and for parents to be there when needed.

Here are some quotes from focus group participants to better illustrate these points: “Just being willing to listen and don’t give unsolicited advice. If I’m struggling with an issue, don’t just brush it off or give straight facts. Just sit down and listen.” What they want is “love and acceptance.” Young adults are individuals “who are growing and going through a lot of things... Being willing to help where they need help and not judge” is what they really want.

Of course, we aren’t always going to like the decisions they make. Those concerns should be clearly stated, but our emotional support should not be a condition of our approval of their choices. Young adults want to learn from us but want to understand where our guidance comes from. The Bible is full of wisdom to make wise choices, parents can help our youth apply it to modern everyday life. ■

Alina M. Baltazar, PhD, MSW, LMSW-clinical, CFLE, is a professor of social work and co-associate director of the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions at Andrews University.

Yazmik Cantillano, MSW, LMSW-clinical, is an assistant professor of social work at Andrews University.

