

SUMMER 2017

# Princeton House Behavioral Health

Depression is on the  
Rise Among Teen Girls:  
**How Mindfulness Helps**

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Princeton House  
Behavioral Health  
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# Depression is on the Rise Among Teen Girls: How Mindfulness Helps

The incidence of depression among adolescents is increasing, particularly among teen girls. According to one recent study, the prevalence of 12-month major depressive episodes among girls ages 12 to 17 rose from 13.1 percent to 17.3 percent between 2004 and 2014, compared to an increase from 4.5 percent to 5.7 percent among boys.<sup>1</sup>

Monisha Motiwala, PsyD, Supervising Psychologist at the Teen Girls' Program at Princeton House Behavioral Health, attributes the difference to several factors:

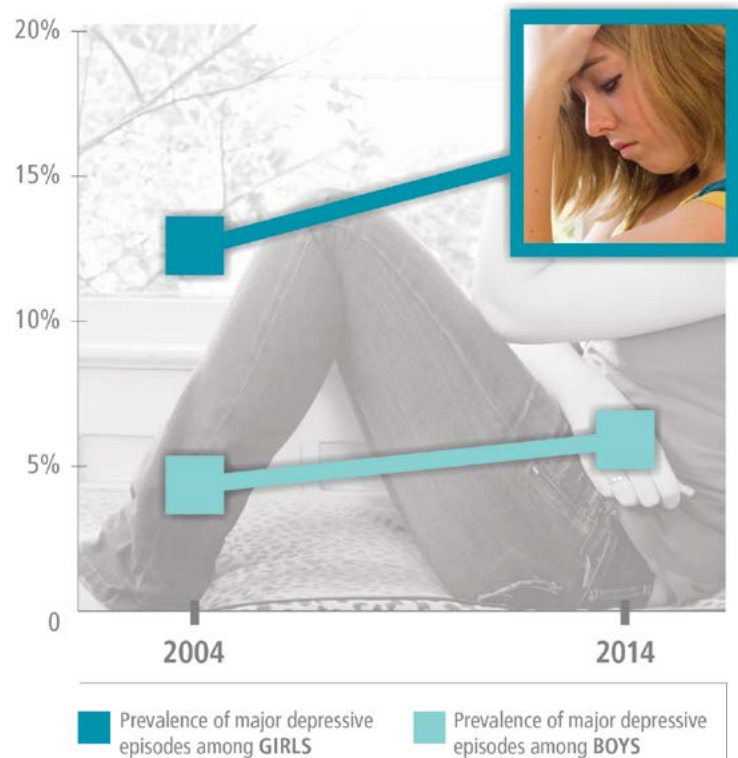
- Girls tend to interact with peers on a more relational level and may internalize emotions, whereas boys more often release stress by acting out or using aggression.
- Girls may struggle more with body image and its unrealistic media portrayals, and they can put greater pressure on each other to live up to certain expectations.
- In the age of social media, peer bullying is no longer left behind when the school day ends. Rather, it can be a vicious, continuous cycle — especially for teen girls, who use social media more than their male counterparts do.<sup>2</sup>

"Today, the extensive use of social media and texting among this age group can mean constant pressure to fit in, making life incredibly stressful for any adolescent," explains Dr. Motiwala. "This can precipitate depression — especially for those who internalize conflict or lack effective coping skills. Mindfulness skills can help by enabling teens to become more grounded and to identify value-based approaches to conflict."

Dr. Motiwala suggests that therapists practice mindfulness skills with teens to help them more easily incorporate these skills into daily life. Even something as simple as awareness exercises to observe breathing or the sounds in the room can help, she adds.

"Mindfulness is a key part of the Teen Girls' Program at Princeton House," says Dr. Motiwala. "We empower girls with mindfulness tools that enable them to cope more effectively, and we also have family counseling sessions to teach these skills to family members who may have trouble dealing with their own emotions or relating to their teens during this challenging stage of life."

For more information about the Teen Girls' Program, visit [princetonhouse.org/teengirls](http://princetonhouse.org/teengirls) or call 888.437.1610.



## Phone Coaching Helps Teens Regroup

Sometimes bullying or social pressures can lead to school avoidance. As part of the Teen Girls' Program at Princeton House, patients can call therapists from anywhere — including from a school counselor's office — for immediate coaching when they are faced with a potentially disruptive issue. Therapists offer skills to help them regulate emotions in the moment so that they can return to class. This service is offered to patients from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week.

1. Mojtabai R, Olfson M, Han B. National Trends in the Prevalence and Treatment of Depression in Adolescents and Young Adults. *Pediatrics*. 2016;138(6).  
2. PewResearchCenter. Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015. [www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)





## DBT Skills Can Develop the Wise Mind in Adolescents

As many parents and therapists recognize, adolescence can be a time of impulsiveness and reactionary behavior. Some of these responses stem from social pressures and emotional context, but other reasons may be specifically biological.

“Because the prefrontal cortex of the brain is not fully developed in adolescents, they don’t always think through the consequences of their behavior — particularly in emotionally charged situations that require immediate decision-making,” says Laura D’Alessandro, LCSW, Clinical Manager of the Child/Adolescent Program at Princeton House’s outpatient site at Hamilton. “In addition, teens are more vulnerable to emotion at this stage of life and often lack a defined sense of self. As a result, they tend to use what we call the ‘emotion mind’ when making decisions.”

Per the concepts of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) introduced by its developer, Marsha Linehan, PhD, D’Alessandro explains that the emotion mind uses intense feeling as a guide, relying on what would make a person feel better in the moment. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the reasonable mind uses analytical thinking and facts to guide decisions, but doesn’t consider what might make someone content in the long term. A happy medium is the wise mind, which finds balance between the two and uses aspirations to determine the best course of action.

DBT is an effective tool in helping adolescents use the wise mind. According to D’Alessandro, the four components of DBT can each play a role:

**MINDFULNESS:** Adolescents must recognize in the moment that they are not thinking with the wise mind.

**EMOTION REGULATION:** They must be equipped with the ability to regulate their feelings.

**DISTRESS TOLERANCE:** At the same time, they must be able to manage emotional intensity.

**INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS:** They must then use interpersonal effectiveness skills to carry through the wise mind decision effectively.

“Therapists can help their adolescent patients reduce impulsivity by taking inventory of where skills are lacking in these four areas, and then focusing in to work on those areas,” adds D’Alessandro. “Using these skills to develop the wise mind is almost like building a muscle — with practice, adolescents can become more reflective, more aware, and less impulsive in their actions.”

Princeton House offers a full array of outpatient programs that address the specific needs of adolescents ages 13 to 18. For more information, visit [princetonhouse.org](http://princetonhouse.org) or call 888.437.1610.



# The Healing Power of Creative Arts Therapies

The creative arts have a long history in aiding therapy and healing. Because many kinds of patients benefit from creative arts therapies, Princeton House Behavioral Health offers them broadly, integrating them into both inpatient and outpatient treatment programs across its sites with therapists who are board certified in their respective disciplines.

“Part of the power of these programs is their ability to touch people on a visceral level and break down defenses that may resist traditional talk therapy,” says Iris Perlstein, LCADC, LPC, ATR-BC, Director of Allied Clinical Therapies at Princeton House. “You can move someone into a deep place very quickly using these therapies — a place where they can feel things and then translate them into words.”

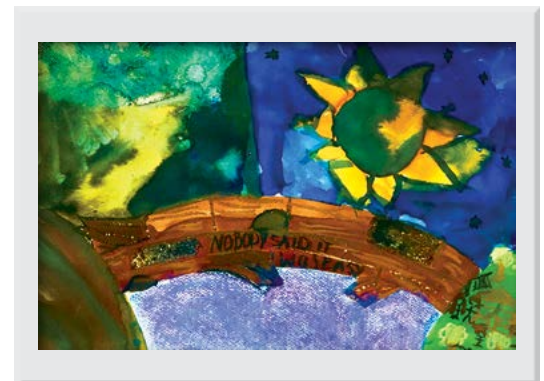
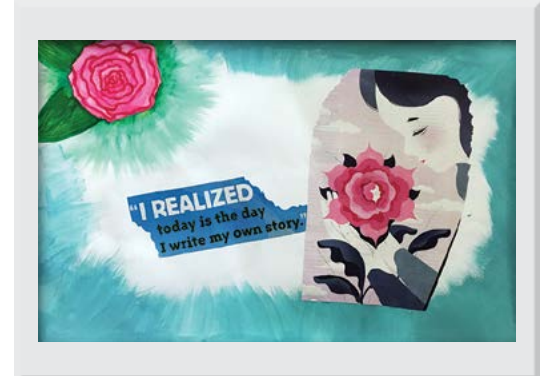
## Artistic Expression at Hamilton

For the past seven years, Princeton House’s outpatient site at Hamilton has celebrated National Creative Arts Therapies Week with a powerful exhibit of artwork created by patients. This year’s exhibit, which was displayed in the lobby of the building, featured about 50 works of art from patients in the children’s, adolescent, adult, and women’s trauma programs.

Christina Taylor, ATR-BC, LCAT, LPC, Senior Allied Clinical Therapist at the Hamilton site and coordinator of the exhibit, views the process as a labor of love and a source of pride to see clients, staff, and visitors engage with the imagery in a way that deepens awareness and connections of the universal human experience. It also brings to light what patients bravely come to resolve in treatment.

“The creative process is inherent to the human experience,” she says. “Art therapy is not about creating a masterpiece or a beautiful image; rather, it’s about the process of creating imagery in a safe environment that is contained by the relationship between the art therapist and the patient. It’s about safely expressing feelings that cannot always be put into words. The non-verbal, visual expression of self allows clients to appropriately self-regulate and release their affects safely, whether they are syntononic or dystonic in nature.”

*“This was really great! I’m so glad you had these from every program and every level of skill. It was very grounding for me to be able to just look at it and admire everything.” ~ Art Exhibit Attendee*





# Mindfulness

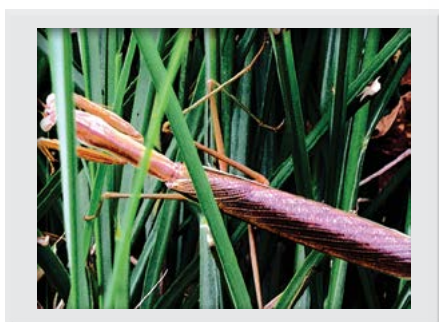
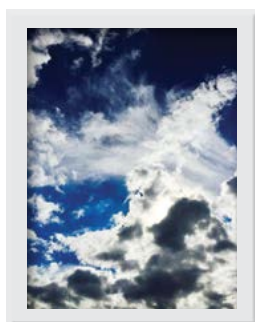
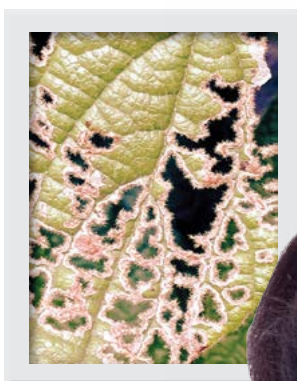
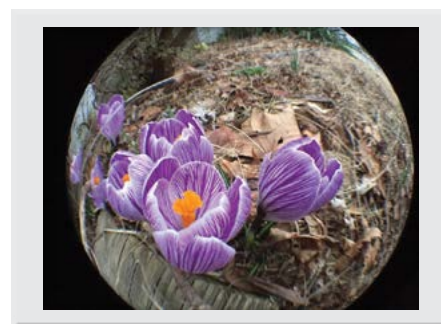
## Through the Camera Lens at Moorestown

Depressed and anxious adolescents may struggle with regulating their emotions. At Princeton House's Moorestown site, therapist Myrna Ludwig, LCSW, is teaching mindfulness to teens through the use of photography not as an end product, but as a tool.

"Many of our patients internalize and blame themselves for their feelings, and develop poor coping skills, such as self-injury, suicidal behaviors, and substance use," says Ludwig. "Photography brings the state of awareness to the present moment and subject matter, which can provide relief from distressful thoughts and begin the practice of tolerating distress."

Teens in partial hospital and intensive outpatient treatment take photos using cell phones, a tool that most adolescents can access at all times. The process requires concentration, and therapists coach teens to take images in a non-judgmental way and to try to see their subject matter from a different perspective. Consciously focusing on reality as it is in the present moment exercises the muscles of mindfulness.

Pre- and post-testing results have consistently shown significantly lower levels of depression and anxiety and reduction of suicidal thoughts following the mindfulness photography group.



**For more information about creative arts therapies at Princeton House, call 888.437.1610/outpatient or 800.242.2550/inpatient.**

# Counseling the Counselor: Finding Stability in an Unbalanced World



*by Heather Lynch, MA, LPC, ACS, Clinical Manager of Adult Programs at Princeton House's North Brunswick Outpatient Site*

This time in our world, by all accounts, is an unstable one. As a licensed professional counselor, I hear countless reports of the impact of world events on mental health. From terrorist

attacks to shootings, bad news has sadly become a more regular occurrence. In addition, this past election season was a particularly difficult one for many. In fact, prior to the election, numerous articles cited “election anxiety” as something that was bringing many people into therapy — an occurrence not typically seen by therapists in previous election seasons.



The emotional climate of our world lends itself to people feeling out of control, anxious, and depressed. Those who already struggle with mental health issues can find that their symptoms dramatically increase during stressful times. Those in helping professions, such as therapists, often struggle with these very issues as well. The challenge for therapists is to maintain their own stability while helping those they treat.

## Decreasing Anxiety through Mindfulness

Many people are able to manage shifts in their moods by using mindfulness, which helps reduce stress, improve focus, and boost memory. Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, the founder of mindfulness-based stress reduction, defines mindfulness as “awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally in the spirit of self-understanding.”

It's important for therapists to prioritize their own balance and stress relief. Mindfulness resources, including videos and guided meditation, are available through numerous sources online. I often recommend deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, massage, a cup of tea, or even taking a walk to regain balance.

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## The Therapist-to-Therapist Connection

I believe that for therapists, the most important and probably most effective way of staying balanced is to connect with others, including others in the profession. When people start to feel unwell, whether emotionally or physically, they tend to withdraw and isolate. Some therapists are hesitant to reach out, feeling as though they “should” be able to manage without the support of others. When we reach out to those who care for us, whether personally or professionally, we are engaging in essential self-care. This also allows us to obtain the support, encouragement, and feedback that help us to continue to maintain stability.

Staying balanced in an unbalanced world involves a combination of taking good care of ourselves in both mind and body, as well as connecting with others. In doing so, the balance between mental and physical health helps maintain the steadiness needed to navigate uncertain times.

## Creative Arts Therapies Day



In March, behavioral health professionals, educators, and Princeton House staff gathered in Princeton for a half-day educational program that offered perspectives on the healing benefits of creative arts. The program featured presentations on art, dance/movement and music therapies and how they impact patients, along with interactive elements in music, singing, and movement.

## First Responder Treatment Services in the News



NJ101.5 recently featured Princeton House's First Responder Treatment Services program in an on-air interview and online story on "When Heroes Need Help." Sean Sprich, now a peer liaison for the Police Benevolent Association (PBA), described how he benefited from treatment after mounting pressures from his

role as a law enforcement officer led to substance abuse and his subsequent arrest. Michael Bizzarro, PhD, LCSW, BCD, Director of Clinical Services for the program, was also interviewed. In addition, NJ Spotlight wrote about the program in an article called "Addressing Specific Needs of First Responders Struggling with Addiction."

## Serving Service Members



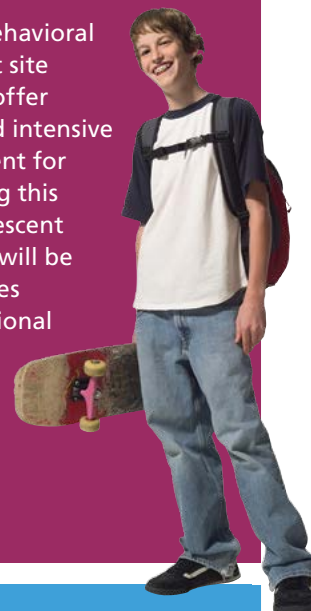
The McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Joint Military Base has an extensive health center for the service men and women stationed there, including an outpatient mental health clinic staffed with physicians, psychologists, and therapists who are also officers of the Air Force, Navy, or Army. Princeton House is proud to be a resource for service members who need

intensive outpatient, partial hospital, or inpatient treatment for addictions or behavioral health disorders. In April, Princeton House hosted 17 members of the Joint Base's mental health clinic to share information about services. All of the outpatient directors and management participated, along with our First Responder Treatment Services team.

Princeton House's First Responder Treatment Services, the Men's Trauma Program, the Women's Trauma Program, and child and adolescent services have been especially useful resources for military members, families, and veterans.

## COMING SOON: Adolescent Services in Eatontown

Princeton House Behavioral Health's outpatient site at Eatontown will offer partial hospital and intensive outpatient treatment for adolescents starting this winter. These adolescent treatment services will be geared to teens ages 13 to 18 with emotional and behavioral problems, substance abuse issues, or both. Stay tuned for updates!



## SAVE THE DATE: Cultural Considerations in the Treatment of Jewish Orthodox Clients with Eating Disorders

**SPEAKER:**  
Devorah Levinson  
of Relief Resources

**July 28, 9 to 10:30 a.m.**

Princeton House Behavioral Health  
615 Hope Road  
Victoria Plaza, Building 1B  
Eatontown, NJ 07724

**TO LEARN MORE OR TO REGISTER,  
PLEASE CONTACT:**  
[eatingdisorders@princetonhcs.org](mailto:eatingdisorders@princetonhcs.org)

## GRAND ROUNDS

For information on upcoming grand rounds, please visit:  
[princetonhouse.org/grandrounds](http://princetonhouse.org/grandrounds)





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## Determining When an Outpatient Requires Acute Inpatient Care

**M**ost therapists have encountered situations when their patients need to be referred from outpatient therapy to a higher level of care, such as an inpatient program or an emergency behavioral health evaluation.

Sometimes, however, it can be challenging to assess when acute care is needed. Kerri Celaya, MA, Director of Inpatient Admissions at Princeton House Behavioral Health and Behavioral Health Emergency Services at University Medical Center of Princeton, offers these general guidelines for seeking a higher level of care:

**WHEN PATIENTS ARE IN IMMINENT DANGER** of hurting themselves or others.

**WHEN PATIENTS CAN NO LONGER FUNCTION** in any level of outpatient treatment, even if they are not suicidal. For example, they may not be taking care of their activities of daily living, or may be unable to get out of bed to attend treatment.



In these cases, a few days of acute stabilization can often get patients back on track, enabling them to once again benefit from outpatient therapy.

**WHEN PATIENTS ARE USING SUBSTANCES DAILY**, especially alcohol, opioids, or benzodiazepines. These situations often require medical detox.

"We don't expect therapists to have to make a thorough acute needs assessment, so I recommend calling us for a phone intake in situations where there's any uncertainty," says Celaya. "A clinician from our Admissions Department can conduct a needs assessment over the phone 24/7 to quickly determine if a higher level of care is needed."

To contact the Admissions Department at Princeton House Behavioral Health, call 800.242.2550.

## SPECIALIZED INPATIENT CARE

With 24/7 nursing care and psychiatrists and social workers on site seven days a week, inpatient treatment at Princeton House Behavioral Health offers a full continuum of care for those struggling with behavioral health issues, substance abuse, or both. Because many patients have comorbid medical conditions such as diabetes, COPD, sleep apnea, or heart disease that need additional attention during their treatment, a Princeton HealthCare System internist makes daily rounds. In addition, a patient can be transferred seamlessly to University Medical Center of Princeton if acute medical care is needed.

