



April 24, 2024
A Note from Max Andrick

Hey Friends!

I have volunteered and walked beside youth and their families for a while now, and I believe that there is a greater need now more than ever for us to share in this journey.

Proverbs 22:6 says

***“Train up a child in the way they should go,
and when they are old, they will not depart from it.”***



This scripture makes it seem so simple. Train the child up in what you know about life, and when they are old, they will not stray from that.

While this is absolutely true, the journey to accomplish this is not intuitive or simple. First, from the perspective of youth it can be argued that they face a world that didn't exist when their parents were adolescents.

Oh, and this generation of youth are pioneers in their own right. Not only do they face social crises like we faced in our youth — like discovering how to fit in, how to dress, what to say to be accepted by our peers — but also they must deal with relentless social media pressures, pressures I did not understand until I talked firsthand with youth. I had no idea.



It is not just did you wear the thing that is currently in, did you go to the thing that is cool, but also did you post pictures about it? Did you get the clicks, shares, or likes that meant it was enough? Were you tracked on the app? Were you not tracked on the app? Why or why not did all this happen? What is the fallout from those answers? All in real time.

Social media makes all of that not only possible, but it is the reality of being in middle or high school.

Within all this connection comes a sense of disconnection. A sense that you are always on public display, but never really *with* anyone, because you are chasing all the other things to keep your “cred,” your social status.

Man! To think I just had to pick the right flannel shirt and act cool at lunch. Back then no one knew where you were or what you were doing most of the time. Now, for youth, this is one added dimension to their lives that weighs heavily on them.

In youth ministry we see the isolation that is caused by what they are facing.

In addition to those social pressures, our current youth endured the most isolating social climate during the pandemic. This came at a crucial time in their development, and we are regularly seeing the effects present in youth and families. The effects don't always look the same, but they seem to have roots in the same place. The mental health aspects for all involved make this very challenging.

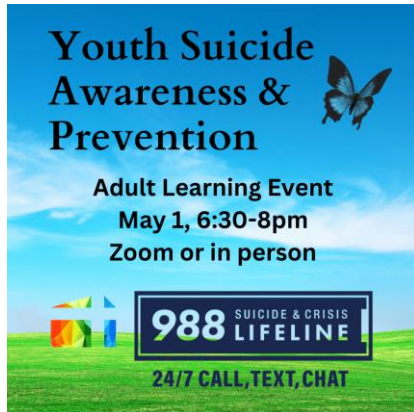


Parents who want to share their knowledge and coping skills may feel overwhelmed by the sheer mass of what their children face. They may feel powerless to stem the tide of situations that come up or feel inadequate to the task. Parents are real people, too; they face their own challenges in a world that has changed very quickly in a short time.

If this is you as a parent, know that you are not alone. Please know that parenting is not easy and doesn't come with a handbook. Parenting is a trial-and-error, work-in-progress thing. Each child, parent, and situation are different and unique.

We are told or reminded in many scriptures that we are creations of God, fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). I understand that to mean that **we are enough for what we face**, even when we have more to learn about how to successfully navigate where we are. I encourage all parents to seek resources and information that will help them to navigate their current and future situations.

Are you a parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle, with a teen in your life who struggles with their mental health? A middle or high school teacher, administrator, or coach working with kids all week? A mental health counselor or social worker with youth clients? Do you supervise youth employees at your business?



HUMC is hosting an event next Wednesday for adults to talk about youth suicide prevention and the powerful and important presence that adults can have in their lives.

We hope you will consider attending: May 1, 6:30-8pm, in person at church or online on Zoom. (Details are here: <https://hilliardumc.org/events/suicide-awareness-prevention-adult-learning-event/>.) Our speaker is a suicide prevention specialist from Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

And while the presentation will be focused on *youth* suicide prevention, **the principles are mostly the same for adult suicide prevention** — this presentation really is for all adults. (We may schedule another event for youth if there’s interest.)

And the event is specifically geared toward Christian faith communities and will give us an opportunity to think about how our faith plays a role here.

I have had the privilege of meeting many people, and I have found in my journey that people in general want to be seen, heard, and respected. Our youth are no different from that. First they want to be seen, seen for the good and beauty they contribute to this world. They want to be seen not as less than just because they are young. They want to be seen as important and valued.

When I was young, I was fortunate to have a teacher, a coach, or a trusted family friend stop what they were doing and see me. Take the time to hear me — not necessarily give me the answer I needed but the tools to come to the conclusion myself.

My prayer for us all is that we take the time to see one other, really see. I pray that we choose to be present for each other, to walk beside and stand with one another.



In Christ,



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PS: Registration is open for youth summer camp, Lakeside Institute, July 21-27! I'm on staff, along with my wife April Andrick (HUMC’s Youth Director), as well as several other HUMC members. It's a great week! [Details are here.](#)

