

Mental Health Resources

Mental health is one of the most common challenges that students face today. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), 1 in 6 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 have or will have a serious mental illness, and suicide is the third leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old.

Below are some tips to help ensure your *FIRST*® Tech Challenge team has a healthy and supportive environment for teens and mentors during the build and competition season.

- Promote an inclusive environment.
- Lead by example. Prioritize your mental health, communicate your feelings clearly (both “good” and “bad” emotions), and ask others how they feel.
- Set healthy boundaries with your team. For example, you can set strict end times for meetings, save a specific day each week for team members to have off, or meet only three nights a week.
- Let team members leave their worries behind—literally. Leave a basket at the door for students to write their worries on and leave in the basket so they don’t bring them into the team space.
- Encourage nonverbal communication of emotions. For example, have red arm bands available for students to wear if they would like to be left alone to work on a project or decompress or create a “quiet space” within your build space.
- Create a gratitude board to thank each other in a public way.
- Take a team break to go for a walk, stretch, or just step away from a project.
- Find or create training for mentors and/or student leaders on creating a supportive and positive team environment.

How to respond if someone asks for help

- “Thank you for telling me.”
- Seek to clarify what they have told you and after summarizing, ask “Did I miss something?”
- Validate the person. “No wonder you feel...” (This can help identify the feeling.)
- Show concern—don’t force yourself to react or solve the issue. Sometimes people just need to be heard.
- Take a break together. Go for a walk, step outside the room, or find a snack.
- Ask “How can I help?” or “Who is part of your support system through this?”
- If a person acts or speaks in a way that indicates they are a risk to themselves or others, immediately take steps to support them as outlined by your school/organization or according to guidance from [mental health resources](#).

Additional Resources

- [National Alliance on Mental Health](#)
- [FIRST® Youth Protection Program Training Videos](#)
- [FIRST Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training & Resources](#)
- [Mentor Mental Health Awareness Resources](#)
- [International Suicide Hotlines](#) - If you or someone you know is suicidal, call one of the numbers in the article.