

DBSA Special Survey

Meeting the Unmet Needs of Young Adults

Summary Report: May 2014

BACKGROUND

In November, 2013, DBSA launched a survey of DBSA constituents and Balanced Mind Parent Network (BMPN) members to get feedback on the needs of young adults, age 18 – 29, living with mood disorders. The survey was available through dbsalliance.org, and participants were invited via announcements on the site homepage, our email newsletters, and announcements to local chapters and members of the BMPN (a program of DBSA).

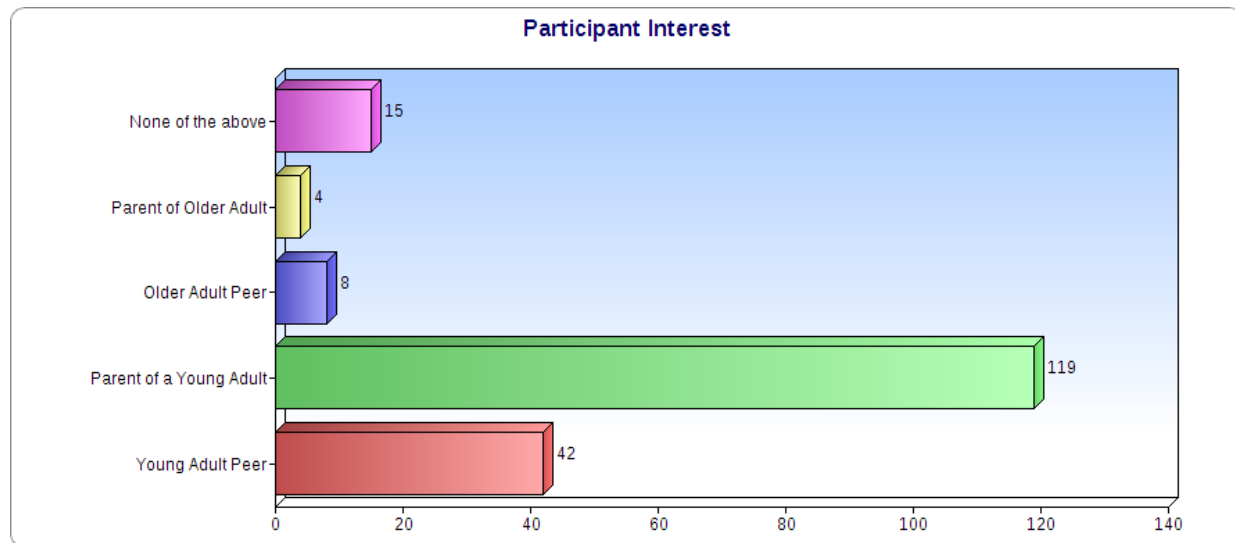
188 individuals responded to the survey between 11/20/2013 and 5/20/2014.

SURVEY RESULTS

Participant Interest

Individuals participating in the survey identified themselves based on the following background or area of interest.

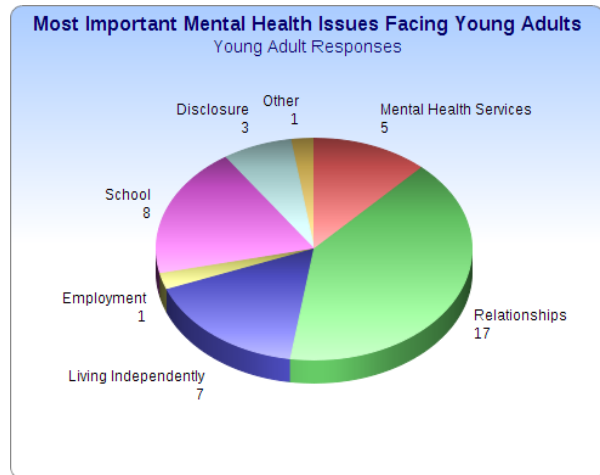
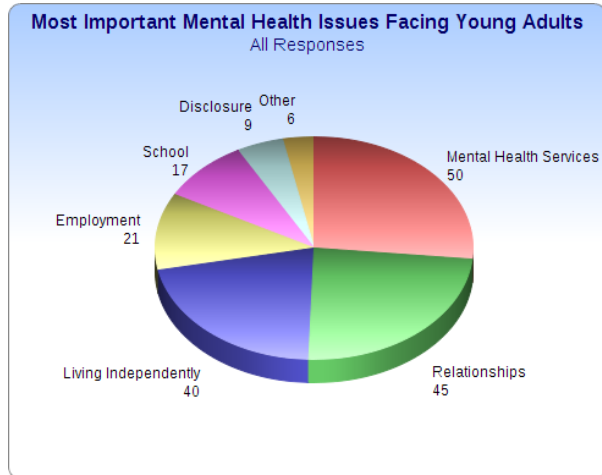
- A young adult, age 18 - 29, living with a mood disorder (Young Adult Peer)
- The parent of a young adult, age 18 - 29, living with a mood disorder (Parent of young adult)
- A person living with a mood disorder, age 30 or older (Older Adult Peer)
- The parent of a person, age 30 or older, living with a mood disorder (Parent of older adult)
- None of the above, but interested in this topic (None of the above)



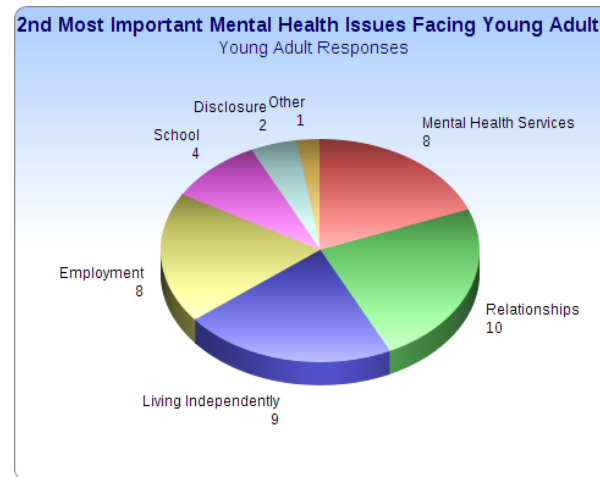
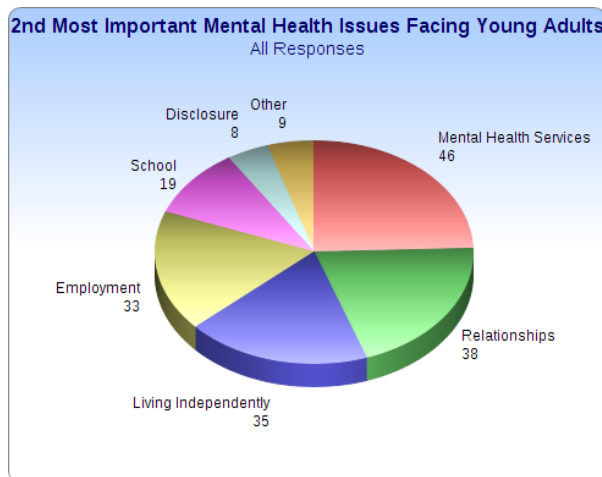
Most Important Mental Health Related Issues Facing a Person Age 18 - 29

Respondent were asked two questions to provide their perspective on the most and second most important issues facing young adults, age 18 – 29. Selection choices included:

- Accessing adequate mental health care services (**Mental Health Services**)
- Developing/maintaining relationships and/or a circle of friends (**Relationships**)
- Living independently (**Living Independently**)
- Finding/maintaining employment (**Employment**) (Employment)
- Succeeding in school (**School**)
- Evaluating disclosure to friends, extended family, and/or co-workers (**Disclosure**)
- Other (**Other**)



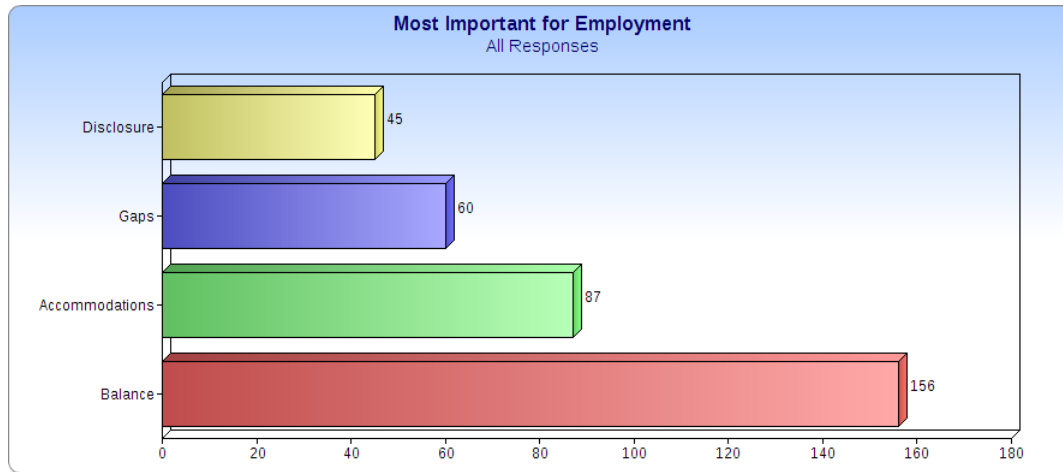
While the majority of overall respondents selected “Accessing adequate mental health care services” as the most important issue (27%), the subset of young adult respondents selected “Developing/maintaining relationships and/or a circle of friends” as the most important issue (40%) facing a person age 18 – 29. “Developing/maintaining relationships and/or a circle of friends” was also identified by the both the entire group and the subset of young adults as the second most important issue (24% selection by both groups) facing this age group.



Most Important Factors for Finding/Maintaining Employment

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, find/maintain employment.

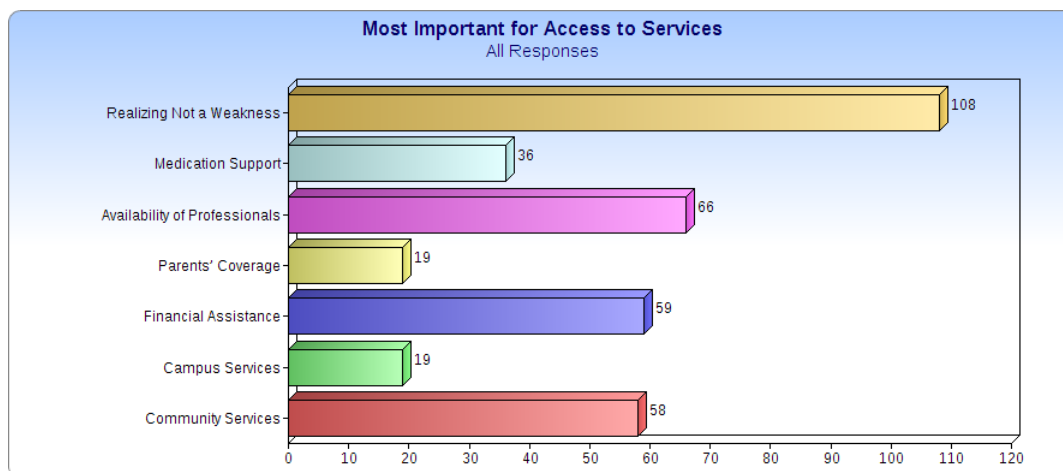
- Finding a profession that will allow life balance/accommodations to support wellness (**Balance**)
- Understanding how to ask for accommodations at work to support wellness (**Accommodations**)
- Explaining gaps in school or employment due to mental health issues when interviewing (**Gaps**)
- Addressing fear of disclosure at work (**Disclosure**) (Disclosure)



Most Important Factors to Help Access Adequate Mental Health Care Services

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, access adequate Mental Health Care Services.

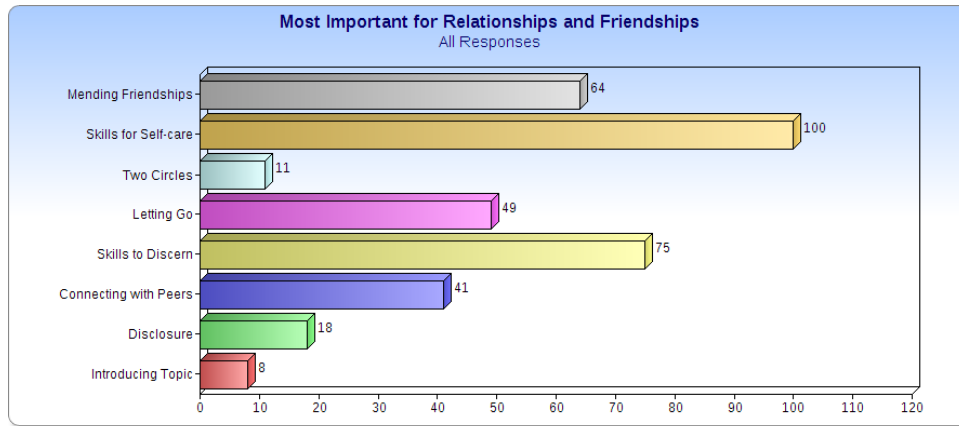
- Connecting with community mental health services (**Community Services**)
- Connecting with campus mental health services (**Campus Services**)
- Obtaining financial assistance for independent health services (**Financial Assistance**)
- Understanding how to leverage parents' health care coverage (**Parents' Coverage**) (Parents Coverage)
- Availability of mental health professionals (**Availability of Professionals**)
- Understanding medications and how to finance them (**Medication Support**)
- Realizing that receiving mental health care is not a personal weakness or something to be embarrassed about (**Realizing Not a Weakness**)



Most Important Factors for Developing or Maintaining Relationships and/or Friendships

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, develop/maintain relationships and/or a circle of friends.

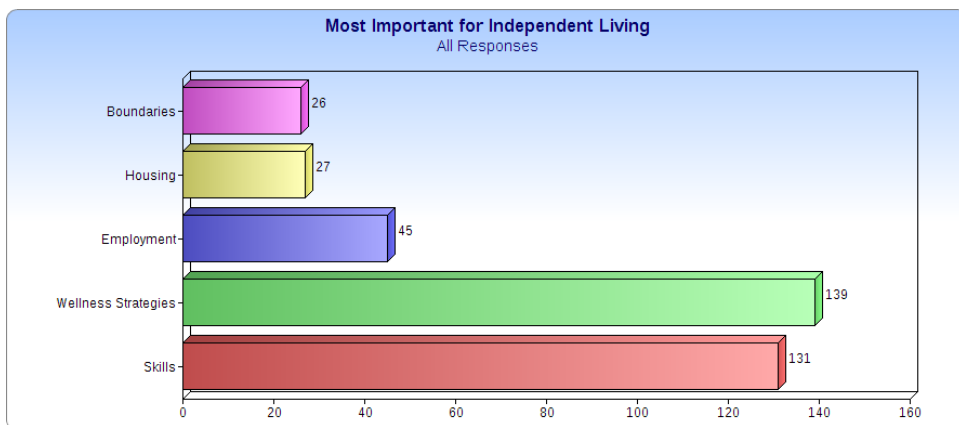
- Knowing ways to introduce the topic (Introducing Topic)
- Understanding the pros and cons of disclosure (Disclosure)
- Connecting with others that live with mental health conditions (Connecting with Peers)
- Acquiring skills to help sort out if positive/negative feelings towards a friend or love interest are symptoms or genuine (Skills to Discern) (Skills to Discern)
- Understanding when it might be necessary to let go of a friendship that is detrimental to your wellness (Letting Go)
- Integrating two different circles of friends (those living with and those who do not) (Two Circles)
- Developing skills to sort out how to maintain positive self-care without bending to negative social pressures (Skill for Self-care)
- Knowing how to mend friendships that may have been damaged by symptomatic behaviors (Mending Friendships)



Most Important Factors to Help Living Independently

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, live independent from parental support.

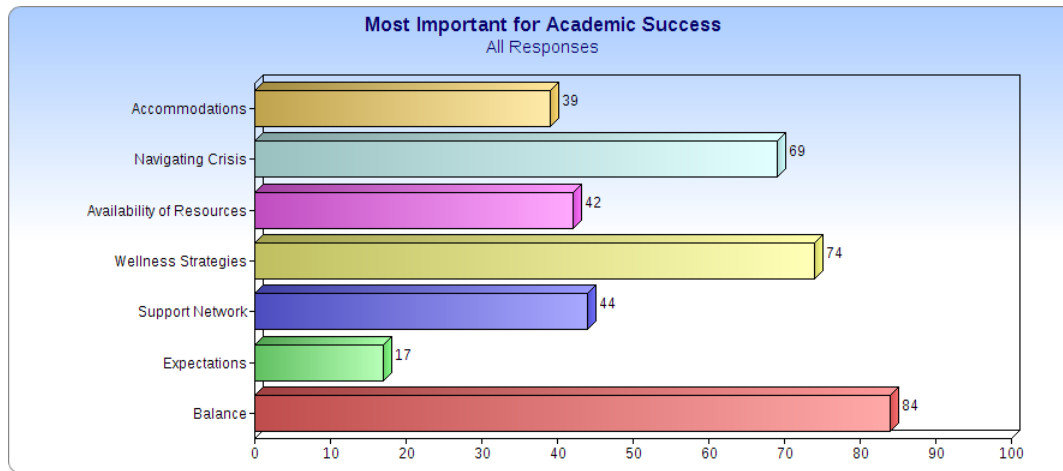
- Developing adequate personal, financial, and household skills prior to independent living (Skills)
- Developing consistent personal wellness strategy habits and routines (Wellness Strategies)
- Support for finding employment (Employment)
- Securing housing support (Housing) (Housing)
- Establishing boundaries (Boundaries)



Most Important Factors for Success in College or at University

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, succeed in college or at university.

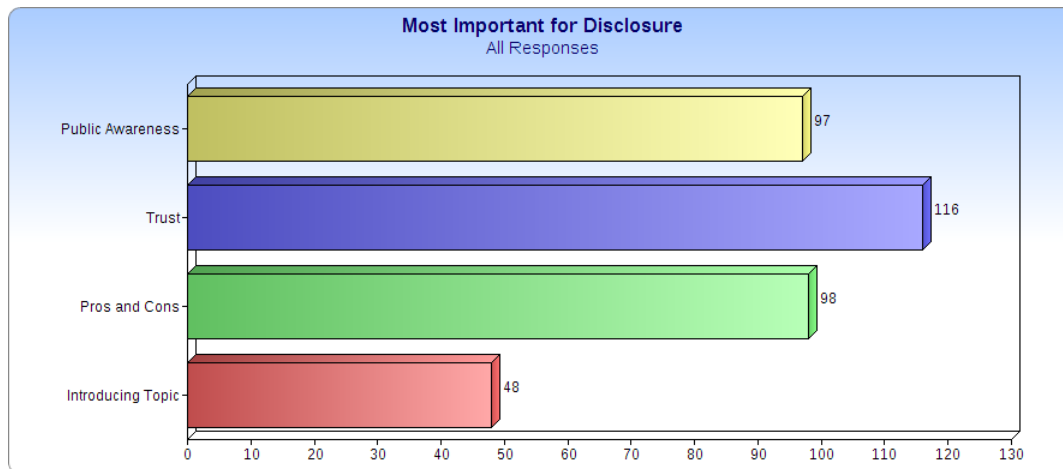
- Balancing course loads and extracurricular activities to ensure adequate rest and reduce anxiety (**Balance**)
- Managing academic success expectations (**Expectations**)
- Finding and maintaining strong network of peers/friends for emotional support (**Support Network**)
- Developing consistent personal wellness strategy habits and routines (**Wellness Strategies**) (Wellness Strategies)
- Availability of mental health resources through the college or university (**Availability of Resources**)
- Understanding how to navigate personal, medical and emotional crises when far away from home (**Navigating Crisis**)
- Knowing how to access and navigate the college or university's official accommodations process through its student disabilities office (**Accommodations**)



Most Important Factors to Help Evaluate Disclosure

Respondent were asked to select the two factors from the list below that they felt were the most important in helping a person a person, age 18 – 29, evaluate disclosure to friends, extended family, and/or co-workers.

- Understanding ways to introduce the topic (**Introducing Topic**)
- Understanding the pros and cons of disclosure (**Pros and Cons**)
- Finding a group of people to trust (**Trust**)
- General awareness by public about the myths and facts of mental health (**Public Awareness**) (Public Awareness)



Additional Issues Critical to Address

Respondent were asked to share any additional issues they felt were critical to address for young adults, age 18 – 29). The following is a sample of the responses provided by individuals who identified as a young adult living with a mood disorder.

- The overwhelming pressure to be "good enough" and be as perfect as possible.
- Recognizing a backslide into illness so that it can be stopped before it becomes a problem.
- Where to turn in the event of a relapse
- Fears about medication impacting personality and lifestyle can be a major obstacle separate from the stigma of seeking treatment
- A focus on thriving vs. surviving, i.e. pushing individuals to take risks and live passionately while focusing on mental wellness
- Getting an initial diagnosis
- It's easy to feel guilty if you aren't where you wanted to be at this point in life.
- Learning how to not let the label affect self-esteem
- Lack of support
- Getting rid of stigma associated with mental illness
- Dealing with issues of starting your own family (marriage and children)
- Spiritual needs are incredibly important and are not addressed often enough in my opinion.
- I find what holds me back at all anymore is my social skills.
- I have personally had trouble with roommates/housing.
- Setting reasonable goals for successful treatment and life successes
- Keeping up on school work even with stress and mental issues
- Psycho-education
- Personalization of strategies to their own individual needs
- Finding the money to pay to see a psychiatrist and maintain medication or see a counselor
- It's critical for people who struggle with mood disorders to make friends, supportive friends can do a lot to combat symptoms like loneliness and to help when a person is struggling with their symptoms.
- Building a daily routine
- Lack of mental health awareness
- Finding the right medication and in the first place making sure of a correct diagnosis and seeing if medication is absolutely necessary

You may request a complete list of all additional issues shared by all respondents by emailing your request to programs@DBSAlliance.org. Note the list will not contain any identifying information beyond participant interest category. (E.g. Young Adult with Mood Disorder, Parent of Young Adult with Mood Disorder, etc.)

DISCLAIMER AND NEXT STEPS

As with all DBSA constituent surveys, participants were anonymous volunteers. We cannot determine how closely survey participants resemble the entire population of people who live with, or are affected by, mood disorders.

Thank you to all those who offered their time and valuable feedback. The results will be used by DBSA and the newly formed DBSA Young Adult Council to prioritize future programming.