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Health dept. uses MySpace to reach teens

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NEW YORK, July 7 (UPI) -- The New York City health department has posted a page on MySpace, the social networking site, to engage teens grappling with depression, drugs and violence.

NYC Teen Mindspace is the health department's first effort to promote health through a Web-based social networking site.

Though many teens experience mental health issues, they are often reluctant to acknowledge them and seek help. When asked who they are most likely to talk with when they feel sad, more than 20 percent of teens said they talk to no one, one-third said they would talk to a friend only and one-third said they would talk to an adult, health officials said.

The Mindspace page features fictional, composite personalities, such as "Kyle," "Nicole," and "Stephanie," who chronicle their struggles through video posts.

The Web page allows teens to send a confidential message to a mental health counselor from LifeNet, a service offered by the Mental Health Association of New York. Mindspace does not offer live assistance, but it encourages teens to call 800-LifeNet, where counselors are available 24 hours a day, or call 911 in an emergency.

Quizzes, polls, games and fact sheets help teens test their knowledge and compare their feelings with those of their peers.



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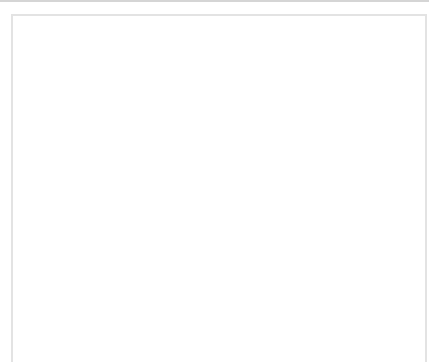
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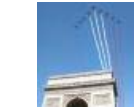





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