NEW YORK: New York City to teens: TXT ME with mental health worries

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"I know from personal experience that reaching out when you're in pain can be the turning point – the first step on the road to recovery," said Chiara de Blasio, daughter of New York City's mayor, announcing the launch of a new teen crisis text line. Counselors at NYC Teen Text receive special training to support young people via text, and draw on a database of 2,000 local providers to make referrals for follow-up care. John Draper, director of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, helped design the program. "Teens can be more candid on text than even in a phone conversation or in person," he said. Some challenges come with texting, however, including the lack of auditory cues ("You can't hear someone say 'Mhm, mhm' over text," Draper explained) and privacy concerns. The program encrypts and secures all messages, and counselors advise the youth to forward their texts to a secure server if they want to save them for future reference without worrying that someone will read them. NYC Teen Text is available to students in ten public high schools through a pilot program managed by the city's public health department and the Mental Health Association of New York City.

Spark Extra! In this SPARK Talk [2] (video), John Draper of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline explains the importance of giving people help "when, where, and how they need it."

Links within this resource

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