

#### Letter 4: YRT2\_Y1.F.21

Dear Mental Health Professionals,

It is very possible that some youth leave your office feeling worse than when they first walked in. It is important to recognize that children's problems are not as simple as some make out to be. They can be just as complex as adult mental health issues. Coming off as condescending and immediately blaming the child for their problems does more harm than good. It is often acceptable to blame the child for their wrongdoings or problems when sometimes, they simply do not know better.

Some important messages to mental health professionals, educators, police officers: educators, don't miss the warning signs that children may be displaying. It looks different from child to child. Many do not know how to reach out for help so it is important that as a mental health professional to look out for warnings. Police officers, I believe you require more training on handling sensitive cases that involve mental health problems. Although I believe the police can sometimes do more harm than good and have little to no place in the mental health sector, they should be given the responsibility of diffusing extremely harmful situations (as long as they have been extensively trained).

When working with children and youth, I think it is especially important to promote a sense of belonging, encourage healthy coping mechanisms and emotional regulation techniques, and to ensure they have access to mental health services when they need it most (school, community, make sure they have the means to be using these services and a support system).