

# Many teens struggle with stress in silence: study

BY LORRAYNE ANTHONY

**T**ORONTO — When the going gets tough, many teens don't get going to friends or parents; they keep their problems to themselves, a new survey suggests.

In fact, the study found that 42 per cent of the teens surveyed rarely or never ask for help when they feel overwhelmed.

"The fact that so many of them are rarely or never asking for help ... they don't cope as well, they are less likely to go to their parents and more likely to tell us their parents are a source of stress," said Patricia McDougall, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Saskatchewan and one of the lead researchers.

The Raise Your Voice National Youth Study, released Tuesday, was funded by Motorola and was based on data from a national online survey of 1,007 youths between the ages of 13

and 18. A separate online survey of 496 parents of youth between the ages of 13 and 18 was also conducted during the spring of 2006.

The teen survey is considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.07 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

While many of the teens said they never seek help to deal with the stress in their lives, 19 per cent said they routinely ask for help.

Sixty-nine per cent of those surveyed said their top stress was school. Money was a cause of stress for 24 per cent, and body appearance was cited by 24 per cent.

Teens who do reach out for help were most likely to turn to friends (67 per cent) or their mothers (60 per cent). Fathers and siblings (32 per cent for both) were less likely to be teen confidants.

Adrian Lee is a "pretty unstressed" 17-year-old high school student in Toronto. But when he does come up

against a problem, he said he doesn't confide in anyone. He acknowledges he has a support system of friends and a mother and father who are approachable, but it just doesn't occur to him to talk about his stress.

"The problem with parents ... it's not that I don't love them or anything, it's just I feel there is a generational gap of things they just don't understand," he said. "It's not their fault ... it would be hard for them to understand."

The study also found that one in five stressed teens report behaviours that provide a distraction. The behaviours ranged from watching TV and playing video games to going for a walk or playing sports.

Fred Mathews, a psychologist with the Toronto Central Youth Services, said the key to getting teens to confide in parents is to start a dialogue when the kids are very young.

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