

IMMERSIVE LEARNING FOR ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

THE STATE OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN AMERICA

Mental health and suicide ideation or actions among youth is a severe and growing problem in the United States, a trend only exacerbated by the pandemic. Poor mental health is associated with a host of health risks, both during adolescence and into adulthood. It can lead to risky sexual behavior, illicit substance use, unintended pregnancy, school absence and dropout, and other potentially life-long health problems.

- **More than a third** of high school students experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, and **over half** experienced emotional abuse by a parent or other adult in the home (CDC).
- At least **2.7 million** youth are currently experiencing severe major depression (Mental Health America).
- A growing body of research suggests that trauma can be **passed from one generation to the next** through epigenetic changes (i.e., gene expression).

AVENUES FOR HEALING

- The Accenture Virtual Experience Solution (**AVeNueS**) is an award-winning learning method that uses immersive virtual reality and experiential learning to help develop skills in understanding and navigating human behavior. It invites users into a deeper understanding of their own bias and increases the likelihood that they will be conscious of it when making decisions about the children and families they serve.
- **Alayna** is a scenario within the AVeNueS catalog that focuses adolescent behavioral health. This scenario provides an opportunity to better understand how trauma impacts us over generations and to consider ways to help people begin to heal.
- The **AVeNueS** learning method unfolds in three parts: **immersion**, **reflection**, and **analysis**.



Alayna's story invites users to develop a deeper understanding of how trauma impacts young people. Here, the user is introduced to a 15-year-old girl who is entangled in a conflictual and dysfunctional family dynamic. Participants interact with Alayna over four visits across several months, observing how her behavior deteriorates during this period.

Alayna's life circumstances are limiting her ability to attend to the work adolescents should be doing during their transition to adulthood. Teens like Alayna often show developmentally typical behaviors (like

being rude or talking back). We often misinterpret those behaviors as deviant or criminal when someone like Alayna expresses them.

The ability to engage with her over time gives a window into the impact of intergenerational trauma and how it presents itself in adolescent behavior. This provides an opportunity to practice promoting a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing.



PART 1 IMMERSION

AVeNueS immerses users into highly realistic experiences designed to evoke a response. It uses actors filmed on green screen and stitched into carefully dressed locations, creating a digital twin of an actual place where users go to interact. The experience is voice activated so the user has the sense that they are sitting across the table from another person who is looking them in the eye and conversing.



PART 2 REFLECTION

Next, we bring groups of users together in carefully curated seminars. These are highly interactive settings designed to enable reflection about how each one of us behaved in the headset and an opportunity to learn from one another.



PART 3 ANALYSIS

Finally, AVeNueS is maintained on a platform that leverages user analytics. This gives us the ability to see how large groups of people are behaving in the headset and drive future learning agendas.



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