

# New Survey from Caron Treatment Centers Shows Parents Lack Awareness About the Extent and Consequences of Pressure They Put on Teens

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**Wernersville, PA** – Parents know their teenagers face tremendous pressure in today’s fast-paced world. However, a new survey from [Caron Treatment Centers](#) finds that parents are either unaware or in denial that their teens view them – not their peers – as the most significant external trigger for pressure. The survey of 1,009 parents or guardians of teens ages 13-18 and 1,009 teens ages 13-18 was commissioned by Caron, a leading not-for-profit treatment provider of addiction and behavioral healthcare and conducted by The Harris Poll in July 2018.

The 2018 survey reveals that both teens and their parents feel immense pressure to perform in their lives, with the majority citing a “7” on average (on a 10-point scale). And, those under high pressure “8-10” (parents, 36%; teens, 42%) far outweigh those under low pressure “1-3” (parents, 11%; teens, 10%) by more than three times.

For parents, the leading cause of pressure stems from managing household finances (56%) and trying to save money for the future (57%). By comparison, for teenagers causes of pressure include schoolwork (74%), followed by fitting in socially with peers (49%). Still, when asked about the top external source from which they feel the most pressure, teens said their parents.\*

“Pressure on developing minds has the potential to change the circuitry of the brain,” says Dr. Joseph Garbely, Vice President of Medical Services and Medical Director at Caron. “It’s a very serious concern because this biological change can place teens at greater risk for mental health disorders as well as substance use and abuse.”

In fact, recent research shows that an increased number of teens now suffer from anxiety. A study published in June by the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics found a 20% increase in diagnoses of anxiety between 2007 and 2012.

## Pressure Begins at Home

Contrary to parents’ belief that external pressure comes most commonly from friends, teens expressed they feel most external pressure from their parents.\* And when it comes to managing this pressure, more than eight in 10 teenagers (82%) believe that their parents have a deep influence on how they ultimately choose to deal with pressure.

In fact, more than seven in 10 teens (71%) wish they were better prepared to deal with the pressure they feel in their lives. Nearly four in 10 (38%) perceive everyone else to be handling pressure better than them.

“Parents and teens today are under more pressure than ever to take on added responsibility and

excel in every facet of their lives. We largely attribute this shift to heightened competition for college admission and the mounting cost of college forcing most students to require financial aid and scholarships,” said Tina George, Student Assistant Program Coordinator for Caron. “On top of that, social media increases the pressure for parents and teens to appear perfect while juggling it all.”

### Social Media Ups the Ante

In general, social media has also upped the ante in terms of the pressure that both teens and parents feel in their own lives. Nearly seven in 10 parents with a social media account (66%) say that social media has put more pressure on parents/guardians than ever before to appear perfect as a parent. And most parents with a social media account (63%) feel that at times, social media makes parenting feel competitive.

When it comes to teens on social media, the same is true; most feel that social media introduces more pressure to their lives than ever before – and exacerbates the pressure they already feel. Most teens with a social media account (56% total average, girls 61% and boys 51%) say that social media increases the pressure that they already feel in their lives. And nearly half of teens with a social media account (46% total average, again especially girls 51% and 42%, boys) say that at times, the pressure they feel from engaging in social media makes them feel bad about themselves and their lives.

“Teen lives today play out on social media and there is significant pressure to appear flawless,” says George. “Our prevention work with students shows that this environment can quickly become toxic – especially combined with hormones that affect their mood, emotions, and impulses. If teens don’t have healthy coping skills, they may be at an increased risk of substance abuse and addiction.”

### Taking the Edge Off

Unfortunately, parents may unknowingly be sending dangerous mixed-messages to teens about coping with pressure. Although parents are concerned about their teens using substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco/nicotine, marijuana, prescription meds not prescribed to them) to deal with pressure (43%), they are three times more likely to be tolerant of their own substance use to take the pressure off (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, benzodiazepines, stimulants, and opioids) (25%) than to be tolerant of teens’ substance use to take the pressure off (8%). Teens observe this unhealthy behavior and, in fact, at least 1 in 10 teens think alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs are acceptable to alleviate pressure (14%) and may even be necessary to relax or succeed. Four in ten teens (44%) report that most of their peer group sometimes uses alcohol or drugs to cope with pressure.

“Children learn more by what their parents do than what they say, and, if they’re seeing their parents cope by drinking a bottle of wine, that sends a powerful message. The survey highlights a very clear need for reevaluation of the pressure adults put on themselves both as individuals and parents and how that stress trickles down to kids,” said Dr. Michele Pole, Director of Psychology at Caron. “We’re setting our teens up for risky behaviors with potentially devastating consequences. We must start early to help teens develop a positive self-image and create healthy approaches to dealing with life.”

### About the “Pressure to Perform” Study

The “Pressure to Perform” study was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Caron Treatment Centers. Interviews were conducted among parents and teens who met the following criteria and during the time periods listed below:

Parent: Among 1,009 adults ages 19+ who are the parent or guardian of children 13-18 years old.

Fielded between July 11 and 23, 2018.

Teen: Among 1,009 teens ages 13-18. Fielded between July 11 and 20, 2018.

Results for the parent study were weighted for age within gender, region, race/ethnicity, income, region, household size, marital status, employment and education where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. Results for the teen study were weighted for age within gender, region, race/ethnicity, household size, parents' highest level of education and school location. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

\*Top Parent perceived sources of most pressure in teens:

Themselves (28%);

Their friends (21%);

Their teachers/school (13%);

Their parents(s)/guardian(s) (10%)

Top Teen reported sources of most pressure:

Myself (27%);

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) (22%);

Teachers/School (19%);

Friends (11%)

About Caron Treatment Centers

With 60 years in the field, Caron Treatment Centers operates lifesaving [addiction and behavioral healthcare treatment](#). Caron is headquartered in Wernersville, [Pennsylvania](#) with Ocean Drive and Caron Renaissance located in Palm Beach County, Florida. Caron has Recovery Centers in New England, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., which offer community and recovery support. Caron's Recovery Centers in Atlanta and New York City also offer pre- and post-treatment services. Caron has the most extensive continuum of care including teens, and adults, chronic pain, executives, healthcare professionals and legal professionals. Caron's outcomes-driven treatment care plans are customized to meet the needs of individuals and families – with highly trained teams prepared to address co-occurring disorders. Caron offers an innovative approach to ongoing recovery care support for its former patients and their families with online peer groups and other resources during the first year of transition following discharge. For more information on Caron, please visit Caron at [www.caron.org](http://www.caron.org) or follow us on Twitter @CaronTreatment.

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