



-- explore the new feminism --
Introduction | Interaction | Information

[ifeminists.com](#) > [introduction](#) > [editorials](#)

The Trouble With TeenScreen

May 24, 2006
by Tony Zizza

"It has ruined the taste of the sweetest lies. Burned through my best alibis. Every sin that I deny keeps hanging 'round my door. Oh, the trouble with the truth is it always begs for more."
—Patty Loveless, "The Trouble With The Truth"

I guess you know you are recently divorced when you start quoting lyrics from country singers. I suppose I've taken it a step further by weaving the lyrics from one of my favorite country singers into perhaps the most controversial subject matter facing our culture today.

And that is the screening of our school children FOR mental illness.

Advocates for mental health screening will tell us the truth is screening prevents suicide among our young people. There is no evidence that supports this at all. From what I understand, suicide among young people is actually declining. I believe I read something from the Centers For Disease Control, (CDC) that showed suicide among young people has declined over the last two decades. If this is the case, why is teen suicide and the obsession with alleged teen depression all the rage?

One of the reasons is that thankfully, subjective mental disorders like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and its objectively dangerous drugs have come under fire. Critics from the left and right now have no fear in even questioning the existence of ADHD. Years ago, this would have never happened. Black box warnings on stimulants and psychotropic drugs are opening the eyes and ears of many parents and lawmakers. While we all dwell over Tom Cruise calling psychiatry into question, there is little doubt scientologists aren't the only ones fuming mad over the myth there is good work tied to what TeenScreen is doing.

So, what's the trouble with TeenScreen? TeenScreen is a subjective questionnaire that was developed by Columbia University to hopefully identify young people who allegedly have "undiagnosed" mental health issues. Students have been lured into taking the "test" by being given free movie tickets and food. From what I understand, TeenScreen is now in place

in over 12 states, and in over 450 schools. To see if your state is supporting TeenScreen, check out [this web site](#).

The screening is essentially a round of self-administered questions. Students who are screened and appear to have finally been diagnosed, are "in line" for treatment. Students have come home crying believing that they are now considered mentally ill because they have been labeled with subjective mental health disorders like OCD and ADD. Again, everything is shrouded in the alleged epidemic of suicide among young people. Both democratic and conservative members and officers of school boards accross the country are letting TeenScreen in, shutting out the trouble with it because these days anyone who speaks out against the false labeling and drugging of children must be a scientologist.

Imagine you are a parent of any race or political bent, and your child comes home believing they are mentally ill. How are they being stigmatized against seeking mental health treatment? Mental health advocates who think there is nothing wrong with America becoming one nation under medication have it backwards. A stigma of having a subjective mental disorder results when programs like TeenScreen label our young people in the first place! Our young people are being labeled mentally ill when they answer questions like these in the wrong light turned on by TeenScreen:

- Have you often felt nervous when you've had to do things in front of people?
- Has there been a time when you felt you couldn't do anything well or that you weren't as goodlooking or smart as other people?
- Have you often felt grouchy or irritable and often in a bad mood, when even little things would make you mad?

In regard to the first question, how much more subjective can you get? I mean, it sounds like TeenScreen is not acknowledging that people, young or old, are nervous when they have to do things in front of people such as what, give a speech? What's the big deal? I wonder why even "nerves" these days are associated with mental illness. What good does this kind of thinking do to our young people?

Looking at this second question, and remember, TeenScreen is comprised of 14-52 similar and equally asinine questions, I can't help but conclude TeenScreen denies the very existence of reality. The trouble with the truth is this, and get used to it: there will always be some people who are smarter than you, and more goodlooking than you. If you have trouble with that, it's not a mental health issue, it's an issue of being stubborn.

The third question must go over real well with young females who are suffering around that period of time in any given

month. Being a teen and younger is a consistent exercise in being moody and mad. Again, when it comes to young people, it's not a question of mental illness, but one of what to do with stubbornness and a self defeating attitude that is sometimes not helped with peer pressure. On the other hand, sometimes it is. Sometimes young people need to be instructed to suck it up. The world does exist outside of their subjective issues.

Again, you will hear people tell you TeenScreen is needed because of the epidemic of suicide among young people. Politicians are coming out in droves now because a young family member at one time committed suicide. Sure, all this is tragic. Terribly so. It is, however, incorrect to believe programs like TeenScreen can do anything about suicide or depression. Or the fact that a young person has to get through life to become what else, but older. What worries me most about TeenScreen is the obsession with the subjective, and the ties that ultimately bind to Big Pharma.

Mental health screening does not belong in any shape or fashion in our schools. There is nothing wrong with a student talking to a guidance counselor. Young people have a plethora of feelings to get through, and sometimes things do not go as planned. Talk therapy can be a good thing. A way of getting things off one's chest by talking and keeping a journal. Setting an action plan to feel better and forget about it over time.

Unfortunately, TeenScreen is quite frankly an exercise in promoting mental health in absolutely the wrong way. As our culture becomes more advanced and dynamic, should there not be a reduction of alleged mental health disorders among young people? If I was back in grade school or high school and someone from TeenScreen or the National Alliance For The Mentally Ill, (NAMI) told me that based on some slippery questions, I had a mental disorder, I would be insulted, and say: prove it! Problem is, and the trouble with the truth is - it's young people we are talking about. While some of our young people may properly rebel against TeenScreen and other dangerous mental health propoganda that helps Big Pharma in the short and long run, what about all the young people who come running home convinced they are - mentally ill?

Whether are not you sit on the left or right end of the political spectrum, TeenScreen is something we need to come together on and bounce out of our schools. It's an assault on the growing minds of young people. It's a slap in the face to all the hard working parents in this country. Bring the subject up at your next school board meeting, and watch the sparks fly. You'll see for yourself who truly wants young people in our schools to believe they are mentally ill. You can find out more about TeenScreen by visiting <http://www.teenscreentruth.com/>.

Zizza is a freelance writer who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. He serves as Vice President for the State of Georgia for the non-profit organization, [Parents For Label and Drug Free Education](#).

[more editorials](#)

ifeminists.com > [home](#) | [introduction](#) | [interaction](#) | [information](#) | [about](#)

ifeminists.com is edited by Wendy McElroy; it is made possible by support from The Independent Institute and members like you.