



HELP! DOES MY CHILD NEED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT?



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1

Understand what mental health is and what a mental health concern is.

2

Identify the signs and symptoms of a mental health concern.

3

Discover ways to respond to your child when you notice a mental health concern.

What is mental health?

- Emotional, psychological, and social well-being
- Affects how we think, feel, and act
- Important at every stage of life
- Can be impacted by a variety of different reasons

What is a Mental Health Concern?

- Emotional Crisis
- Impacts functioning
 - School
 - Home
 - Relationships
 - Sense of self
- High intensity
- Long duration

Understand what makes your child unique

Temperament & Personality

- Temperament
 - Flexible
 - Feisty
 - Slow to warm up
- 9 Characteristics of Personality
 - Sensitivity
 - Persistence
 - Distractibility
 - Mood quality
 - Intensity of reaction
 - Adaptability
 - Rhythmicity
 - Activity level

Signs and Symptoms

Depressive Symptoms

- Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Persistent flatness or emotional numbness
- Persistent nightmares
- Drastic shifts in mood
- Frequent physical complaints or somatic symptoms
- Expressing thoughts, dreams, or fantasies of suicide or homicide

Signs and Symptoms

Anxious Symptoms

- Persistent worry, anxiety or fearfulness
- Inappropriate avoidance of people, places or things
- Bizarre beliefs, delusions or paranoia
- Obsessing over a person, place or thing
- Abusing substances
- Performing specific routines compulsively

Signs and Symptoms

Behavioral Symptoms

- Preoccupation with violence or engaging in any violent acts
- Revengeful speech
- Sudden and unexplained shift in behavior at school (low grades, missing or cutting school, frequent fights at school, disruptive behavior)
- Trouble concentrating
- Abusing substances
- Engaging in any kind of self-harm
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were previously pleasurable
- Sudden change in eating habits (not eating at all, bingeing, purging, etc)
- Sudden change in sleeping habits (hypersomnia, hyposomnia)
- Regressing developmentally: Thumb sucking, bedwetting, fear of darkness
- Persistent withdrawal/ Sudden loss of friends

Trauma

When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. There is a range of traumatic events or trauma types to which children and adolescents can be exposed.

- Bullying
- Community Violence
- Complex Trauma
- Disasters
- Early Childhood Trauma
- Intimate partner violence
- Medical trauma
- Physical abuse
- Refugee trauma
- Sexual abuse
- Terrorism and violence
- Traumatic grief

Post-Traumatic Stress

Understanding Trauma

- Reaction is unique to the individual
- Combination of socio-emotional and behavioral signs and symptoms

Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event	Easily startled, frightened
Flashbacks, upsetting dreams	Trouble sleeping, concentrating
Avoidance of the traumatic event or reminders	Feeling detached from family and friends, emotional numbness
Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world	Self-destructive behavior
Hopelessness about the future	Irritability, angry outbursts
Lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed	Overwhelming guilt or shame
Memory problems	Always on guard

For Children Under 5

- Excessive clinging unto parents or an intense fear of being separated from the primary caretaker
- Showing frightened facial expressions
- Excessive crying, whimpering, trembling or screaming
- Immobility (appearing stuck or frozen often)
- Hitting, kicking, biting or any other preoccupation with violent behavior

Trauma

- Re-enacting the traumatic event through play
- Frightening dreams

What to do when you notice Mental Health Concerns?

Emotional First Aid

- Take a deep breath
- Ask yourself the four questions
 - How am I feeling right now?
 - What do I need?
 - What is my child feeling?
 - What does my child need?
- Engage in a 1:1 conversation
 - Listen
 - Observe
 - Reflect
 - Empathize

LOVE YOUR CHILD

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID SKILLS

L**ISTEN:** Using your listening skills, try to listen to what your child is saying and not saying.

O**BERVE:** Notice any changes in your child's body language, clothing, hygiene habits, friends, responses, and anything else that is a change from your student's normal functioning.

V**ALIDATE:** Read the different emotions your child is expressing or that you are seeing, and normalize them. Acknowledge what you have observed.

E**mpathize:** Show that you not only recognize the different emotions but you understand or are here to understand where your children might be coming from. Allow yourself to imagine what it might be like for your child to experience whatever they are experiencing.

No Shame in Consulting

- DotCom Therapy offers 30 minute Consultations
 - Be honest
 - Share areas of concern
 - Shares hopes for your child
 - Make a plan of action

REVIEW

OH YEAH!

Let's review:

- Mental health is our emotional, psychological and social well-being
 - When our mental health is off it affects the way we think, feel and act
- Emotional crisis happens for a number of different reasons but usually as a result of not being able to manage thoughts, feelings and behaviors which ultimately impact functioning

REVIEW

OH YEAH!

Let's review:

- There are different signs and symptoms that signal your child may be experiencing a mental health concern
 - Ask:
 - Does it impact my child's relationships?
 - Does it impact my child's education?
 - Does it impact my child's sense of self?
 - Does it impact how my child interacts at home?

REVIEW

OH YEAH!

Let's review:

- You CAN support your child if you see mental health concerns by:
 - Checking in with yourself first (The 4 questions, regulating your own emotions)
 - **LOVE**ing your child (Listening, Observing, Validating, and Empathizing)
 - Consulting with a professional

Thank You!



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