



Addressing the Mental Health Needs of School-Age Children

Charting the C's Community of Practice

APRIL 25, 2022

Expectations

- Learning what teachers can do to support students' mental health needs
- Learning specific strategies to use for students with ADHD, Depression, Anxiety
- How Self-Esteem affects mental health

Mental Illness

What is Mental Illness?

- Disorder of the brain
- Can affect ANYONE, at ANYTIME
- Many Factors: Genetic, Biological, Environmental, Social, Cultural
- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- **ADHD, behavior problems, anxiety, and depression are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in children**

Mental Illness

Other diagnoses seen in school-age children

- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- PANDAS (medical)
- PTSD
- Attachment Disorders
- Personality Disorder (early onset)
- Specific Learning Disorder including Dyslexia (reading/writing), Dysgraphia (writing), Dyspraxia (coordination/balance), Dyscalculia (Math)
- Eating Disorders

ADHD

- Build Relationships
- Instruction and assignments tailored to the child (extra time, appearance, length, etc.)
- Offer positive reinforcement and feedback (Praise them often)
- Using technology to assist with tasks
- Allowing breaks or time to move around
- Changes to the environment to limit distraction
- Extra help with staying organized
- Give clear expectations and directions (structure and routine)
- Offer support for positive social interactions and friendships

Anxiety

May include

Specific Phobias

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Panic Disorders

Selective Mutism

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety

Build a relationship

Make them feel safe

Proactively Lower Stress

Set Realistic Expectations

Establish Structure and Predictability

Validate feelings

Depression

- Build a Relationship
- Avoid Negative Techniques and show compassion
- Validate feelings
- Frequent check in about suicidal thoughts
- Teach problem solving skills
- Help them set goals and self-monitor
- Help with organization and planning
- Allow for and develop accommodations
- Encourage and support social interactions
- Develop communication plan with home

Attachment Disorders

- Model and teach positive social interactions
- Take time to talk and listen to child
- Be empathic and nurturing
- Be consistent, repetitive, clear and predictable
- Give them opportunities to make choices
- Respond consistently and calmly
- Discipline with natural/logical consequences
- Provide praise
- Be patient and kind
- Work with families to provide consistency

Eating Disorders

- Build Relationship
- Avoid talking about diets, weight, shape and sometimes food
- Be flexible with schedules
- Be Kind
- Don't assume you understand

OCD

- Specific seating assignment/arrangement
- Possible safe space
- Make assignments manageable (shorter tasks/less problems at a time)
- Reduce testing anxiety (type answers, scribe, no bubble sheets, less distractions)
- Provide separate supplies (esp. if they have fears about germs or contamination)
- Reduce writing anxiety (Scribe, type)
- Consider audio books
- Set limits (bathroom breaks, asking questions, using hand sanitizer)
- Validate fears
- Communicate with family and other staff

PANDAS

- In 1998, Dr. Swedo and her colleagues coined the term PANDAS to describe 50 cases of a rare syndrome that involved obsessive compulsive behaviors following strep infection.
- **P**ediatric **A**utoimmune **N**europsychiatric **D**isorders **A**ssociated with **S**treptococcal infections
- Could account for as many as 1 in 10 new cases of OCD in children each year
- May need accommodations
- Be flexible with changes (attendance, performance, moods, behaviors)

Self-Esteem

Affects all individuals no matter the disability

Is a foundation for mental health

Healthy self-esteem is knowing that we deserve to be treated with respect by ourselves and by others

Healthy self-esteem is knowing our wellness and happiness are worth fighting for

Healthy self-esteem is having self-compassion and acceptance of all parts of oneself, even the flaws

Even students who seem overconfident can have low self-esteem

Healthy self-esteem is something we all have to work at

Self-esteem in youth

- Excessive apologizing
- Cognitive rigidity, inflexibility or perfectionism
- Isolating behaviors (staying home or not engaging with others)
- Camouflaging/Hiding (baggy clothes, hair in face, hood up, etc.)
- Negative tones or attitudes about others
- Self-deprecating statements or humor (Negative self-talk or humor)

How can you help

- Establish Relationships
- Show compassion and Be a kind human being
- Don't Assume
- Normalize Mental Health
- Communicate with the student and the family
- Ask Questions
- Remember behaviors are communication
- Remember students did not ask for the diagnoses they have

Mental Health Impacts on Daily Life

- Family and Peer Relationships
 - Poor social skills
 - Trouble being assertive
 - Low self esteem
 - Negative self talk
 - Problem solving skills
- Educational and Vocational performance
 - Organizational skills
 - Time management
 - Perfectionist
 - Hypersensitive to criticism
 - Problem solving skills

Resources

- <https://www.educationdegree.com/articles/supporting-students-with-anxiety/>
- <https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/school-success.html#:~:text=What%20Teachers%20Can%20Do%20To%20Help>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/school-success.html#:~:text=What%20Teachers%20Can%20Do%20To%20Help>
- <https://ibcces.org/blog/2019/03/12/teachers-fight-depression-mental-health-disorders/>
- Bray, Bethany; Self-esteem: Tending to the roots and branches. Counseling Today, May 2022, Vol. 64
- <https://aspire.care/treating-pans/pans-at-school/>
- <https://www.weareteachers.com/students-with-ocd/>

Resources

- <https://www.collaborativesolutionsnetwork.org/pdf/School%20Attachment%20Strategies.pdf>
- NAMI- National Alliance for Mental Illness
 - <https://www.nami.org>
- NIMH-National Institute of Mental Health
 - <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

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