Parenting and Youth Anxiety and Depression

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Overview

- Defining Anxiety & Depression
- Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages
- How to Support Your Child
Disclaimer: For this presentation, “parenting” is used broadly to represent those who may fill those roles and “families” is also meant inclusively, referring to all individuals with responsibility for a young person (including parents, stepparents, guardians, foster families, grand families, kinship families, chosen families, older siblings, or other caregivers).

Purpose: Caring for every child’s mental health is an important component of parenting, as positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development. Confident, well-informed parents make better parenting decisions, benefiting the family system. Today’s presentation will include information on anxiety and depression in children and youth and discuss how to get help should your family need.
Overview

- Defining Anxiety & Depression
- Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages
- How to Support Your Child
How many children experience depression or anxiety?

- **Persistent sadness or hopelessness**: (4 in 10 children)
- **Depression**: (2 in 10 children)
- **Anxiety**: (3 in 10 children)
- **Serious suicidal thoughts**: (2 in 10 children)

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, National Comorbidity Survey Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A)
## Defining Depression and Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Occasional sadness is a normal part of growing up.</td>
<td>• Fears and worries in children can be common and developmentally appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• If children are sad, irritable, or no longer enjoy things, and this occurs day after day, may be indicative of depression</td>
<td>• Fearful anticipation of further danger or problems accompanied by an intense unpleasant feeling or physical symptoms</td>
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What causes anxiety and depression in children?

We don’t always know what the cause of big feelings are, and they can seem to come out of nowhere.

Risk factors:
- Genetics or Family history
- Traumatic experiences
- Stressful life events
- Temperament
- Certain medical conditions
- Substance use

No single test to diagnose anxiety and depression

Gene x Environment Interaction

Gene x Environment Interaction
Overview

Defining Anxiety & Depression

Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages

How to Support Your Child
Typical or Not?

It can be difficult to understand mental health disorders in children because normal childhood development is a process that involves change.

Behaviors may be signs of an underlying mental health concern or disorder if they:

• are intense,
• persist over long periods of time,
• are inappropriate for the child’s age, or
• interfere with the child’s life.

Is this age appropriate?

How intense and how persistent are these behaviors?

Do these behaviors interfere with my child’s life?
Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

General signs and symptoms of potential distress:

– **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, persistent physical complaints.

– **Emotional Symptoms:** Low self-esteem, low energy, mood swings.

– **Behavioral Symptoms:** School avoidance, withdrawing from friends and family, risky behavior.

*Some physical disorders can cause symptoms that are similar to those of mental health conditions; therefore, it is important to rule-out physical health conditions for more effective, appropriate care.*
Common signs and symptoms of Anxiety include:

**Early Childhood**
- Frequent crying
- Excessive Clinginess
- Sleep difficulties
- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- School avoidance
- Excessive worry

**School-Age**
- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt
- Difficulty separating from parents
- Withdrawing from social engagements
- School avoidance
- Fear of harm
- Preoccupation with “what if”

**Adolescence**
- Irritability
- Concentration
- Avoiding situations
- School performance
- Sleep issues
- Increased sensitivity to criticism
- Substance use
Depression can be difficult to recognize because it can manifest in different ways depending on the person's age.

- In children and youth, *irritability* can be a sign of depression, while sadness is more common in adults.
- The biggest thing to look for in children and youth is a *change in their typical behavior*. 
Common signs and symptoms of depression include:

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<th>Early Childhood</th>
<th>School-Age</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Changes in appetite and sleep patterns</td>
<td>• Moodiness/Irritability</td>
<td>• Irritability</td>
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<td>• Lack of interest in activities</td>
<td>• Acting out/Oppositionality</td>
<td>• Substance use</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Absence of joyfulness</td>
<td>• Hopelessness</td>
<td>• Lack of interest in personal grooming or appearance</td>
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<td>• Physical complaints</td>
<td>• Excessive guilt</td>
<td>• Self-loathing</td>
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<td>• Difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>• Decreased energy</td>
<td>• Social withdrawal/Isolation</td>
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<td>• Lower energy</td>
<td>• Heightened sensitivity to criticism</td>
<td>• Poor school performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Irritability</td>
<td>• Feelings of worthlessness.</td>
<td>• Feelings of emptiness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Thoughts of self harm and suicide (more common in older children)</td>
<td>• Sleep disturbance</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Sudden weight changes</td>
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<td>• Self-harm and thoughts of suicide</td>
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</table>
Significant Overlap of Symptoms Between Anxiety and Depression

- Irritability (tantrums, defiance)
- Concentration and memory difficulties
- Sleep problems
- Excessive guilt and preoccupation with errors
- Tiredness, low energy
- Changes in thinking
- Thoughts of self harm or suicide
Overview

Defining Anxiety & Depression

Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages

How to Support Your Child
Screening for Anxiety & Depression

NEW US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations:

1. Anxiety screening for children and youth ages 8-18.

Parents have an important and essential role in helping children deal with anxiety disorders.

– Validate their feelings.
– Help children manage their symptoms.
– Set realistic expectations.
– Talk through worries.
– Model healthy ways of handling anxiety.
How to Support Your Child with Depression

Depression can cause isolation and loneliness. One of the most important things you can do to build trust with your child is to focus on their feelings.

— Listen carefully & provide emotional support.
— Encourage a healthy lifestyle.
— Help your child feel connected.
— Know that change is possible.
Treatment Options

- Meet with pediatrician or behavioral health provider
- Education on symptoms and treatment of depression and anxiety in children and youth
- “Talk Therapy” (psychotherapy)
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) are first line choices
- Medications
Overview

1. Defining Anxiety & Depression
2. Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages
3. How to Support Your Child
How to Get Help

Find a Treatment Facility

Enter your address, city, zip code, or facility name

Search
NEW SAMHSA RESOURCE: FindSupport.gov

You can find support

Find health care or support
Get the best ways to search for a health care professional or program.
Find health care or support

How to cope
Learn about the signs that you may need help, how to ask for help, and ways to take care of yourself.
How to cope

Learn about treatment
Find out about treatment types, how to make an appointment, and how to prepare yourself for treatment.
Learn about treatment

How to pay for treatment
Find options for covering costs with or without insurance, including free and low-cost programs.
How to pay for treatment

Helping someone
Learn how to talk to a loved one about getting help and how to take care of yourself.
Helping someone

Get help now
Sometimes help can't wait. There are people you can call, text, or chat for help right now.
Get help now

Find Health Care or Support
www.findsupport.gov
Resources for Parents & Caregivers about Children’s Mental Health

**ACF’s Behavioral Health Webpage** includes federal resources for parents and caregivers, teens and young adults, tribes.

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/behavioral-health](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/behavioral-health)

**ACF’s Office of Early Childhood Development Behavioral Health Webpage** includes resources for parents and caregivers with young children.

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/initiatives/behavioral-health](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/initiatives/behavioral-health)

**SAMHSA’s Resource Page for Parents and Caregivers** includes a list of mental health resources, including the recording and slides from ACF-SAMHSA training for parents and caregivers.

[https://www.samhsa.gov/families/parent-caregiver-resources](https://www.samhsa.gov/families/parent-caregiver-resources)
Thank You

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And
https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

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