



INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HEALTH

A mental illness is a medical condition that may change a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. A person may not be able to cope with ordinary demands of life. All ages, race, religions and income levels can be affected. There are a several diagnoses including depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive (OCD), bipolar and posttraumatic stress (PTSD) disorders. It is important to be aware of warning signs that your child may be struggling. Pay special attention to behaviors if your child experiences a loss or major life change and event.

For Parents and Caregivers

As a parent or caregiver, you want the best for your children or other dependents. You may be concerned or have questions about certain behaviors they exhibit and how to ensure they get help.

Signs to Look For in a Person

- Feels very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Worries or so fearful that effect daily activities
- Has severe mood swings
- Has drastic personality changes
- Seems out of control
- Gets into fights
- Loses appetite or frequent throwing up or use of laxatives
- Uses drugs or alcohol repeatedly
- Hurts themselves or makes plans to do so

What to do if concerned?

- Talk to a doctor, nurse, school counselor or other medical professionals
- Ask if an evaluation is needed
- Ask about treatment options such as counseling and medication

DID YOU KNOW?

Mental illnesses are treatable.

Recovery is possible.

One in four adults – approximately 61.5 million Americans – experiences mental illness in a given year.

18.1% of American adults, about 42 million people, live with anxiety disorders such as panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), generalized anxiety disorder and phobias.

20% of youth ages 13-18 experience severe mental disorders in a given year.



HOW TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Do you need help starting a conversation with your child about mental health?

Ask Questions.

Try starting with:

- Tell me more about what is happening? How you are feeling?
- Have you felt like this in the past?
- Sometimes you need to talk to an adult about your feelings. I'm here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?
- I'm worried about your safety. Can you tell me if you have thoughts about hurting yourself or anyone else?

Listen actively to what your child says. Repeat what you heard. This let's your child know that you understand what they said and makes sure you have the right information.

When talking with your child:

- Talk in a direct way
- Speak with words they can understand
- Choose a time when your child feels safe and comfortable
- Watch for reactions
- Slow down or step back if they become confused or upset
- Listen openly

It is important to let your child tell you about his or her feelings and worries.

Support Your Children

Seek immediate help if you think your child needs support or is in danger of harming themselves or others. There are many resources for parents and caregivers who want to know more about children's mental health.



THE MORE
YOU
LEARN

Who Does What?



Psychiatrist: diagnoses, treats and provides ongoing care for mental health disorders to patients of all ages and prescribes medications.



Psychologist: provides testing and treatment for depression, anxiety, phobias, panic and eating disorders. Relationship and stress related problems are also helped.



Social Worker: psychological counseling, guidance, and assistance, usually in the form of social services.

References and information provided by:
-mentalhealth.gov
-nami.org
-nimh.nih.gov
Visit parentnetworkwny.org for more info.



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