

Mental Health in Childhood

Signs of Distress and a Call to Action: A Parent Guide

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Learning Objectives

1. Signs of Resiliency – Let's start with the positive stuff!
2. Data on Mental Health In Childhood – The scary stuff!
3. Signs of Distress: The usual suspects and the less obvious ones
4. The B word: Bullying and the H word: Help-seeking
5. Questions



CHOC | RESILIENCY

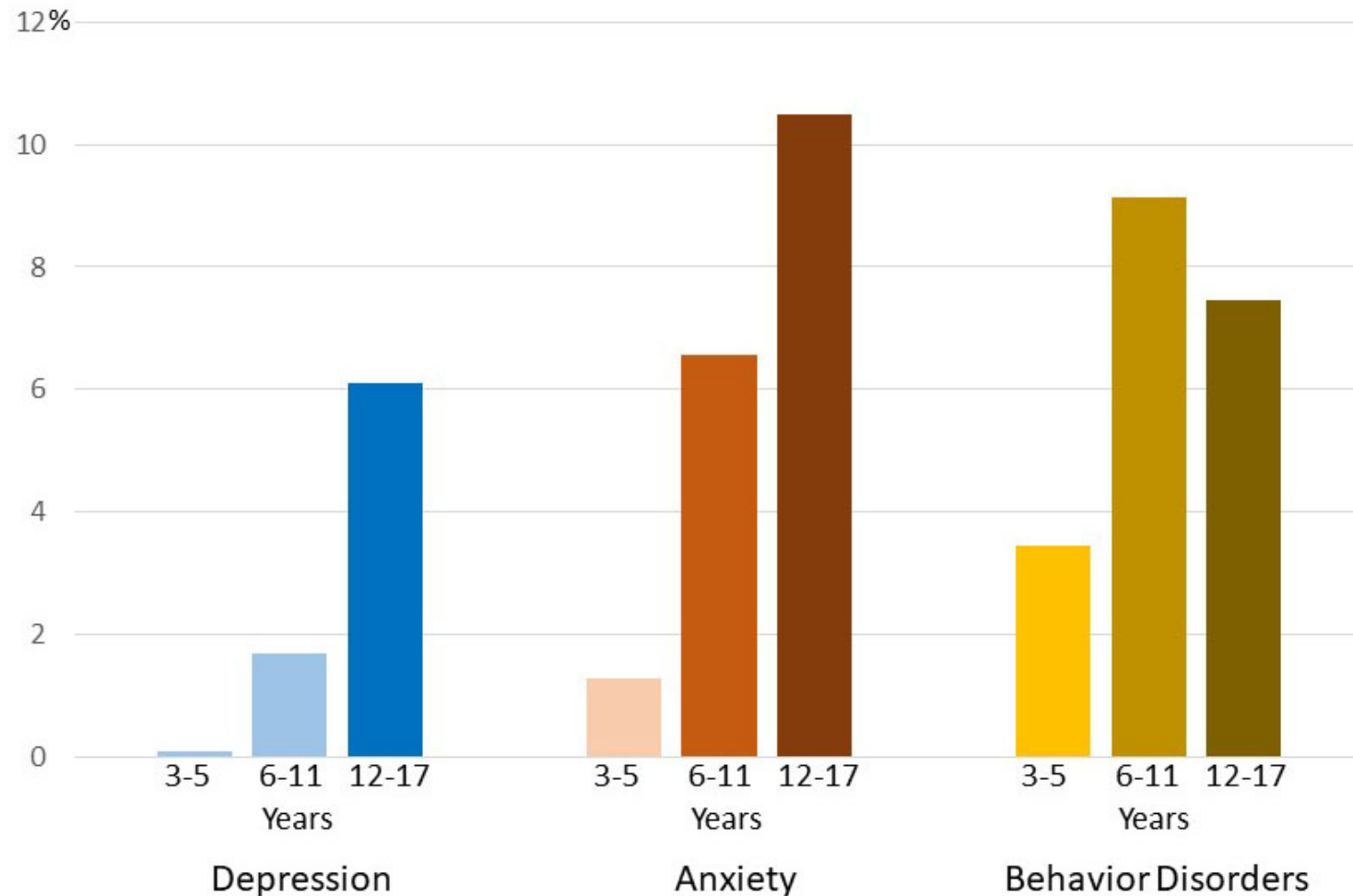




Data on Mental Health in Childhood

Mental Health in Childhood (2016-2019)

Depression, Anxiety, Behavior Disorders, by Age



Mental Health in Childhood (2020)

From March 2020 to October 2020, mental health–related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits.



Signs of Distress: Depression & Anxiety

Depression in Childhood

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or **irritable** a lot of the time.
- Not wanting to do or enjoy doing fun things. *Can be variable.*
- Showing changes in eating patterns – eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Showing changes in sleep patterns – sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal
- Showing changes in energy – being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time
- Having a hard time paying attention. *Is there a sudden drop in grades? Missing assignments? Not understanding material that never was a problem before?*
- Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty. Getting down on themselves / critical?
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior. Do they have unexplained cuts/ burns? Excuses? Wearing long-sleeves?



Anxiety in Childhood

- Being very afraid when away from caregivers (separation anxiety)
- Having extreme fear about a specific thing or situation, such as dogs, insects, or going to the doctor (phobias)
- Being very afraid of school and other places where there are people (social anxiety)
- Being very worried about the future and about bad things happening (general anxiety)
- Having repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected, intense fear that come with symptoms like heart pounding, having trouble breathing, or feeling dizzy, shaky, or sweaty (panic disorder)



Anxiety can also...

- make it difficult to fall asleep.
- present as physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches. Frequent school absences.
- take the form of developmental regression (e.g, being more clingy, wetting the bed, baby talk, etc.
- be missed because some anxious children keep their worries to themselves.



Signs of Mental Health

Distress: In short be on the look out for changes in your child's overall mood and behaviors.





The B Word: Bullying

And Now Our Surgeon General

<https://youtu.be/Y49j1DBP4rY>



Stop the Bullying

- Bullying can lead to mental health distress.
- Adults / school personnel need to quickly and consistently send a message that bully is not acceptable.
- Teach your kid to be an upstander. Let them know you don't tolerate bullying behavior.
- Make a plan before it happens.



- Check in with your child.
- Empathize.
- Share experiences. Empower.
- Postpone/Limit/Monitor social media.

Other Tips from a Psymom



- *Limit/Lock up prescription and nonprescription medication.*
- *Limit/Lock up alcohol.*
- *Talk to your kid about vaping.*
- *Postpone/Limit/Monitor social media.*
- *Get your kids involved in some activity/sport/arts/etc.*
- *Let your kids know that there is no problem they have or they've made that will make you love them any less.*
- *Be careful with imposing extreme consequences (AKA: It's okay to take back extreme consequences)*
- *Provide extra monitoring of emotions and behaviors after extreme disappointments (e.g., poor grades; break-up; extreme bullying, etc.)*
- *Sometimes, mental health issues can't be prevented.*
- *Sometimes, mental health issues require professional help.*

Resources

Help links and extra reading

[Children's mental health is in crisis \(apa.org\)](#) Children's mental health is in crisis

As pandemic stressors continue, kids' mental health needs to be addressed in schools

[Bystanders are Essential to Bullying Prevention and Intervention | StopBullying.gov](#)

[Find a CBT Therapist | Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies \(abct.org\)](#)

[LONG BEACH CHILD & ADOLESCENT CLINIC \(lacounty.gov\)](#)



LONG LIVE CHILDHOOD

Questions?

