

### Phase Resources

#### Surviving or Thriving: Your Child's Mental Health

Laura Valentine MA;LCMHC & Livia Cossy

#### What is Mental Illness?

Mental health is the overall wellness of how you think, regulate your feelings and behave. A mental illness, or mental health disorder, is defined as patterns or changes in thinking, feeling or behaving that cause distress or disrupt a person's ability to function.

Mental health disorders in children are generally defined as delays or disruptions in developing age appropriate thinking, behaviors, social skills or regulation of emotions.

#### What are some of the common disorders you see in children?

**Depression and other mood disorders** - Depression is persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest that disrupt a child's ability to function in school and interact with others. Bipolar disorder results in extreme mood swings between depression and extreme emotional or behavioral highs that may be unguarded, risky or unsafe.

**Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** - PTSD is prolonged emotional distress, anxiety, distressing memories, nightmares and disruptive behaviors in response to violence, abuse, injury or other traumatic events.

**Schizophrenia** - Schizophrenia is a disorder in perceptions and thoughts that cause a person to lose touch with reality (psychosis). Most often appearing in the late teens through the 20s, schizophrenia results in hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking and behaviors.

#### What are some of the warning signs of mental illness in children?

- Persistent sadness — two or more weeks
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions
- Hurting oneself or talking about hurting oneself
- Talking about death or suicide
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Changes in eating habits

- Loss of weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in academic performance
- Avoiding or missing school

#### What should I do if I suspect my child has a mental health condition?

- CONSULT YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR.
- DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIORS THAT CONCERN YOU.
- TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER, CLOSE FRIENDS, RELATIVES OR OTHER CAREGIVERS TO SEE IF THEY'VE NOTICED CHANGES IN YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR
- SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR.

#### How can I help my child cope with mental illness?

- LEARN ABOUT THE ILLNESS.
- CONSIDER FAMILY COUNSELING.
- ASK YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL FOR ADVICE.
- ENROLL IN PARENT TRAINING PROGRAMS.
- EXPLORE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOU RESPOND CALMLY.
- SEEK WAYS TO RELAX AND HAVE FUN WITH YOUR CHILD.
- PRAISE YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND ABILITIES.
- WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL TO SECURE NECESSARY SUPPORT.

Sometimes believers feel as though they are lacking faith if they seek help- but it is ok to say that you're not ok. We want to replace fear with faith, but its hard to do that when we are heartbroken, full of grief and burdened; so that's when you should seek counseling. Counselors are catalysts for change. When the work you do there is completed; you'll have more meaningful relationships with God, yourself, and others.

#### Are there some tools and techniques that I/we can use at home to help them cope?

Especially now that the children are at home with us, we want to have some self-regulation interventions to help reduce anxiety, curb some oppositional behavior and keep them entertained. From (DBT) Dialectal Behavior Therapy, let's learn some distractions skills and some self-soothing skills.

Distraction skills: (ACCEPTS)	Self Soothing Skills (Using 5 senses)
<p>Activities (exercise/ create an obstacle course in the home, have a treasure hunt, coloring is good for calming; build puzzles, family movies, take them for a walk as long as we are able to go outside so they can get some sun)</p> <p>Contributing (do something nice for someone ) This is a good time to teach about compassion.</p> <p>Comparisons (awareness about those less fortunate/gratitude letter)</p> <p>Emotions (A good movie to watch now is inside out)</p> <p>Pushing Away (put the pain in a box for a while) For Christians I want to alter it some and say (Prayer)</p> <p>Pray and ask God to quiet the noise/ for help</p> <p>Thoughts (Psalm 91:1 teach the breathing technique)</p> <p>Sensations (squeeze a rubber ball very hard)</p>	<p>Vision (pleasing/stars)</p> <p>Hearing (listen to soothing sounds/music)</p> <p>Smell (get some calming essential oils)</p> <p>Taste (favorite food and chew slowly)</p> <p>Touch (bubble bath, comfortable clothes)</p>

**ACE's**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood and can include:

- Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Having a family member attempt or die by suicide

ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, and opportunity. These experiences can increase the risks of injury, sexually transmitted infections, maternal and child health problems, teen pregnancy, involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.

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## PREVENTING ACES

### **Strategy**

- **Strengthen economic supports to families.**
- **Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity.**
- **Ensure a strong start for children.**
- **Teach skills.**
- **Connect youth to caring adults and activities.**
- **Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms.**

### **Approach**

1. **Strengthening household financial security**
2. **Public education campaigns**
3. **Early childhood home visitation**
4. **Social-emotional learning**
5. **Mentoring programs**
6. **Enhanced primary care**

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With all that's happening now with Coronavirus/COVID-19, how should we as Christians manage our mental health and that of our children?

In Mental Health cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on the way we think- altering our faulty thoughts. It begins with a situation that affects our thoughts and beliefs, and the way we feel, then it affects the way we behave.

In the same way the Bible tells us to think on whatsoever is pure, true, of good report. So as Christians we should manage our mental health by meditating on the WORD.

#### PROVERBS 22:6

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO; AND WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.

(Parents, your children are looking at you for how they should react- Be Anxious for Nothing) Teach them scripture so that they can hide it in their hearts and meditate on His word).

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND. IT DOES NOT ENVY, IT DOES NOT BOAST, IT IS NOT PROUD. IT DOES NOT DISHONOR OTHERS, IT IS NOT SELF-SEEKING, IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED, IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH. IT ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS, ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PRESERVES. LOVE NEVER FAILS.

As Parents focus on this: Ask yourselves the question: How are we doing as a couple during this time? When we pause, we are forced to address things we may have been avoiding. How are we communicating? Are we supporting each other emotionally? Making decisions that are best for the entire family? What are some foundational family values and core beliefs that are being challenged now that we are socially distanced from extended family?

How do we agree in a time of crisis? Remember that your actions affect your spouse- decide together on how you will operate in this "New Normal." Base your actions on 1 Cor...

#### PSALM 116:1-2

I LOVE THE LORD, BECAUSE HE HATH HEARD MY VOICE AND MY SUFFOCATIONS. BECAUSE HE HATH INCLINED HIS EAR ONTO ME, THEREFORE WILL I CALL UPON HIM AS LONG AS I LIVE.

Call upon the Lord, He is your refuge and fortress. He is your provider, your healer, your peace, your deliverer- In whom you put your trust.

As Christians we want to learn the skills of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and train our brains to give us the end result that we seek. Become Masters of our thoughts, and emotions, which helps direct our behaviors. First master it for ourselves, then teach our children to align their thoughts and emotions with His word.