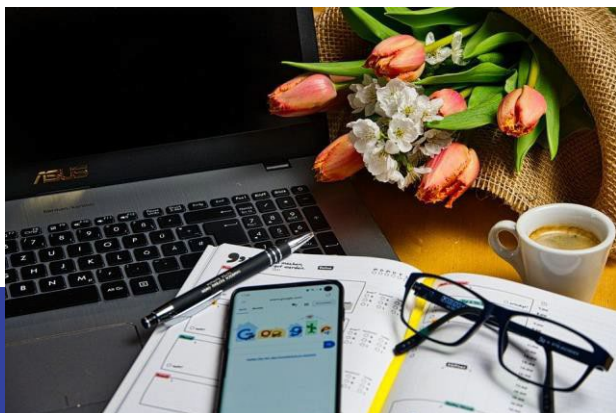




# Early Warning Signs of Mental Illness in Youth

# Learning Goals

- Understand typical development
- Identify early warning signs in children and youth
- Understand mental illnesses and their impact children
- Learn strategies to help children
- Learn suicide warning signs and resources



# What is Typical?



# Developmental Markers

## Early Childhood

- Prone to tantrums
- Possessive
- Testing limits
- Disruptive



# Developmental Markers

## 2 - 4 Years



- Motor and language abilities growing by leaps & bounds
- Sociable, lively, highly imaginative, eager to learn
- Warm and affectionate-enjoy playing with friends
- Like rituals-although daily routines may be a source of conflict

# Developmental Markers

## 5 – 8 Years

- More mature-more likely to use words rather than hitting
- Play well alone as well as with others
- Becoming more interested in reality than make-believe
- Show increased interest in household responsibilities and has increased consideration of others



# Developmental Markers

## 9 – 12 Years

- Show greater independence
- Busy with self initiated projects and friends
- Is a pleasant companion to friends and family-maintains good peer relationships
- At around 11, feels anxious about growing up
- Feel stress and turmoil



# Developmental Markers

## 13 – 16 Years



- Searching for own identity
- Having better more satisfying personal relationships
- Touchy and sensitive to criticism
- Need privacy



# Developmental Markers

## 13 – 16 Years

- Want and need to make independent decisions
- Feel anxious about soon joining the adult world
- May be non-communicative at home and spend a good deal of time with friends



# Let's take a second look at behaviors

Some behaviors are warning signs:

- At some ages
- In some situations



Some behaviors are clear warning signs no matter the age or situation



# Behaviors

- Behavior is defined as the way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation, stimulus or environment: it is the manner of conducting oneself
- Behavior is anything that an organism does involving action and response to stimulation
- It is the way in which someone behaves

**NOT ALL  
BEHAVIORS ARE  
“BEHAVIOR”**

Behavior is the language used to communicate that something is wrong!

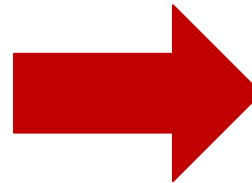


# What Is Beneath The Surface?

Behaviors are like the part of the iceberg that is visible.

What's underneath the behaviors?

**SYMPTOMS**



## Symptoms as Warning Signs

An example would be MANIA. A person living with bipolar disorder can experience manic episodes. This is not necessarily due to a trigger, but rather a symptom of a brain disorder.



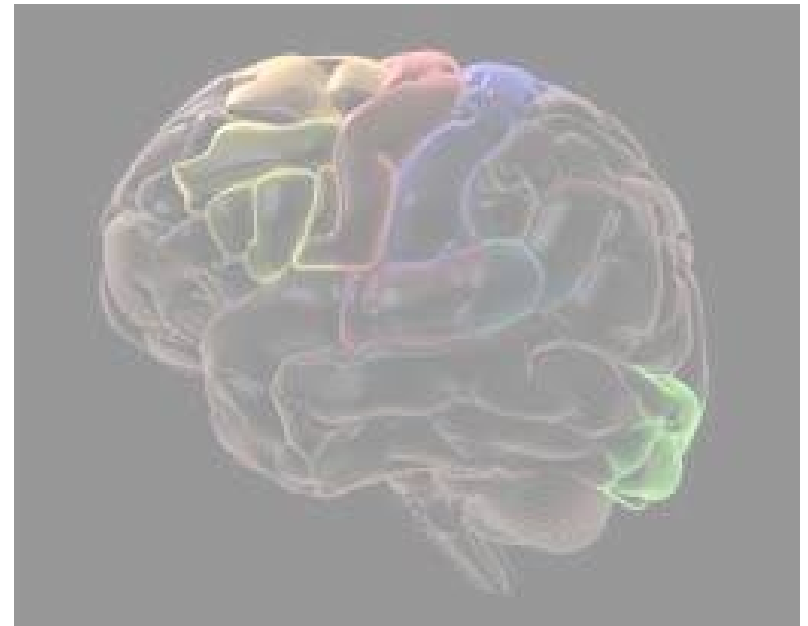
# Mental Illnesses in Children and Youth





# Mental Illnesses Are:

- Brain disorders that affect thinking, moods, feelings and the ability to relate to others
- Medical illnesses whose symptoms are behaviors



# Youth Mental Health Facts

1 in 5 children in the U.S. experience a mental health disorder

**National Research Council & Institute of Medicine report, 2009**

**Almost 50% of children and youth who live with a mental health disorder do not obtain treatment**

**Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness start  
by the age of 14**



**Three quarters of all lifetime cases have begun  
by age 24**

# Recognizing Early Warning Signs

- Tense/keyed up
- Difficulty staying seated
- Difficulty keeping hands to self
- Repetitive behaviors
- Fear and avoidance of others

# Warning Signs

- Losing temper
- Distractibility
- Restlessness
- Difficulty sustaining mental effort
- Blurting and issues with taking turns
- Inconsolable



# Warning Symptoms

- Self Harm
- Grandiosity
- Hypervigilance
- Disassociation
- Spiteful/Defiant
- Flashbacks
- Suicidal ideation
- Hallucinations (hearing critical or threatening voices, experiencing sensations that others don't experience)
- Delusions

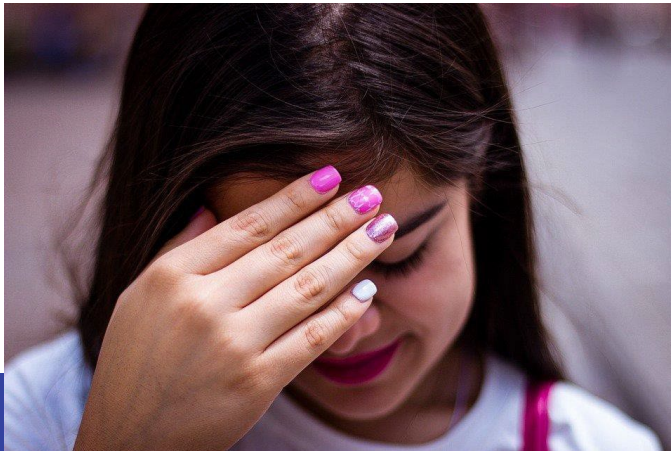
# Common Mental Illnesses That Affect Youth

- **Mood Disorders**
  - Depression
  - Bipolar Disorder
- **Disruptive, Impulse Control and Conduct Disorders**
  - ADHD
  - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
  - Conduct Disorder
- **Anxiety**
  - General Anxiety Disorder
  - Phobias
  - Panic Attacks
  - Other
- **Substance Abuse Disorder**
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**
- **PTSD**

# Child Traumatic Stress

Child traumatic stress is the physical and emotional responses of a child to events or experiences that threaten that child's sense of security. Traumatic stress can affect all areas of a child's life; in the home, school, and community.

- **Ambit Network**





# Prevalence

1 out of every 4 children has been exposed to a traumatic event

- The impact of trauma can affect
  - Healthy development
  - School
  - Relationships
  - Work
- Trauma affects the ability to participate fully in a healthy life



# Symptoms Of PTSD/Trauma

- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Recreating the event
- Absenteeism
- Changes in behavior
- Over or under reacting to loud noises
- Emotional distress
- Making statements or asking questions about death and dying
- Reoccurring nightmares

# Anxiety

- Irritable
- Looks terrified
- Displays sadness
- Hypersensitive/  
feelings easily hurt
- Frequent tears
- Refuses to  
join activities
- “Fight or flight”/or  
freeze response
- Quick to anger
- Fearful/panicky
- Excessively worries
- Physical complaints
- Low frustration  
tolerance
- Frequent absences

# Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

- Involuntary thoughts, ideas, urges, impulses or worries that run through the mind (Obsessions)
- Purposeless repetitive behaviors (Compulsions)



# Depression

## Mood Changes

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Loss of interest/pleasure
- Irritable mood/anger
- Distractible
- Aggressive
- Excessive guilt/self-blame

## Cognitive Changes

- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems making decisions
- Slow movement, speech and thinking
- Forgetfulness
- Suicidal thoughts or gestures

# Watch out for Suicide Warning Signs

- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Talking about having no reason to live, being a burden to others, or not being here tomorrow
- Feeling hopeless, desperate, or trapped
- Gathering materials to attempt suicide
- Giving away possessions
- Acting recklessly

# If you are worried, ask the question!

- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- If yes, talk to a professional





# Bipolar Disorder

## Mania

- Abnormally elevated mood
- Racing thoughts
- Increased talkativeness
- Aggressive, irritable, “touchy”
- Increased energy
- Uncontrollable rages  
temper tantrums
- Decreased sleep

## Depression

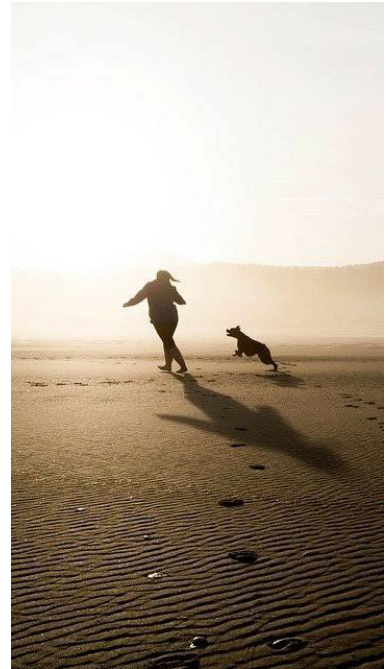
Same as previously discussed plus:

- Insecurity, anxiety, low self-esteem
- Self Isolation
- Suicidal thoughts or gestures

# ADHD/ADD

## Hyperactivity Symptoms

- Is on the “go”
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs around or climbs excessively
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Difficulty waiting or taking turn



# ADHD/ADD-Symptoms:

## Inattentive Symptoms

- Daydreams
- Can't pay attention to details
- Doesn't finish school work
- Distractible, careless and disorganized
- Doesn't listen to, or follow through on directions



# ADHD/ADD

## Impulsivity Symptoms:

- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

# Oppositional Defiant Disorder

ODD is a condition in which a child displays an ongoing pattern of:

- uncooperative
- defiant
- hostile
- annoying behavior toward people in authority
- interferes with relationships and school



# Who gets psychosis?

- Up to 6% of people
- Found in all cultures
- Affects males and females equally
- Can occur at any age but typically occurs in late teens/early adulthood



# Causes of psychosis



- Medical diseases such as Parkinson's, HIV and Huntington's
- Certain medications
- Extreme stress
- Brain tumors and cysts or brain injuries
- Drug and alcohol use and withdrawal
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia

# Identifying Psychosis – *You may notice a young person....*

- Having difficulty paying attention
- Not understanding what they hear
- Saying that lights are too bright, sounds are too loud
- Feeling disconnected
- Acting oddly
- Avoiding school





# Identifying Psychosis – *You may notice a young person....*

- Having odd beliefs
- Acting as if they are suspicious of you
- Using odd word combinations
- Being unexpectedly aggressive
- Laughing inappropriately
- Feeling paranoid



# Talking About Psychosis

- Talk with the young person about what you have seen – be calm and non-judgmental
- Let them know you are concerned
- Early treatment of psychosis is critical to recovery – delay increases risk and makes recovery more difficult
- Refer the young person to a counselor or mental health professional as soon as possible!

# Medication Side Affects

- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Dizziness
- Constipation
- Tics
- Weight gain or loss
- Nervousness
- Shakiness
- Confusion
- Headaches



# Substance Use and Mental Illness



# Executive Function

- A set of cognitive abilities that control and regulate other abilities and behaviors.
- Are necessary for goal-directed behavior and self control
- Allow us to anticipate outcomes and adapt to changing situations.
- Ability to form concepts and think abstractly

# Executive Function

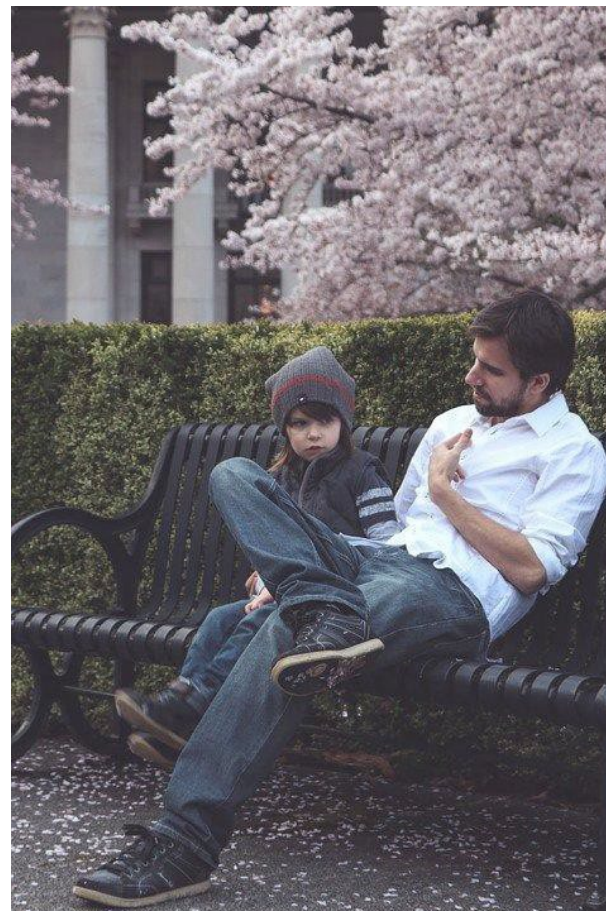
- ADHD
- Learning Disabilities
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Depression
- Autism Spectrum Disorders



# How Can We Help?

# Check in with Your Child

- For young children, use feelings chart
- Think of a specific topic/question
- Start with your own feelings
- Validate feelings
- Be open about your own mental health
- Leave door open, but don't shove them through it





# Remind them of the Trusted Adults in Their Lives



- Neighbors
- Aunts and uncles
- Older cousins
- Grandparents
- Friends' parents
- Teachers
- Counselors
- Crisis Textline: text MN to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
- International Suicide Prevention hotlines:  
<http://suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html>

# Professionals that Can Help

- Primary doctor
- Therapist
- Crisis Textline: 741741
- US National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
- International Suicide Prevention hotlines:  
<http://suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html>
- County Crisis Team (dial  
\*\*CRISIS if in Minnesota)
- If an emergency, call 911



# How Else Can I Keep My Child Safe?

- Dispose of expired medications or unused prescriptions
- Lock-up over the counter medications such as acetaminophen
- Store weapons outside of the home or lock them up



# Take Care of Yourself!

- Avoids burnout
- Helps you manage your own stress and anxiety
- You can't take care of others unless you take care of yourself



# Take Care of Yourself

- Eat, sleep, and exercise
- Create a routine and a to-do list
  - Schedule in time for yourself
- Practice mindfulness
- Use walks to reset between activities
- Practice self-care activities with children
- Talk to other parents
- Know when to ask for help



# What We Do

- Education classes, booklets and fact sheets
- Suicide prevention
- Support groups, Helpline
- Public awareness presentations
- Legislative advocacy
- NAMIWalks



# Support NAMI Minnesota

- Advocate for a better Mental Health System
- Attend an event
- Sign up for a newsletter
- Join an affiliate
- Be a sponsor
- Volunteer
- Become a donor



# Contact Information

NAMI Minnesota  
1919 University Ave W., Suite 400  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-645-2948  
1-888-NAMI-HELPS  
[www.namihelps.org](http://www.namihelps.org)  
[www.namihelpsyouth.org](http://www.namihelpsyouth.org)