



Kids Included Together






Mental Health Basics

This resource outlines a few mental health basics. Program Leaders and Staff will find this Tip Sheet helpful for identifying behaviors that may indicate a mental health challenge. This resource is not intended as a diagnostic tool or substitute for treatment. Diagnoses can only be made by qualified medical professionals.



When you see this symbol, click to visit a selected web resource.

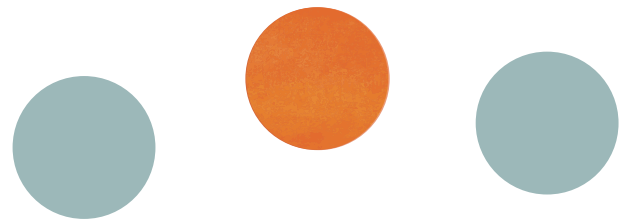
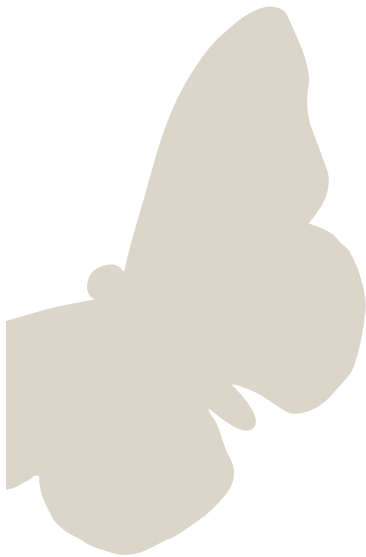
Common Mental Health Disorders in Children/Youth

- Anxiety 
- Depression 
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) 
- Child Traumatic Stress (CTS) 
- Reactive Attachment Disorder 



Common Causes of Mental Health Disorders

- Trauma
- Neglect
- Stress
- Brain Injury
- Biology/Genetics



Approximately **1 in 5**

youth experience a mental health disorder in early childhood

Signs of Anxiety in Children/Youth

- Excessive and debilitating worry with negative emotions and fear
- Crying
- Tantrums
- Becomes frozen with fear
- Clinging
- Internalizing symptoms


Signs of Depression in Children/Youth

- Loss of interest in things that used to be enjoyable
- Trouble completing simple tasks
- Poor performance in school and/or activities
- Boredom
- Changes in appetite
- Peer relationships suffer
- Regressing (acting younger)
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness

Signs of ODD in Children/Youth

- Low frustration tolerance
- Lack of adaptability
- Extreme reactions/intensity of emotion
- Uses anger to mask other emotions, has trouble expressing: shame, embarrassment, sadness, guilt, worry, disappointment, hurt


Caregiver Suggestions for Anxiety

- Art Activities
 - Allow child to choose their activity
 - Encourage expression of feelings
 - Create structure around time and materials to avoid over-stimulation
 - Praise the youth's effort and say, "Would you like to tell me about your art work?"
- "72 Phrases to Calm an Anxious Child" 
- Create a "Cozy Corner"
 - Include a beanbag or big fluffy pillow
 - Squishy or plush toys
 - Pictures of nature
 - Books

Caregiver Suggestions for Depression

- When possible, give activity choices that match the child's strengths and interests
- Play the "Good At Game"
 - Everyone molds a cup/nest out of clay and fills their cup with trinkets (stones, buttons, coins) that represent the things they are good at
 - Encourage anyone who wants to share; staff should model first

Caregiver Suggestions for ODD

- Teach children how to express their emotions using a variety of words
- Set clear behavior expectations and follow through consistently
- Avoid power struggles
- Use "Reflect, Connect, & Redirect" strategies 

Additional Resources:

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov 

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
www.nctsn.org 

Go Zen
 (Anxiety Stress Relief Programs for Kids)
www.gozen.com/allprograms 

Mental Health America
 Free Mental Health First Aid Certification
<http://mhasd.org/first-aid-programs/> 