

WELL *moment*

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Development of Anxiety and Mood Disorders in Children





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Today's Discussion

- The signs of anxiety and mood disorders in children and adolescents
- How to identify early risk factors for internalizing mood disorders in young people
- The treatment options for mood and anxiety disorders

Housekeeping Notes

- Our goal is to have this be an interactive session, so please submit your questions throughout the presentation and we will be sure to answer as many as we can.
- As a follow-up, we will send an email of the video recording and the presentation slides, along with links to resources discussed.
- We invite you to participate in the polls featured during today's presentation.
- We'd love to hear from you! If we don't cover something, or if your question isn't answered, contact us.

Email us at memberinfo@vhan.com, and we will get you a response as soon as possible.

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POLL QUESTION

What concerns do you have about your child's emotions?

What is anxiety?

- State of worry, fear, nervousness
- We all experience anxiety sometimes and this can be adaptive and keep us safe
- Anxiety disorders = worries and fears that are out of proportion to the situation and interfere with daily life
 - Many types: separation anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobias, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder

How common are anxiety disorders in children and teens?

- Among the **most common** psychological disorders
- Approximately **10-12% of children and teens** experience an anxiety disorder
 - In young children, separation anxiety and specific phobias are most common
 - In teens, social anxiety and panic disorder become more common
- **Average age of onset** around 8 years old
- **Slightly more common** in girls than boys

What is depression?

- Persistent feeling of sadness, irritability, loss of interest or pleasure
- Clinical depression is characterized by associated changes in thoughts and behaviors
 - Increased or decreased appetite
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Restless/fidgety or moving more slowly than usual
 - Impaired concentration and decision making
 - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
 - Thoughts of death or suicide
- Lasts for 2 weeks or more or milder symptoms for 1 year

Other types of mood disorders

- Disruptive mood dysregulation disorder – irritable mood most of the day, nearly every day with severe temper outbursts throughout the week
 - Beginning before age 12
- Bipolar disorder – extreme mood swings; happiness, elevated mood, irritability and high energy, along with depressed episodes
 - Typically, onsets in young adulthood but can emerge in teens also

How common is depression in children and teens?

- 1-2% of preschoolers using modified criteria
- 1-3% of school age children
- 5-6% adolescents (15-20% lifetime prevalence in adolescence)
- More common in girls than boys beginning in adolescence (around age 12)
- Anxiety and mood disorders often co-occur

What are risk factors for anxiety and mood disorders?

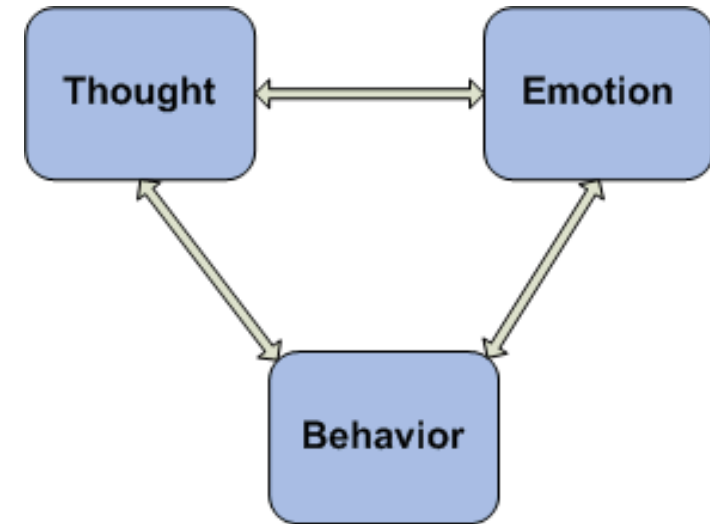
- Genetic influences
- Biological factors
 - Dysregulation in stress response systems (HPA axis)
 - Brain function (e.g., amygdala, ventral striatum, prefrontal cortex)
 - Neurotransmitter systems (e.g., serotonin)
- Stress, maltreatment, and trauma
- Family environment – conflict, low warmth, overcontrolling parenting
- Early temperament – low positive affect, high behavioral inhibition, high negative affect
- Thought patterns – attention towards threat, negative interpretations

What warning signs can parents look for?

- Anxiety and depression can present in many ways (e.g., temper outbursts, aggressive behavior, quiet/withdrawn)
- Changes in child's mood and behavior (e.g., less interested in activities, spending more time alone in room, avoiding activities or places)
- Physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, stomachaches)
- Trouble sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating (e.g., drop on grades)
- Loss of energy, fatigue
- Worries or fears
- Negative thoughts, low self-esteem (e.g., "I'm bad at everything!")

Treatment of anxiety and mood disorders

- Cognitive behavior therapy
 - Effective around age 7
 - 45-80% recovery rate
 - Focus on thoughts, feelings, behaviors
 - Concrete skills, homework, practice
 - Short-term
- Medications (e.g., SSRIs)
 - Can be used in combination with therapy
- More intensive services for safety concerns (e.g., partial hospitalization)



What can parents do to help children with anxiety?

- Listen and validate feelings
 - “I understand you feel nervous”
- Avoid telling them how they *should* feel
- Encourage facing fears
- Help child learn to tolerate anxiety, not avoid
- Set realistic expectations
- Talk through what the child is afraid will happen, help to problem solve
- Model coping with anxiety

What can parents do to help children with depression?

- Validate experiences
 - “That sounds very difficult”
 - “I can see you are having a hard time”
- Show empathy and support
- Ask questions about how they’re feeling and listen in a nonjudgmental way
- Notice the positive
- Give opportunities to engage in more social interactions and activities
- Avoid criticism

Talking with children about suicide

- If you are concerned your child may have suicidal thoughts, talk with them about it
 - Asking about suicide does not make people more likely to harm themselves
 - “Sometimes when people feel the way you do, they think about death or even killing themselves. I’m wondering if you’ve ever had these thoughts?”
- Show them that they have a safe person to talk with, show empathy and validate
- Stay connected with your child, know what they are doing and who they are with
- Make the home safe (e.g., restrict access to firearms or medications)
- In case of immediate threat of harm, call 911 or go to the emergency room

Resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) <https://www.nami.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide <https://sptsusa.org/parents/>
- The Child Mind Institute <https://childmind.org/>
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America <https://adaa.org/find-help>
- Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies <https://www.abct.org/get-help/>
- NAMI HelpLine 800-950-NAMI
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741-741



Questions?