

Children's Mental Health

As a part of Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, addressing the mental health needs of children, youth and families is fundamental to the future of Fort Bend County. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our communities and we must not overlook the psychological impact on our children's mental health.



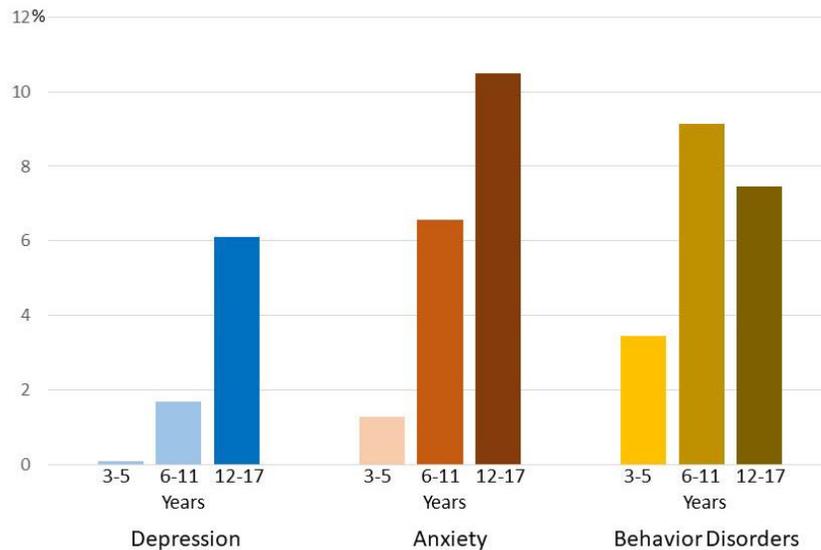
Mental Health Disorders in Children

- **ADHD, behavior problems, anxiety, and depression** are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in children.
- **Anxiety** in children may present as fear or worry, but can also make them irritable and angry. Anxiety symptoms can also include trouble sleeping, as well as physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches.
- **Depression** in children may present as sadness, hopelessness or anger and irritability. Depression symptoms can include not wanting to do fun things, changes in eating, sleeping patterns, or energy, trouble with concentration, feeling worthless, useless, or guilty, showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior.



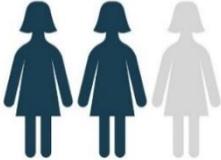
1 in 6 children aged 2-8 years has a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Depression, Anxiety, Behavior Disorders, by Age



It is important to recognize the symptoms of anxiety and depression in children, so they can seek treatment with a health care provider. Identifying and diagnosing disorders earlier ensures that children have the best outcome! Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html> for more information on how to track child development!

Addressing Childhood Trauma

2/3 

of children reported at least one traumatic event by the age of 16

which can be a risk factor for nearly all behavioral health or substance abuse disorders

- Traumatic events can include a death, divorce, a pandemic, natural disasters, exposure to violence, or bullying.
- Understanding a child's trauma and making an effort to help them heal from it can significantly reduce the effects of possible behavioral disorders that could result from the trauma.

Traumatic stress can also lead to increased use of health and mental health services and increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Resiliency in Children

- **Resilience** is important to development during childhood because it allows children to deal with hardships in life without it being overwhelming for them.
- Providing children *healthy parent-child relationships, safe and stable homes, healthy foods, education,* and *support* systems is key to their emotional and overall wellbeing.
- Playing supports and enhances the development of resilience
- To help foster resilience, parents can play, show warmth, listen, reassure, and be consistent with their children.
- **Indicators of positive mental health are present in most children.** Parents reported in 2016-2019 that their child mostly or always showed affection (97.0%), resilience (87.9%), positivity (98.7%) and curiosity (93.9%) among children ages 3-5 years.

RESILIENCE - the process of handling stress and recovering from trauma or adversity.



How can you help?

As parents, it is important to support children by...

- Trying to keep up with regular routines.
- Reassuring them that they are safe and letting them know that it is okay to feel upset.
- Addressing fears and concerns in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Sharing with them how you deal with stress.
- Spending time with your child in meaningful activities, reading together, exercising, and playing games.
- Limiting exposure to social media.



Find details positive parenting tips for specific age groups using the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>

HELPING CHILDREN COPE

Your children may respond differently to an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond:

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
PRESCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being alone, bad dreams • Speech difficulties • Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting • Change in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling • Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure
SCHOOL-AGE (ages 6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet • Regular exercise and stretching • Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) • Participate in structured household chores • Set gentle but firm limits • Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community • Encourage expression through play and conversation • Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
ADOLESCENT (ages 13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Concerns about stigma and injustices • Avoiding/cutting school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) • Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games • Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak

For more information, please see www.NCTSN.org

Additional Helpful Links on Children's Mental Health:

Children's Mental Health Basics: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html>

Information for Parents and Caregivers: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/parents-caregivers>

About Child Trauma: <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>

Children's Mental Health Network: <https://www.cmhnetwork.org/>

Center for Developing Child: Harvard University:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

CDC's Guide to Helping Children Cope During the Pandemic:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/for-parents.html>