



Promotion of Child Mental Health



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Introduction

Children's mental health matters

Just as you can help, prevent a child from catching a cold or breaking a bone, you can help, prevent a child from having mental health problems. The first "basic" is to know that child's mental health matters.

Consequences of mental illness may be prevented

Although there can be a genetic or biological component to mental illness, and many children live in unsafe environments that put them "at-risk" of developing mental health problems, the consequences of mental illness may often be prevented through early intervention. The best way to promote child's mental health is to understand the nature of problems which protects them from experiencing failures and also gives insight to them to succeed in life.

Mental Health Promotion

We do this by helping to build a child's confidence and competence-the foundation of strong self-esteem. Identifying the signs of mental illness that the child might be experiencing and it is important for adults to seek the help of mental health professionals.

Know the Signs

Consider consulting a professional if a child you know:

Feels very sad, hopeless or irritable, Feels overly anxious or worried, Is scared and fearful; has frequent nightmares, Is excessively angry, Uses alcohol or drugs, Avoids people; wants to be alone all of the time, Hears voices or sees things that aren't there, Can't concentrate, sit still, or focus attention, Needs to wash, clean things, or perform certain rituals many times a day, Talks about suicide or death, Hurts other people or animals; or damages property, Has major changes in eating or sleeping habits, Loses interest in friends or things usually enjoyed, Falls behind in school or earns lower grades.

What Parents Can Do

Care for your children's mental health just as you do for their physical health. Let your children know that everyone

experiences pain, fear, sadness, worry, and anger and that these emotions are a normal part of life; motivate them to talk about their concerns and to express their emotions. Appreciate your children's talents and skills and also accept their limitations.

Think of "discipline" as a form of teaching, rather than as physical punishment; set clear expectations and be consistent and fair with consequences for misbehavior; make sure to acknowledge both positive and negative behaviors.

What Teachers Can Do

Aware of warning signals of mental illness in students and seek help from school mental health professionals; psychological testing may be necessary. Ventilate your students to discuss troubling events at school or in the community; abreact the students to verbally describe their emotions. Give information about mental health issues in children and know the characteristics of mental illness.

What Doctors Can Do

Be familiar with the most effective pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatment options. Learn more about specific mental health conditions and children ADHD-attention problems, Autism-developmental delay, Bipolar Disorder-depression and high energy, Conduct Disorder-behavioral problems, Depression-sadness, Grief-coping with loss, Suicide-thoughts of death/dying, Substance use-drinking and using drugs [1-7].

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