


Hidden in Plain Sight:
Anxiety & Depression
in (Pre)Teens

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Childproofing





Childproofing as a Concept

- Think about having an infant or toddler around, what were some of the ways that you would childproof your home?
- Why did we bother?
- **To protect children from themselves and keep them out of harm's way**

Childproofing our (Pre)Teens


- Protecting (pre)teens is not as easy or as obvious as protecting an infant or toddler
 - The dangers are less obvious and come from many directions
 - But the premise is the still the same
- **Our goal is to protect (pre)teens from themselves and keep them out of harm's way**

Childproofing in Action: Identifying Hidden Hurts

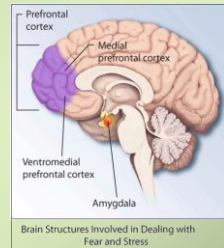
The Impacts of Trauma, Mental Illness & Substance Use Issues

- Issues with Trauma, Mental Illness & Substance Abuse may a/effect:
 - Thoughts
 - Feelings (emotional, physical, metaphysical)
 - Behaviors
 - Perceptions (of self, others & the world)
 - Beliefs (about self, others, & the world)
 - Moods
 - Relationships with others
 - Daily functioning
 - Physical functioning and health



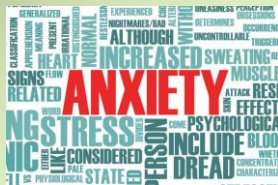
Effects of Trauma, Mental Illness & Substance Use

- Guilt, shame & self-blame
- Low self-esteem or self-worth
- Little or no confidence
- Sense of powerlessness & learned helplessness
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Feeling hopeless, like no one cares or understands



Areas of Focus for Today

Anxiety & Depression



Anxiety

Anxiety Disorders

- The 2nd most common type of mental health problems in adults and common among (pre)teens
- Often goes hand-in-hand with Depression

Warning Signs of Anxiety Disorders

- Changes in eating & sleeping patterns
- Appears on-edge or anxious
- May become easily confused or have difficulty paying attention
- Worries a lot (more than other people)
- Unreasonably fearful for their safety or of others
- Has difficulty concentrating and reports memory issues
- Is fearful of school or social situations
- Begins using drugs and alcohol to cope with feelings of being out of control or overwhelmed

Why is Anxiety on the Rise?



Increased **stressors** &
Decreased resources



Depression

Warning Signs & Symptoms of Depression

- Vague, non-specific physical complaints
- Frequent absence from school/work or poor school/work performance
- Talk or efforts to run away from home
- Behavioral outbursts: shouting, complaining, unexplained irritability, crying, arguments with peers, partners, parents
- Reckless behavior
- Difficulty with relationships
- Changes in concentration, attention, and memory for details

Warning Signs/Symptoms for Depression (cont.)

- Low self-esteem
- Being bored, low energy
- Lack of interest in socializing (playing) with friends, engaging in participating in hobbies
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Social isolation, poor communication with peers
- Thoughts of suicide or self-destructive behavior
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased anger, hostility, irritability
- Changes in sleep or appetite (especially indicative in youth – can be failure to make expected weight targets)

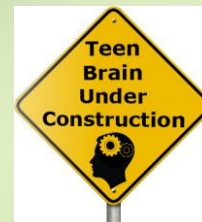
Risk Factors for the Development of Depression

- Familial history
- During childhood, boys and girls are equally as likely to develop depression, but in adolescence and adulthood, girls are 2-3x more likely to develop depression; and older adults are 3x times more susceptible to developing depression
- Stress associated with: frequent familial deployments and/or moves, divorce, work/school, or friendships
- Grief and loss associated with: death of a loved one, recent relationship breakup
- History of abuse, neglect, trauma (including natural disasters)
- Cigarette smoking
- Chronic illness, such as diabetes

Information that We Need to Know About Being a Young Person Today



Brain Development



(Pre)Teens Don't Know what they Don't Know

- The brain doesn't fully develop until our mid twenties (around age 25)
- The area that is last to develop is the **prefrontal cortex**
 - Limited or poor decision making, increased impulsivity and increased risk taking
 - Decreased abstraction and executive functioning, limited understanding of long-term cause-effect relationships
 - More limited ability to have insight and understand oneself, or even be aware that this limitation exists
- *And yet they sound so smart (or think they are)!*



How do youth learn about what they *think* they know?

The role of media/technology in the social development of youth

- Poor face-to-face communication
- Passive-Aggressiveness
- Egocentrism
- The illusion of intimacy
- Limits full expression of emotion and sharing
- We can find anything on the Internet: good, bad and inaccurate



"I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!"

- Quote from a U.S. Government Official
- Reproduced from *50 Communication Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises*, by Peter R. Garber. Amherst, MA, HRD Press, 2008.

Tips & Tools



Responsivity versus Reactivity

Reaction

- Invalidating
- Unconscious
- Impetuous/emotionally loaded
- Spontaneously blurted
- Perpetuates a monologue
- Problem driven
- Diffuse
- Defensive

Response

- Validating
- Conscious
- Rational/thoughtfully considered
- Intentionally delivered
- Opens a dialogue
- Solution focused
- Strategic
- Collaborative

Validation

- Youth need to feel like their side is being heard
- Acknowledge and support the teen's feelings or experiences (whether we agree with them or not) as **important to the teen**, internally valid and meaningful for them - recognize the value that they have for that teen
- Validating a teen's feelings does NOT mean tolerating inappropriate behavior

Sometimes we need someone
to simply be there...
Not to fix anything
or do anything
in particular,
but just to let
us feel we are
supported and cared about



Fb.com/MinionQuote

Validating Statements

- I can see that it really hurts you when/that...
- I really appreciate that you...
- I get that you really don't want to do...
- That's great that you are doing...
- I would be upset too if...
- I see you are making real progress with ...
- You are right, things have sucked for you in the past, so let's see if we can't figure out a way to make them suck less in the future.
- I know it didn't work out the way you wanted it to, but you tried, despite the challenges, and that counts for a lot in my book!

The Power of Face-to-Face Communication: *HUGS*



Addressing Conversation Escalation

Have you ever noticed that the people who tell you to calm down are the ones that pissed you off in the first place?



De-Escalation Techniques

- Body Language
 - Non-threatening
 - Announce what we are about to do
- Tone of Voice
 - Deeper tones of voice are more calming, with less fluctuation of tone
 - Less volume can also serve to get the person to listen better and calm down
- Rate of Speech
 - Slower is preferable
- Hand Gestures
 - Limit hand gestures because they can heighten anxiety in the individual



Self-Regulation as a Life Skill

- One of the greatest skills that we can teach (pre)teens is to self-regulate
 - Emotions/Feelings
 - Behaviors/Actions
 - Thoughts
- 5-4-3-2-1 Model (5 second rule)
 - For ourselves and our (pre)teens
- Stop, Consider, Reflect & Respond
- Consistency, Continuity & Compassion



Seek Help

- Remove shame and stigma
 - We would not think twice about suggesting that a (pre)teen see the eye doctor to get glasses or contacts if they were having trouble seeing
 - We wouldn't hesitate to encourage a (pre)teen to use their inhaler if they have asthma
 - We'd help our (pre)teens how to monitor their glucose if they had diabetes
- So why do we hesitate to access psychiatric or therapeutic help when our (pre)teens struggle with mental illness or substance abuse?

Provide Resources

- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) has chapters in every city and they are a *wonderful* resource
- Al-Anon is a great resource for family members and there are also Al-A-teen for siblings
- Most cities have AA/NA groups for adults as well as (pre)teens
- 2-1-1 is a great resource for information and referrals in your respective areas

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And Remember, it's a Process

This all TAKES TIME!
This all IS A LOT OF WORK!
This process is INCREMENTAL!
You need to BE KIND TO YOURSELF!

Thank you!

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To Schedule a FREE Assessment: 858.675.4228