



Respect

Communication

Children and Mental Health

- About 20% of American children suffer from a diagnosable mental illness which can interfere with their daily life.
- Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion or income and are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing.
- When treated appropriately and early, many children can fully recover from their mental illness or successfully manage their symptoms.
- Without treatment, emotional and mental disorders can continue into adulthood and lead to other struggles, including academic problems, poor relationships, alcohol or drug abuse, violent or self-destructive behavior, even suicide.
- Before a child is diagnosed with a mental health condition, parents and children commonly experience feelings of helplessness, anger and frustration.

Signs to look for

- Mood changes, feelings of sadness or withdrawal that last at least two weeks or that cause problems in relationships at home or school.
- Changes in sleeping habits or unexplained weight loss.
- Intense feelings, such as overwhelming fear for no reason or intense enough to interfere with daily activities, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing.
- Drastic changes in personality or dangerous or out-of-control behavior. Fighting frequently, using weapons and expressing a desire to hurt others.
- Difficulty concentrating or sitting still.
- Excessive complaints of physical symptoms. Compared with adults, children with a mental health issues may develop headaches and stomachaches rather than sadness or anxiety.
- Physical harm, such as self-injury, cutting or burning themselves. Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts.
- Substance abuse. Some kids use drugs or alcohol to try to cope with their feelings.

What should we do?

- Talk with your pediatrician and get a referral for a mental health specialist.
- Work with the school and connect with other families.

Don't avoid getting help for your child out of shame or fear. He or she needs you now more than ever. Sources: Mayo Clinic, Web MD, National Association of Mental Illnesses

Health

Trust

Honesty



**Giving you the building blocks
and tools to create a safe and
healthy home environment**

**Family
Values**