

Children's Mental Health

There has been more awareness for mental health in recent years than ever before. The amount of social media usage is on the rise and children are being effected by this. Mental health is important for the youth and children in today's society. Psychologists are becoming more involved in helping young children and providing services to better suit their needs. Mental health is crucial for young children and by showing support for them can help to improve their mental and physical health. Today's society has highlighted mental health as an important aspect of being a 'perfect' person, but it is more than that. Children's mental health is fragile in their younger years, and it is important to show support for them even when people think they might not need the support at such a young age.

Mental health has always been an important aspect in many people's lives. Mental health is considered to be "an essential part of children's overall health" (Children's). It is the basis of their overall success in school and society. Mental health affects how children think and feel on the inside where physical health affects how children feel and act on the outside. There is an "estimated 15 million of our nation's young people can currently be diagnosed with a mental health disorder" and more are at risk of developing problems due to genetics within their schools, families, and communities (Children's). Within those 15 million children, only about seven percent of them seek the appropriate help they need. Along with the appropriate services that provide help, psychology plays an important role in these young people's mental health.

The research behind psychology and mental health shows that there is a significant need for treatment and prevention options for youth (Children's). Psychology helps in different levels such an individual, peer related, family, school, community, and systemic by providing programs for each level. Within the individual level, psychology provides "therapy or counseling for those

with mental health disorders” (Children’s). Psychologists have also incorporated programs that bring families, schools, and communities to support children. Even with the help of professional psychologists, children’s behavior and mental health change during their youth.

Some children feel different emotions than their peers which can be described as sadness, anxiousness, aggressiveness, etc. and may find it difficult to pay attention in class, make friends, or sit still during group work time. Many mental health disorders begin during a person’s childhood including “anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, depression, and other mood disorders” (Children and Mental Health). Children lash out differently than adults. They may have temper tantrums, talk about fear or worrying, complain about stomachaches/headaches, cannot sit still quietly, sleep too much or too little, uninterested in playing with others, grades begin to decline, or acting out for attention (Children and Mental Health). Parents play an important role in their child’s mental health.

Some parents become concerned with their child’s mental health when they see significant changes in their child’s normal behaviors and actions. Parents “can start by talking with others who frequently interact with your [their] child” (Children and Mental Health). This could mean talking to their teachers or daycare staff to see if they have noticed these changes. Another source is to talk with a pediatrician about the behaviors of the child. Talking to your child’s pediatrician can provide further information about a child’s mental health or seek talking to a mental health professional as well (Children and Mental Health). Working with your child’s school can be beneficial for their academics and make accommodation if needed.

School systems and school psychologists help children with emotional or behavioral problems that may interfere with the child’s ability to learn adequately (Children and Mental Health). School systems offer resources to help children with mental health disabilities. As stated

by the National Institute of Mental Health, “A first step may be to ask the school whether accommodations such as an individualized education program may be appropriate for your child.” Adjusting where a child sits in the classroom can positively influence their learning and teachers in school or daycare settings should be meeting the needs for all students. Along with adjusting the classroom to fit student and teacher needs, there are factors modeled that can affect a child’s mental health.

Being in school can be stressful for some children and having the support needed for their mental health is highly affective. A study on factors associated with mental health shows “around 95% of the variance associated with this school effect was attributable to the quality of schools’ provision” which is in correlation to “personal development and well-being” of children within the schools used for this particular study (Humphrey). Students development in these schools also were improving due to the support for their mental health. Teachers and other school staff work with students who may need the extra support. A child spends much of their life in school and their “experience within school is crucial” for individual differences with self-regulation and social skills. Self-regulation and social skills “help to explain why children in similar environments may experience different levels of well-being” (Humphrey). Along with primary schools supporting children’s mental health, support from caregivers before children enter the school system is important.

Improving a child’s mental health starts before they enter school. Children learn at a young age “what motivates and inspires them” and “negative emotions play a valuable role in developmental processes and in life as a whole” (Oldehinkel). Children will experience many ups and downs before the age of five. Abnormality correlates with the “four D’s deviance, dysfunction, distress, and danger” (Oldehinkel). Dysfunction and deviance relate to a child’s

emotions and behaviors that may be uncommon in some societies. ADHD is commonly aligned with dysfunction and deviance and this diagnosis may be due to “fundamental beliefs about children’s nature, rights, and destinations” (Oldehinkel). A child who has a mental health disorder may suffer from it at a young age, but it can go unnoticed or seen as a delay in development based on societal norms.

The nation’s youth go through rapid changes and there has been an increase in “vulnerability to mental illness due to social and environmental circumstances” (Liebenberg). Resilience and sustainable development goals help children reach their full life and health potential. Mentors such as friends, family friends, role models, teachers, and other give children competence, self-efficacy, and motivation which also help support problem solving. Communities are “a core resource in supporting child and adolescent mental health” (Liebenberg). As a community, people can help the younger generation with mental health obstacles and reach their full potential.

Mental health has been a rising topic in today’s society and the awareness for children’s mental health has also increased. Schools, teachers, family, friends, and community members play an important role in a person’s life during their younger years. Professional psychologists help in the support of children’s mental health. Children who struggle with mental health or have a disability pertaining to mental health can find support within their homes and communities. ADHD is a common form of a mental health disorder in younger children, but with the proper help and support system it can be maintained.

Bibliography

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