

*Let Us Help You
Fit The Pieces together
about your
Child's Behaviour*

**Warning Signs Of
Mental Illness
In Children**



"Parents know in their heart of hearts something has changed in their child and it is not going away," Marilyn Benoit, WebMD.

Public Relations Unit

*Sandilands Rehabilitation
Centre*



INTRODUCTION

Teen years are very complicated for all persons who must supervise them, Parents, Teachers and Helpers.

Unlike yesterday, today's children are faced with more challenges, issues and stress which produce anxiety. These anxieties can stem from the child;

Wanting to do better in school

Wanting to be liked by everyone

Wanting to be accepted by the in crowd at school

Wanting to be perceived as perfect.

When these concerns produces feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, withdrawal and sadness, it is possible that mental health issues are emerging.

Marilyn B. Benoit, MD., in her article Recognizing Childhood Depression and Anxiety (WebMd) says, "A child who is unhappy about a friend who treated them badly, they normally will get over that in a couple of days. But parents know when something is sticking and not going away. Most kids bounce back from an adverse experience in just a few days. Depressed children are still sad after a couple of weeks."

Most adults investigate the physical cause of a problem initially. However once the physical cause is ruled out there is that reluctance to pursue psychological and psychiatric avenues.

In the article, Recognizing Signs of Mental Illness in Your Child", the author says

“In order to best handle these childhood disorders, it’s important for parents and caregivers to recognize potential signs of mental illness and to seek treatment for the child as soon as possible if the situation requires it.”

Taking this advise seriously, the Mental Health professionals at Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre has produced this booklet to assist caregiver and caretakers in identifying those signs that are indicators of mental health issues.

This booklet outlines the Warning Signs and Symptoms of mental illness for Children and Teenagers that will hopefully prevent the a child becoming disruptive in the family, school and the society.

Failure to address mental health issues can result in ;

- 1. Failure in School work,*
- 2. Involvement in criminal activity*
- 3. Dependence on social services, and ,*
- 4. Possibly suicide.*

Today’s Parents should form alliance with their child’s teachers and caregivers. Such alliance can confirm the formation of emotional and behavioural problems that should not be ignored. Early detection of these problems can help determine whether you need to seek help for your child.



THE CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS ARE COMPLICATED

Mental health disorders in children and adolescents are caused mostly by biology and environment.

- **Heredity (genetics):** Mental illness tends to run in families, which means the *likelihood* to develop a mental disorder may be passed on from parents to their children.
- **Biology:** Some mental disorders have been linked to special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters help nerve cells in the brain communicate with each other. If these chemicals are out of balance or not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to symptoms. In addition, defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain also have been linked to some mental illnesses.
- **Psychological trauma:** Some mental illnesses may be triggered by psychological trauma, such as severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse; an important early loss, such as the loss of a parent; and neglect.
- **Environmental stress:** Stressful or traumatic events can trigger a mental illness in a person with a vulnerability to a mental disorder.

Mental Illness in Children 1996-2010 MedicineNet, Inc.

Examples include:

- Exposure to environmental toxins, such as high levels of lead;
- Exposure to violence, such as witnessing or being the victim of physical or sexual abuse, drive-by shootings, muggings, or other disasters;
- Stress related to chronic poverty, discrimination, or other serious hardships; and
- The loss of important people through death, divorce, or broken relationships.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health
National Mental Health Information Centre:
Centre for mental health Services

Signs of Mental Illness in Children

Stacy Fileccia

Children may begin to show signs of mental illness due to various reasons: genetics, death of a loved one such as a parent or sibling, parents' divorce, etc. These conditions may slowly lead to the following symptoms of a mental health condition:

- The first sign that most children begin to show is a consistent decline in their performance at school. Low grades, lack of participation in various activities, and a general withdrawal from classmates, are all part of these [mental illness symptoms](#).
- Sometimes, children may experience separation anxiety, where they refuse to separate from their parents, refuse to go to school, or any other place without them.
- While social withdrawal (including from family) may be portrayed by some children, other children may be hyperactive and have a short attention span. They may easily get distracted, and may fail to hold their attention to a particular task or activity at hand.
- Throwing tantrums and showing aggression, are common signs of mental illness in children. Their aggression may go to the point of harming those around them, without any guilt (even if it is a parent).
- Due to their altered state of mind, children who suffer from mental illness tend to face extreme nightmares and sleep disturbances.
- Purposeful disobedience is another characteristic symptom of children who may have distressed mental health. No matter how much you ask them to behave, and even if you ground them, they may not show any signs of improvement.

Signs of Mental Illness in Teenagers

The factors that are a cause for different [types of mental illnesses](#) in younger children are also applicable to adolescents. Here, however, peer pressure and the general competitiveness in school may also be responsible for their altered behavior and mental health, which may be identified by means of the following sign

- A lot of teenagers take recourse to cigarettes, alcohol and drugs to deal with their altered state of mind.
- Teenagers often tend to suffer from prolonged depression, and social withdrawal is also a symptom that indicates they may have some kind of mental illness.
- Sometimes, this prolonged negative state of mind may even have them consider suicide as a way out of their problems.
- Their anger and aggression may be released in the form of adopting practices that are considered anti-social or bad in society, such as vandalism, a blatant refusal to abide by the law, theft and robbery, and a lack of attendance at school (though they may leave the house on the pretext of going to school).
- They try to avoid dealing with problems, even the most minor ones, and trying to cope with these problems causes them a lot of stress.
- Teenagers with signs of mental illness may have either a large appetite as they seek the comfort of food when stressed, or may have an extremely poor appetite due to the fear of gaining weight. This also manifests into other disorders such as [anorexia nervosa](#) and [bulimia nervosa](#). Their sleeping patterns are also affected by these symptoms.
- They may tend to complain of physical conditions more often than not.
- Extreme rage is a sign of mental illness even in teenagers.

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Warning Signs of Teen Mental Health Problems

Mental Health problems are real, painful and can be sever. They can lead to school failure, loss of friends, or family conflict. Some of the signs that may point to a possible problem are listed below. If you are a Parent or other care-giver of a teenager, pay attention if your teen:

Is troubled by feeling:

- very angry much of time, cries a lot, or overreacts to things;
- worthless or guilty a lot;
- anxious or worried a lot more than other young people;
- grief for a long time after a loss or death;
- extremely fearful-has unexplained fears or more fears than most kids;

- constantly concerned about physical problems or appearance;
- frightened that his or her mind is controlled or is out of control.

Experiences big changes, for example:

- does much worse in school;
- loses interest in things usually enjoyed;
- has unexplained changes in eating or sleeping habits;
- avoids friends or family and wants to be alone all of the time;
- daydreams too much and can't get things done;
- feels life is too hard to handle or talks about suicide;
- hears voices that cannot be explained.

Is limited by:

- poor concentration; can't make decisions;
- inability to sit still or focus attention;
- worry about being harmed, hurting others, or about doing something "bad"; the need to wash, clean things, or perform certain routines dozens of times a day;
- thoughts that race almost too fast to follow;
- persistent nightmares.

Behaves in ways that cause problems, for example:

- uses alcohol or other drugs;
- eats large amounts of food and then forces vomiting, abuses laxatives, or takes enemas to avoid weight-gain;
- continues to diet or exercise obsessively although bone-thin;
- often hurts other people, destroys property, or breaks the law;
- does things that can be life threatening.

To find help, discuss your concerns with your teen's teacher, school counselor or others such as a family doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, religious counselor or nurse.

Cummin Behavioural Health Systems, Inc

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL ILLNESS?

Written by American Psychiatric Association

Having only one or two of the problems listed below is not necessarily cause for alarm. They may simply indicate that a practical solution is called for, such as more consistent discipline or a visit with the child's teachers or guidance counselor to see whether there is anything out of the ordinary going on at school. A combination of symptoms, however, is a signal for professional intervention.

- The child seems overwhelmed and troubled by his or her feelings, unable to cope with them.
- The child cries a lot.
- The child frequently asks or hints for help
- The child seems constantly preoccupied, worried, anxious, and intense. Some children develop a fear of a variety of things--rain, barking dogs, burglars, their parents' getting killed when out of sight, and so on--while other children simply wear their anxiety on their faces.
- The child has fears or phobias that are unreasonable or interfere with normal activities.
- The child can't seem to concentrate on schoolwork and other age-appropriate tasks.
- The child's school performance declines and doesn't pick up again.
- The child's teachers, school administrators, or other authority figures in the child's life ask the parent what might be troubling the child.
- The child is having difficulty mastering school work.
- Teachers suggest that the child may have a learning disability or other type of school-related problem.
- The child loses interest in playing.
- The child tries to stimulate himself or herself in various ways. Examples of this kind of behavior include excessive thumb sucking or hair pulling, rocking of the body, head banging to the point of hurting himself, and masturbating often or in public.

- The child has no friends and gets into fights with other youngsters. Teachers or others may report that "this is a very angry or disruptive kid."
- The child isolates himself or herself from other people.
- The child regularly talks about death and dying.
- The child appears to have low self-esteem and little self-confidence. Over and over the child may make such comments as: "I can't do anything right." "I'm so stupid." "I don't see why anyone would love me." "I know you [or someone else] hates me." "Nobody likes me." "I'm ugly. . . too big. . . too small. . . too fat. . . too skinny. . . too tall. . . too short, etc."
- Sleep difficulties don't appear to be resolving. They include refusing to be separated from one or both parents at bedtime, inability to sleep, sleeping too much, sleeping on the parent's or parents' bed, nightmares, and night terrors.
- The child begins to act in a provocatively sexual manner. This is more common in girls as they approach puberty and thereafter, but even much younger girls may flirt with men in sexually suggestive ways.
- The child sets fires.

Supporting Children's Mental Health: Tips for Parents and Educators

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Helping Children achieve their best. In School. At Home. In Life

Create a sense of belonging. Feeling connected and welcomed is essential to children's positive adjustment, self-identification, and sense of trust in others and themselves. Building strong, positive relationships among students, school staff, and parents is important to promoting mental wellness.

Promote resilience. Adversity is a natural part of life and being resilient is important to overcoming challenges and good mental health. Connectedness, competency, helping others, and successfully facing difficult situations can foster resilience.

Develop competencies. Children need to know that they can overcome challenges and accomplish goals through their actions. Achieving academic success and developing individual talents and interests helps children feel competent and more able to deal with stress positively. Social competency is also important. Having friends and staying connected to friends and loved ones can enhance mental wellness.

Ensure a positive, safe school environment. Feeling safe is critical to students' learning and mental health. Promote positive behaviors such as respect, responsibility, and kindness. Prevent negative behaviors such as bullying and harassment. Provide easily understood rules of conduct and fair discipline practices and ensure an adult presence in common areas, such as hallways, cafeterias, locker rooms, and playgrounds. Teach children to work together to stand up to a bully, encourage them to reach out to lonely or excluded peers, celebrate acts of kindness, and reinforce the availability of adult support.

Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision making. Provide consistent expectations and support. Teaching children social skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution supports good mental health. "Catch" them being successful. Positive feedback validates and reinforces behaviors or accomplishments that are valued by others.

Encourage helping others. Children need to know that they can make a difference. Pro-social behaviors build self-esteem, foster connectedness, reinforce personal responsibility, and present opportunities for positive recognition. Helping others and getting involved in reinforces being part of the community.

Encourage good physical health. Good physical health supports good mental health. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.

Educate staff, parents and students on symptoms of and help for mental health problems. Information helps break down the stigma surrounding mental health and enables adults and students recognize when to seek help. School mental health professionals can provide useful information on symptoms of problems like depression or suicide risk. These can include a change in habits, withdrawal, decreased social and academic functioning, erratic or changed behavior, and increased physical complaints.

Ensure access to school-based mental health supports. School psychologists, counselors, and social workers can provide a continuum of mental health services for students ranging from universal mental wellness promotion and behavior supports to staff and parent training, identification and assessment, early interventions, individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and referral for community services.

Provide a continuum of mental health services. School mental health services are part of a continuum of mental health care for children and youth. Build relationships with community mental health resources. Be able to provide names and numbers to parents.

Establish a crisis response team. Being prepared to respond to a crisis is important to safeguarding students' physical and mental well-being. School crisis teams should include relevant administrators, security personnel and mental health professionals who collaborate with community resources. In addition to safety, the team provides mental health prevention, intervention, and postvention services.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Treatment of Children with Mental Disorders: A Note to Parents

1992-2010 Psych Central.

Q: What should I do if I am concerned about mental, behavioral, or emotional symptoms in my young child?

A: Talk to your child's doctor. Ask questions and find out everything you can about the behavior or symptoms that worry you. Every child is different and even normal development varies from child to child. Sensory processing, language, and motor skills are developing during early childhood, as well as the ability to relate to parents and to socialize with caregivers and other children. If your child is in daycare or preschool, ask the caretaker or teacher if your child has been showing any worrisome changes in behavior, and discuss this with your child's doctor.

Q: How do I know if my child's problems are serious?

A: Many everyday stresses cause changes in behavior. The birth of a sibling may cause a child to temporarily act much younger. It is important to recognize such behavior changes, but also to differentiate them from signs of more serious problems. Problems deserve attention when they are severe, persistent, and impact on daily activities. Seek help for your child if you observe problems such as changes in appetite or sleep, social withdrawal, or fearfulness; behavior that seems to slip back to an earlier phase such as bed-wetting; signs of distress such as sadness or tearfulness; self-destructive behavior such as head banging; or a tendency to have frequent injuries. In addition, it is essential to review the development of your child, any important medical problem he/she might have had, family history of mental disorders, as well as physical and psychological traumas or situations that may cause stress.

Q: Whom should I consult to help my child?

A: First, consult your child's doctor. Ask for a complete health examination of your child. Describe the behaviors that worry you. Ask whether your child needs further evaluation by a specialist in child behavioral problems. Such specialists may include psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and behavioral therapists. Educators may also be needed to help your child.

Q: How are mental disorders diagnosed in young children?

A: Similar to adults, disorders are diagnosed by observing signs and symptoms. A skilled professional will consider these signs and symptoms in the context of the child's developmental level, social and physical environment, and reports from parents and other caretakers or teachers, and an assessment will be made according to criteria established by experts. Very young children often cannot express their thoughts and feelings, which makes diagnosis a challenging task. The signs of a mental disorder in a young child may be quite different from those of an older child or an adult.

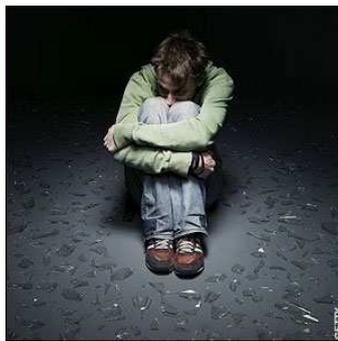
Q: Won't my child get better with time?

A: Sometimes yes, but in other cases children need professional help. Problems that are severe, persistent, and impact on daily activities should be brought to the attention of the child's doctor. Great care should be taken to help a child who is suffering, because mental, behavioral, or emotional disorders can affect the way the child grows up.

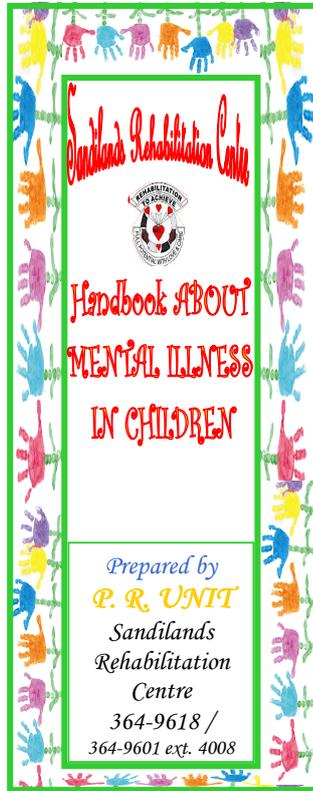


SIGNS OF POSSIBLE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

- ♥ *Decline in school performance ,*
- ♥ *Poor grades despite strong efforts ,*
- ♥ *Regular worry or anxiety,*
- ♥ *Repeated refusal to go to school or take part in normal children's activities,*
- ♥ *Hyperactivity or fidgeting,*
- ♥ *Persistent nightmares,*
- ♥ *Persistent disobedience or aggression,*
- ♥ *Frequent temper tantrums ,*
- ♥ *Depression,*
- ♥ *Sadness or*
- ♥ *Irritability.*



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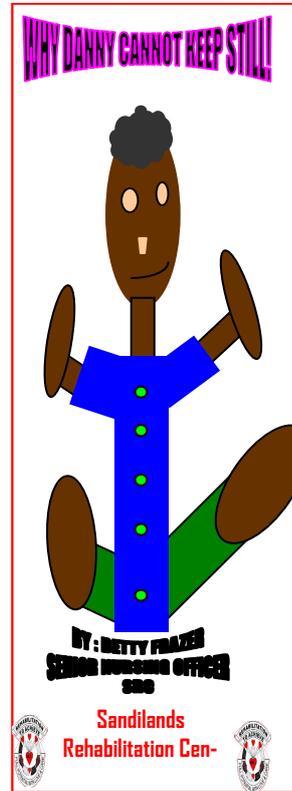


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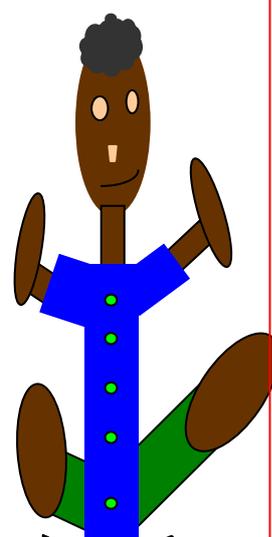


Handbook ABOUT
MENTAL ILLNESS
IN CHILDREN

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WHY DANNY CANNOT KEEP STILL!



BY: BETTY FRAZER
SENIOR NURSING OFFICER
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**Sandilands
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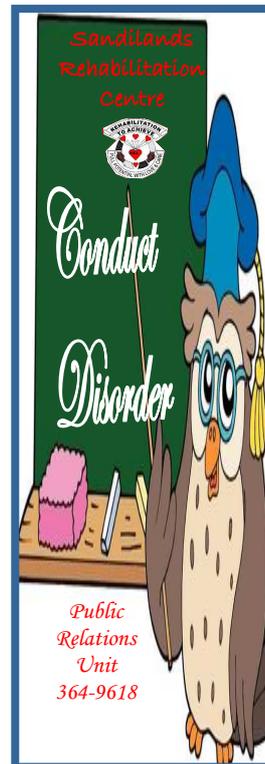
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Teachers' Handbook
about
MENTAL
ILLNESS



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Conduct
Disorder



Public
Relations
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364-9618

Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre

LOGO



VISION

“To be a Caribbean model for Geriatrics, Psychiatric and Rehabilitative Health Care”

MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide comprehensive geriatric, psychiatric and rehabilitative health care through in-patient and day care facilities with the ultimate aim of assisting patients to attain and maintain their optimum level of functioning and become productive citizens”.

GERIATRIC HOSPITAL

MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide comprehensive health care that will contribute to the total well being of the elderly preserving complete geriatricity for as long as possible and allowing a dignified demise”.