

# Children and Mental Health



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# Manifestations of Mental Health Issues:

- ▶ Problems in behavioral and/or emotional regulation are most frequently observed.
- ▶ Escalating behaviors that violated the rights of others or bring the child into significant conflict with familial, educational, societal or authoritative figures.





# The Pandemic:

- ▶ Lockdowns
- ▶ Masks
- ▶ Social Distancing
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Joblessness
- ▶ Loss of Business
- ▶ School Closings
- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Online learning

COVID-19



# Stress:

- ▶ Not all children react to stress in the same way
- ▶ Childhood stress can be present in any setting that requires the child to adapt to change
- ▶ The changes can be both positive and negative
- ▶ Children often learn how to deal with stress, in part, by what they see and feel in their environment



# Distress Symptoms:

- ▶ **Infants - may become cranky and want to be held**
- ▶ **3-6 year old preschool and kindergarten may return to previously mastered behavior in speech and toileting**
- ▶ **7-10 year-olds may become withdrawn or overactive. Problems with concentration may present academic concerns**
- ▶ **Preteen - Teenager may respond by acting out, curfew infractions, substance abuse, reckless behaviors. Some may become frightened of leaving the home. They may feel fearful or facial disaster or illness**
- ▶ **95% of college students say their mental health has declined**



# Distress Symptoms:

- ▶ **Special Needs Children– May experience more intense distress worry, or anger, because they have less control over day-to-day wellbeing**
- ▶ **Nausea**
- ▶ **Cutting**





# Common Causes of Stress Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- ▶ **Negative thoughts about themselves**
- ▶ **Changes in familial make-up, school, or housing**
- ▶ **Juggling familial, social, and academic expectations**
- ▶ **Peer pressure**
- ▶ **Body Changes**





## Common Indicators Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- ▶ Trembling
- ▶ Rapid heartbeat
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Extensive worrying and overthinking
- ▶ Extreme embarrassment
- ▶ Full blown panic attacks





# Common Indicators Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- ▶ Unexplained pain
- ▶ New or recurring fears
- ▶ Inability to stay on task
- ▶ Destruction of property
- ▶ Anger outbursts





## Common Indicators Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- ▶ Increased alcohol and cannabis use
- ▶ Survey from 2020 revealed:
  - ▶ 38% were feeling tired
  - ▶ 36% sleep disturbances
  - ▶ In December, 42% reported symptoms of anxiety or depression that month, an increase from 11% the year before
  - ▶ An MNT study found that cases of depression has tripled.



# Stats:



- ▶ CDC study showed that one in four 18 - 24 year-olds said that they've thought about self harm during the pandemic
- ▶ More than 50% reported at least one negative mental health symptom
- ▶ Children and adolescents are the largest population of internet porn viewers
- ▶ Sexting, sharing illicit pictures and videos and cyberbullying may become methods of manipulation



# Stats:

- ▶ Studies show that 93% of boys and 62% of girls have seen or had contact with pornography by the time they are 18
- ▶ The average age for pornographic trafficking is between 12 and 14 years
- ▶ The world has changed forever. Easy access to information has presented a problem that can be harmful to children. Children often do not make safe decisions and frequently become victims, either by mistake or because their brains are not capable of evaluating the consequences
- ▶ This fact makes it easy for children to become targets of sexual victimization.



# How The Pandemic Has Affected Our Children in School:

- ▶ Diagnosis of depression and anxiety increase with age while behavior problems are most often seen among children 6 - 11
- ▶ Manifestations
  - ▶ Tired
  - ▶ Withdrawal from friends and usual activities
  - ▶ Irritability
  - ▶ Aggressiveness
  - ▶ Sadness





# How The Pandemic Has Affected Our Children in School:

- ▶ Children don't have physical (facial and bodily) cues from their teachers and peers
- ▶ Loss of social interaction time
- ▶ Manifestations
  - ▶ Quiet
  - ▶ Anxiety
  - ▶ Depression
  - ▶ Stuttering and other language development issues
  - ▶ ADHD indicators



# How The Pandemic Has Affected Our Children in School:

- ▶ Clingy
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ School avoidance
- ▶ Worry about family members
- ▶ Eating changes
- ▶ Increase in conflicts

STAY HOME



# How the Pandemic Has Affected Our Children in School:

- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ More screen time and social media use
- ▶ Decline in physical activity
- ▶ Less school referrals - less day-to-day contact with educators and other adults, signs of abuse or neglect are more likely to go unnoticed



# How To Assist Children Cope With The Stresses and Resume a Normal Life:

## ▶ Do activities together...

- ▶ Talk
- ▶ Art project
- ▶ Cook, bake
- ▶ Walk
- ▶ Go to the beach

- Do Activities together
- Park
- Photo albums
- Music
- Pray
- Games ( go beyond a ready-made game - invent and make a game<sup>17</sup>)





# How To Assist Children Cope With The Stresses and Resume a Normal Life:

- ▶ Do activities together
- ▶ Discuss self-regulation
- ▶ Provide structure
- ▶ Praise on-task behavior
- ▶ Break tasks into small steps





# How To Assist Children Cope With The Stresses and Resume a Normal Life:

- ▶ Offer opportunities for creative thought - stories, plays, writing assignments - magazine pictures are great starters for creative writing
- ▶ Cut out cartoons and have the child lay them out in the correct sequence
- ▶ Problem solving opportunities: create, invent, discover, imagine if, predict
- ▶ Bridge lessons into real life
- ▶ Read, Read, and Read some more!



# How To Assist Children Cope With The Stresses and Resume a Normal Life:

- ▶ **Maintain family routines/consistency**
- ▶ **Monitor screen time (TV and Computer)**
- ▶ **Inform children of anticipated familial changes**
- ▶ **Be an active listener**
- ▶ **Recognize distress signs**
- ▶ **Be the example of reason and stability**
- ▶ **Seek help from healthcare, counselors, and school personnel when flags go up**



# College Students Are Struggling Also:

- ▶ Anxiety and depression are on the rise according to a new BestColleges.com survey, 95% have experienced negative mental health symptoms due to the pandemic
- ▶ According to a Boston University study of 33,000 undergraduate students, 83% said that worsened mental health had negatively affected their academics
- ▶ Isolation and online learning worsen the college student mental health crisis. . A study done at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that the mental health crisis among college students is associated with distanced learning and social isolation more than any other stressor, including fears over Covid-19.



## College Students Are Struggling Also:

- ▶ Working out less and eating worse produce negative feedback for stressed students
- ▶ Trouble concentrating, managing their time, and keeping up the momentum to graduate
- ▶ Professors, administrators, school mental health practitioners may not be on campus and as readily available
- ▶ College mental health and counseling centers may not be ready for the influx of needy students. Long wait times and understaffing may be issues



# There Are Some Positives:

- ▶ Renewed appreciation of their family - perhaps more Facetime with relatives
- ▶ Slowed down their hectic lives
- ▶ Became more reflective about values



# LCWA Website:

▶ [www.lcwadvocacy.org](http://www.lcwadvocacy.org)