Mental Health 101 for Non-Mental Health Providers
Understanding Mental Health Issues in Children

Serious emotional disturbances

- Mental health issues are serious if they cause a major change in your child’s functioning at home, in school, or in the community.
- Serious emotional disturbances affect one in every ten young people.
- These disorders include depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, and eating disorders.
Is this Normal Behavior for a Child/Adolescent?

- Fighting with siblings/friends
- Doing things to get on your parent’s nerves, on purpose
- Having no friends
- Lying
- Being afraid all of the time
- Playing with fire
- Not paying attention in school
- Being in a bad mood most of the time
- Questioning whether you want to be a boy or a girl
- Using drugs and alcohol

- Thinking about sex all of the time
- Having sex with lots of partners
- Thoughts of hurting/killing yourself or others
- Cutting
- Staying away from friends and family members
- Change in grades, not bathing, changes in sleep or eating habits
- Getting into trouble with the police
- Complaining of body aches (i.e., stomachaches, headaches, and backaches)
"At your age, Tommy, a boy's body goes through changes that are not always easy to understand."
Overview of Children’s Mental Health Needs

- About 20% to 38% of youth in the US have a mental health issue
- About 9% to 13% of youth have a serious mental health issue that causes a change in their daily functioning
- About 1/6 to 1/3 of youth with a mental health issue receives counseling or medications
What is the DSM-5?

• A reference guide about mental health issues
• Published by the American Psychiatric Association in 2013
• For each mental health issue specific criteria has to be met
Diagnostic Categories

- Internalizing Disorders
  - Mood Disorders
  - Anxiety Disorders
  - Adjustment Disorders
Types of Mood Disorders

- Major Depression
- Dysthymic Disorder
- Cyclothymic Disorder
- Depressive Disorder NOS
- Mood Disorder NOS
- Bipolar Disorder
Depression

- Depression is not a passing mood
- Depression in children can be caused by any number of events:
  - Physical health problems
  - Life events
  - Family history
  - Environment
  - Genetics
  - Changes in the brain
  - Being abused
Symptoms of Depression

Negative thinking – “I can’t, I won’t”
Wanting to be left alone
Being irritable all the time
Not doing well in school (not just grades)
Lack of interest in friend’s activities
Muscle aches or lack of energy
Feeling helpless a lot of the time
Lacking confidence regarding:
  How smart they are
  Their friendships
  Their future
  Their body
Getting into trouble because of boredom
How often do children get depressed?

- About 2% of school-age children may be depressed at any one time
- Increases to 4% at puberty
- Teenage girls have a higher rate of depression than boys
- About 20% of children and teenagers will have 1 or more episodes of Major Depression before age 18
Tips for dealing with Major Depression*

- Learn how to deal with stress
- Learn how to solve problems
- Learn how to give-and-take with others
- Learn how what you think, feel, and do act together
- Identify and change any negative self-talk
- Avoid All-or-Nothing or Black-or-White thinking
- Get regular exercise and participate in outdoor activities
- Talk about any grief/loss issues with your therapist
- If you are thinking of hurting yourself, talk to your therapist.
- Develop a personal safety plan with your therapist
- Talk to your doctor and take all prescribed medications as instructed
- Go to sleep on time every night

*Compiled by Cenpatico from multiple sources; citations available upon request. Updated 08/06/2009
What are Anxiety Disorders?

- Mental health issues that cause children to feel:
  - Upset
  - Scared
  - Uneasy when most children would be OK

- Anxiety in children can lead to your child:
  - Not attending school
  - Not liking themselves
  - Problems with getting along with their friends
  - Using alcohol and drugs
  - Not being able to deal with new things
Common Anxiety Disorders

- Panic Disorder
  - Panic Attacks – occur when your child suddenly starts to feel afraid, without warning
    - Physical symptoms:
      - Chest pain
      - Being unable to catch your breath
      - Feeling dizzy
      - Fear of dying

- Obsessive-compulsive Disorder (OCD)
  - OCD – having thoughts that occur over and over again that your child is unable to control
Common Anxiety Disorders

• Phobias
  o A phobia is a fear of something that poses little or no danger to you. This fear causes your child to avoid objects or places. It can also cause over-the-top feelings of fear or dread.

• Generalized Anxiety Disorder
  o Your child worries all of the time about things going on in their life. This usually lasts for six months or longer.
  o Common symptoms include:
    ✓ Headaches
    ✓ Feeling sick to their stomach
    ✓ Feeling tired
    ✓ Muscle aches
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

- Symptoms
  - Flashbacks
  - Lacking any feelings
  - Depression
  - Feeling angry
  - Being irritable
  - Being easily startled or “on edge”
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

What causes PTSD?

- Living through or seeing something that is upsetting and dangerous can cause PTSD
- Being a victim of abuse or violent crime
- The death or serious illness of a loved one
- War
- Being in an accident (Car, plane crash)
- Acts of God (Hurricanes, tornados)
What works best for treating PTSD?

- Check out other mental health issues that are similar to find out if it is a better fit.
- Find out what tends to stress out your child.
- Lower feelings of guilt, shame, or anger about the PTSD symptoms.
- Your child must take all medications as prescribed by your doctor. Report any problems to your doctor immediately.
- Learn coping skills.
- Learn how to control your anger.
- Increase social skills.
- Learn what you can do to prevent PTSD symptoms from getting worse.
Externalizing Disorders
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Impulse-control disorders
What is AD/HD?

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) is one of the most common childhood disorders
- It affects between 5-8 percent of school-age children
- Boys have a higher rate of diagnosis than girls
AD/HD Types and Symptoms

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
  - 3 Types of ADHD and some common characteristics
    - Inattentive
      - fail to pay attention or make careless
      - do not seem to listen
      - do not follow through
      - have difficulty organizing
      - easily distracted and forgetful
    - Hyperactive/Impulsivity
      - fidget with their hands or feet or squirm in their seat
      - restlessness
      - “on the go” all the time
      - talk excessively
      - blurt out answers before questions have been completed
      - Has a difficult time waiting their turn
      - interrupt others
How does a child get an AD/HD diagnosis?

- Have at least 6 of the symptoms from either list, evident for at least six months and before the age of 7
- Problems in at least 2 areas: home, school or community/work
- Your child must not be able to do well with others, in school, or in the community.
How do children with AD/HD get better?

- **Medication**
  - The most common types are called stimulants. These medications your child stay focused, to learn, and stay calm.

- **Therapy**
  - Behavioral therapy can help teach your child to control themselves so they can do better at school and at home.

- **Medication and therapy combined**
  - Many children do well with both medication and therapy.
What works best in treating AD/HD?*

- Participate in Parent Management Training
- Learn more about the symptoms of ADHD
- Parents need to keep track of the child’s homework assignments and chores
- Check out other mental health issues to find out if it is a better fit
- See if the parent’s diagnosis of ADHD is causing problems during family therapy
- Take stimulant medications as prescribed by the doctor. If you are experiencing any problems, talk to your doctor
- Teach your child how to study better
- Learn problem-solving skills
- Teach your child how to take responsibility for their own behavior
- Identify outlets for energy (i.e., PE classes, arts/crafts, extramural sports)

*Compiled by Cenpatico from multiple sources; citations available upon request. Updated 08/06/2009
What Doesn’t Work for AD/HD?

- Treatments that rarely work include:
  - Leaving foods out of your diet (i.e., sugar, dairy, wheat)
  - Vitamins or other health food remedies
  - “Talk therapy”
  - Going to the chiropractor
  - Therapy that focuses on sensory integration
Oppositional Defiant Disorder
Oppositional Defiant Disorder

ODD is a pattern of negative, hostile and defiant acts that lasts more than 6 months. Your child must have at least 4 or more of the following symptoms:

- Loses temper easily
- Argues with adults
- Refuses to obey rules
- Often annoys people on purpose
- Blames others for his/her mistakes
- Often touchy or easily annoyed with others
- Often angry and resentful
- Often spiteful
What causes ODD?

There is no clear cause for ODD. Some things that increase the chance of having ODD are:

- Your child’s personality
- Your own response to your child’s personality
- The child’s genes combining with their home environment
- Parents not taking charge of children, poor child care, or family problems
- Changes in the brain
- Your child’s idea that she is not getting enough of her parent’s time and attention
How do children with ODD improve?

- **Medication**
  - Medications are most helpful after your child, the family, and the therapist learn how to work together.
  - Stimulants, or medications used to treat ADHD, can helpful in lowering ODD if your child also has ADHD.
  - Antipsychotics, or medications used to treat psychotic disorders, are also frequently prescribed for ODD.

- **Therapy**
  - Your therapist can help you learn how to be a better parent. For example, you can learn how to:
    - Give timeouts to your child
    - Avoid fighting with your child
    - Remain calm when your child starts to act out
    - Focus on what your child does well
    - Offer choices to your child
Tips for dealing with ODD

- Talk to your child’s doctor to see if they think the child may have ODD
- Check out other mental health concerns to find out if they are a better fit
- Conduct Parent Management Training
- Learn about the symptoms of ODD
- Ask for home visits from your child’s therapist and case worker
- Learn ways to deal with anger
- Learn social skills
- Participation in Head Start for toddlers
- Use tutoring services in school
- Teenagers should start looking for after-school jobs
- Work with teachers to make sure your child is completing their homework
- Find out if your school has anti-bullying programs or peer support groups
- Observe your child’s behavior to learn what causes them to act out
What doesn’t work for ODD?

- Treatments that are usually not effective for ODD include:
  - Boot camps
  - Sending your teenager to a juvenile detention center for a short period of time in order to “shock” them
  - Exposing your child to scary events/places
    - Riding along with police officers in high crime areas
    - Examining a dead body (i.e., autopsy)
    - Attending a funeral
Helpful Resources

- **NYU Child Study Center – A to Z Disorder Guide.** This guide provides overviews of a number of children’s mental health disorders as well as related articles. In addition, we point you in the direction of a number of organizations and websites where you can find in-depth information on each topic. [http://www.aboutourkids.org/families/disorders_treatments/az_disorder_guide](http://www.aboutourkids.org/families/disorders_treatments/az_disorder_guide)

- **CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)** is the nation’s leading non-profit organization serving individuals with AD/HD and their families. CHADD has over 16,000 members in 200 local chapters throughout the U.S. Chapters offer support for individuals, parents, teachers, professionals, and others. [http://www.chadd.org/](http://www.chadd.org/)

- **The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)** is the official division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with emotional or behavioral disorders. [www.ccbd.net/index.cfm](http://www.ccbd.net/index.cfm)
Helpful Resources

• The Federation of Families is dedicated to providing education, resources and information to children with mental health needs and their families. www.ffcmh.org

• NAMI is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults living with mental illness and their families. Founded in 1979, NAMI has become the nation’s voice on mental illness, a national organization including NAMI organizations in every state and in over 1100 local communities across the country who join together to meet the NAMI mission through advocacy, research, support, and education. http://www.nami.org/

• The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Center works toward raising the standard of care and improve access of services to traumatized children, their families and communities throughout the United States. They provide valuable resources for parents, caregivers, educators and professionals on child traumatic stress. http://www.nctsn.org/
Helpful Resources

- National Mental Health Association (NMHA) is an advocacy, education and support organization working to address the needs of people with mental health related needs and mental illness.  
  [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

- Parent to Parent is a national non-profit organization committed to assuring access and quality in Parent to Parent support across the country. Parent to Parent programs provide emotional and informational support to families of children who have special needs most notable by matching parents seeking support with an experiences, trained "Supporting Parent."  

- Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is the nation's oldest membership-based child welfare organization committed to engaging people everywhere in promoting the well-being of children, youth, and their families, and protecting every child from harm.  
  [www.cwla.org/default.htm](http://www.cwla.org/default.htm)