

How to Support Parents of Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Issues

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Objectives

- List 3 common concerns parents have regarding parenting children with a mental illness.
- Define mental health as compared to mental illness in children.
- Discuss the types of support parents need when parenting a child that has a mental illness.

The stigma of raising a mentally ill child



Why this topic?

- My interest in providing this lecture came from my own experiences over more than 20 years as a clinical social worker, nurse and nurse practitioner working with parents, guardians, grandparents and relatives who are parenting children with behavioral and mental health disorders, whether mild, moderate, severe, acute and chronic issues...

Why am I talking to you?

- Raise awareness
- Provide resources
- Open for discussion
- Encourage understanding of mental health providers of the needs of parents
- If parents have more support, child will do better

In preparing for this lecture

- I scoured the literature for information about supporting parents of children with mental health problems
- Found no articles/research on SUPPORTING parents
- Found many articles on parenting children with developmental/cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities
- Found articles pertaining to the mental illness of the parent and how it impacts the future of the child.
- Also found articles about the dysfunctional patterns of families with children with mental health problems...
- Not strengths based...

Parenting child with mental health needs is a lifelong adventure...



Definition:

Parents

- Biological
- Single
- Step parent
- Grandparent
- Foster parent
- Guardian-Other relative or friend

Definition:

Children- <18



2 -17yrs

Definition: Mental Health in childhood

- “achievement of developmental and emotional milestones, healthy social development, and effective coping skills, such that mentally healthy children have a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities.”

Definition:

Mental disorders in children

- “Serious deviations from expected cognitive, social, and emotional development”.. CDC (2013)
- Conditions meeting criteria described by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, (DSM-V)* or the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)*



“Suffering in silence. I'll never forget the first time I had to admit my daughter to a behavioral health hospital.”

Epidemiology

- 13-20% of children in U.S. experience a mental disorder in a given year and 40% have more than one type of disorder.
 - Suicide- 2nd leading cause of death among children 12-17 years in 2010CDC.
 - Mental disorders among children is important public health issue
 - Prevalence
 - Early onset
 - Impact on the child, family, and community.
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- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2009); Merikangas (2010).
 - Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Atlanta, GA; 2011. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

TABLE 2. Prevalence estimates of childhood mental disorders for which data are not routinely collected

Anxiety disorders

Agoraphobia	2.4 %
Generalized anxiety disorder	0.3-2.2%
Obsessive-compulsive disorder	1.0–2.3%
Panic disorder	0.4-2.3%
Posttraumatic stress disorder	5.0%
Separation anxiety	7.6%
Social phobia	9.1%
Specific phobia	19.3%
Bipolar I or II disorder	2.9%
Childhood onset schizophrenia	0.014%
Eating disorder	0.1%

I noticed....

- Similar problems or questions that parents asked regarding their child's diagnosis
- Similar processes of understanding and acceptance regarding child's diagnosis



Common Concerns and Problems Voiced by Parents

- Child has meltdowns in public
- Fear of CPS referrals
- Well meaning relatives
- Kicked off Medicaid roll and can't get meds

Common Concerns and Problems Voiced by Parents

- Meds running out
- Insurance won't pay for med prescribed by psychiatrist/np
- School not following IEP
- School not treating child fairly

Common Concerns and Problems Voiced by Parents

- No respite care
- Can't get therapist or psychiatrist
- Can't get pediatrician to follow their child as "too complicated"
- Co-occurring medical problems

Common Concerns and Problems Voiced by Parents

- More than one child with mental health problem in the family
- Parent with mental health problem in the family
- Limited finances

Whether child has been diagnosed with ADHD- Bipolar-psychotic...

- ALL parents worry about
 - Stigma for their child
 - Risks of Medication
 - Dependency of medication
 - Long term consequences of medication
 - Desire for ongoing information
 - Need for ONGOING availability of med provider regarding
 - Problem solving
 - Efficacy
 - Possible SE of Medication

Family Burden

- Objective Burden
 - financial costs, housing, logistic negotiations in managing child
- Subjective- psychological pain, embarrassment, mental anguish

Supporting parents :

Type of support depends on...

- Age of child
- Age of parents
- Individual needs of parents
- Siblings with or without mental illness
- What diagnosis the child has been given
- How long the child has had the diagnoses
- The positive and negative experiences of parents and children thus far in the system of care
- Child and parent understanding of their diagnosis.. ADHD, Anxiety, Mood Disorder, Psychosis, ODD, Conduct Issues, Tourettes
- Whether they have a partner and/or relative to help with parenting the children

Parents often need

PERSONAL support in the TELLING of their stories with their children...

- the time Ginny threatened suicide with a knife and ran into the street and the police yelled at the mother for not supervising her better....
- When Sammy jumped off the roof as he just knew he was superman and broke his leg
- the time Joseph told his teacher that his mother left him alone all weekend and Children's Protective Services were called and the school did not realize a relative had been caring for him over the weekend bc they did not ask
- when a mother tried to get Lindsay and Albert (4 and 3) into the car at Wal-Mart and Albert began screaming and yelling and struggling to get out of the mother's arms and passersby's scowled stating that she couldn't control her kids.

Parents need guidance

- To help them navigate the jungle of resources to help them find
 - Respite
 - Financial support
 - Medical providers that are not afraid to care for their child
 - Therapists

Parents need information..

- Education and placement in classroom
- Special education department of the school system to help with testing and placement
- Often need an ADVOCATE so they understand their child's right to an education

Have your tool bag of

- Handouts
- Resources
- References
- Telephone numbers
- Case manager- social worker- registered nurse

Support and care of parents

- Has been sorely neglected... who cares and supports them?
- Each other...
- Lots of grass roots support groups online, across the state and here in Albuquerque.
- Not as many resources in the rural areas of the state.

New Mexico Resources

- Parents Reaching Out [Parents Reaching Out:](http://www.parentsreachingout.org/)
<http://www.parentsreachingout.org/>
- Parents of Behaviorally Different Children
http://parents-for-behaviorally-different-children-albuquerque-nm.new_mexico.usa.mentalhealthdirs.com
- Pegasus <http://www.pegasuslaw.org/>

Online resources...

- ADHD <http://www.chadd.org>
- BPAD <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens-a-parents-guide/index.shtml>
- NIMH Child and Adolescent Mental Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>
- Pediatric Anxiety: How Family Accommodation May Hinder Treatment
- <http://www.bradleyhasbroresearch.org/oth/Page.asp?PageID=OTH133031>
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- <http://aacap.org/>
- Schizophrenia
- <http://www.ocdsite.com/parenting-tips-for-parenting-a-child-with-schizophrenia/>
- Autism, Asperger's, Pervasive Developmental Disorders
- <http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/category/parents-and-friends>
- Tourette's Disorder
- http://www.tsa-usa.org/about_tsa/ausachapters.html

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