



For the entire month of May, we are focusing on our *Mind*; however, the first week of May we are focusing on Children's Mental Health. Not only is it Children's Mental Health Week at Making Moves, but also around the US. This week is National Children's Health Week *and National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is Thursday, May 5th*. It's easy to know your child needs help dealing with a fever or a broken bone, but mental health problems can be harder to identify. The tricky part of parenting is knowing the kinds of behaviors and moods that are usual for the stage of development your child is in – and when your child has gone beyond the norm and needs help. Did you know that half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns 14 years old, and three quarters of mental health disorders begin before age 24? Even very young children may show early warning signs of mental health concerns. These mental health problems are often clinically diagnosable, and can be a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. Unfortunately, less than 20% of children and adolescents with diagnosable mental health problems receive the treatment they need. Early mental health support can help a child before problems interfere with other developmental needs.



Common Children Mental Health Diseases:

Depression amongst children may not be noticeable, but watch out for signs. One in 10 young people experienced a period of major depression. Many children display sadness or low mood similar to adults who are depressed. Signs and symptoms of depression in children include: Irritability or anger.

Dysthymia may be diagnosed if sadness or irritability is not as severe as with major depression, but continues for a year or longer. Kids with dysthymia often feel "down in the dumps." They can have low self-esteem, feel hopeless, and even have problems sleeping and eating.

Dysthymia does not severely interfere with day-to-day functioning, but the "down mood" is a pervasive part of the child's world. (And at least 10% of those with dysthymic disorder go on to develop major depression.)

Major depression is a serious condition characterized by a lasting sad mood, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, and the inability to feel pleasure or happiness. Major depression typically interferes with day-to-day functioning, like eating and sleeping. Kids with major depression feel depressed almost every day.

Signs and symptoms of depression in children include:

- Irritability or anger.
- Continuous feelings of sadness and hopelessness.
- Social withdrawal.
- Increased sensitivity to rejection.
- Low Self-Esteem.
- Changes in appetite -- either increased or decreased.
- Changes in sleep -- sleeplessness or excessive sleep.
- Vocal outbursts or crying.

Bipolar is another type of mood disturbance, marked by episodes of low-energy depression (sadness and hopelessness) and high-energy mania (irritability and explosive temper). Bipolar disorder may affect as many as 1% to 2% of kids. More than 2 million adults have bipolar disorder, which often develops in the late teen years and early adulthood.

Don't put off your child's treatment. Early detection and diagnosis are key in treating kids with depression. A child or adolescent psychiatrist or psychologist can perform a complete evaluation and start a treatment plan that may include counseling, medicine, or both. The counselor might prescribe some sort of group counseling where the family works with the child in therapy sessions. Depending on your child's age and maturity, it may be beneficial for him or her to participate in treatment decisions.

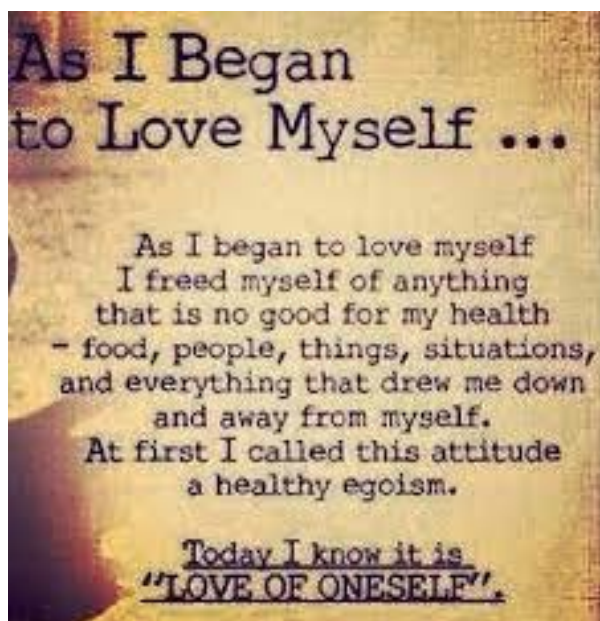
Treating Depression

Childhood Anxiety is really just a form of stress. It can be experienced in many different ways — physically, emotionally, and in the way people view the world around them. Anxiety mainly relates to worry about what *might* happen — worrying about things going wrong or feeling like you're in some kind of danger. A few common childhood phobias include animals, storms, heights, water, blood, the dark, and medical procedures. Children will avoid situations or things that they fear, or endure them with anxious feelings, which can manifest as crying, tantrums, clinging, avoidance, headaches, and stomachaches. Here are some pointers to help children escape the cycle of anxiety. 1. The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety, but to help a child manage it. 2. Don't avoid things just because they make a child anxious. 3. Express positive—but realistic—

Anxiety Disorders



expectations. 4. Respect her feelings, but don't empower them. 5. Don't ask leading questions. 6. Don't reinforce the child's fears. 7. Encourage the child to tolerate her anxiety. 8. Try to keep the anticipatory period short. 9. Think things through with the child. 10. Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety.



At MMDC we promote healthy minds for our children through the art of dance. Not only is dance and music a stress reliever, but are vehicles to build self-esteem and confidence.

Get Involved

The 2016 national event will take place on Thursday, May 5, at 7 p.m. EDT in Washington, DC, at The George Washington University School of Media & Public Affairs' Jack Morton Auditorium. The event—Awareness Day 2016: “Finding Help, Finding Hope.”—will explore how communities can increase access to behavioral health services and supports for children, youth, and young adults who experience mental or substance use disorders and their families.

Thursday, May 05, 2016 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (Eastern Time)

Jack Morton Auditorium
202-994-7470
GWU - School of Media & Public Affairs
805 21st St. NW
Washington, District of Columbia