

Helping Children, Teens, and Families Manage Crisis within a Crisis

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Introductions

What is it that you enjoy about working with children, teens, and families?

Other than CEU's, what is the reason you registered for this seminar today?

What do you hope to learn as a result of attending this seminar?

What are we seeing in children and teens as a result of the pandemic?





What does the data say about pandemic mental health?

- For adults, anxiety rates are 35.9% (previously 6.1%)
- Moderate to severe depression for adults jumped from 7.0% to 30.2%
- Among young adults, 43.5% report moderate to severe anxiety
- Income is a key indicator of mental health, with household incomes less than \$25K being 20% more likely to report moderate to severe anxiety

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What does the data say about pandemic mental health for children & adolescents?

70% of children/teens reported some degree of mental discomfort such as loneliness, irritability, etc.

Children in financially unstable homes or who had food instability experienced the worst mental health outcomes

43-46% parents reported increased rates of anxiety/depression for their teens

Rates of anxiety and depression have doubled

1 in 4 are experiencing clinically elevated levels of depression

1 in 5 are experiencing clinically elevated levels of anxiety

Dependent on parents' level of stress



A Few Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Developing new social relationships with others

Developing empathy

Achieving emotional independence from parents and adults

Acquiring a new set of values/ethical system

Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior

Gaining a sense of identity



Has the pandemic interfered with adolescents' abilities to achieve developmental tasks?

Can you think of ways that the pandemic has interfered with

- Developing new social relationships with others
- Developing empathy for others
- Achieving emotional independence from parents/adults
- Acquiring a set of values/ethics
- Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior
- Achieving a sense of identity



What does pandemic family life look like?

- Increased parental stress
- Allowing increased use of social media
- Increased family violence
- Decreased time outdoors
- Increased drug/alcohol use
- Fewer resources or more costly resources
- Increased parental “help” with school-work or homeschooling
- ***Ultimately models for the child how to handle stress and other major problems



How families (unintentionally) contribute to child/ teen stress

Neglectful families – being too busy, disorganized, or maltreating

Perfect family – doesn't allow for the expression of negative emotions

Normal family – sees the child as odd, different, or out of place with the rest of the family



The antidote to child/teen stress is validation

Validation is the recognition and acceptance that your child has feelings and thoughts that are true to him regardless of logic or whether it makes sense to anyone else

Validation means offering acceptance and feedback about the other person's reality in a nonjudgmental way

Validation helps children develop a sense of acceptance and normalcy



Validation is not...

Permissive parenting

It is not parroting what your child just said

It is not being ruled by your child's emotions

It is not paying undeserved compliments

It is not reinforcing undesired behavior



Benefits of Validation

Helps children/teens learn to manage their emotions

Enhances relationships

Establishes internal locus of control

Fosters compassion for self and others

Fosters perseverance

Enhances academic achievement

Enhances happiness

Is the opposite of shaming



Why parents Invalidate

- Parents don't see the world from the child's point of view
- Parents are afraid of failing as parents
- Parents want to fix what is wrong
- Parents find reality too hard to accept
- Parents don't want their children to go through what they went through
- Parents want their children to behave normally
- Parents' emotions overwhelm them
- Parents are in a hurry
- Parents forget that the child's brain is still developing

If validation is the antidote, then parent engagement is the booster

Barrier to improving teen
mental health is that
sometimes parents approach
counseling as an opportunity
to “fix” their child without
engaging in the process
themselves

Parents must be willing to be
engaged in the process

Parents will need to learn how
to validate and practice this
regularly



How can you create buy-in from parents? (Here are my “go-to’s”)

- Explaining expectations for therapy
 - How often will you see the child
 - How often will you see the parent
 - Will the parent and child know what the other said
- Stating to the parent: “When you have a unique child, you need unique tools, and we can help you learn what those are here”.
- “I would love to help you find ways that you can support your child at home so that she doesn’t have to feel anxious and depressed all the time. Do you think you could commit to attending coaching sessions?”
- “There is only so much I can do in one hour per week. The real work begins when you leave my office”
- Be sure to praise the parent when you see them implementing helpful strategies

How to help Children/Teens reduce distress

- Help them learn appropriate interpersonal interactions
 - How to develop and maintain relationships with others
 - Learning to interpret tone and nonverbal cues
 - Encourage attendance at social gatherings
 - How/when to apologize
- Emotional Regulation
 - Validation
 - TIPP skills
 - Mindfulness
 - ALSUP
- Model mindfulness, relaxation, and appropriate boundaries
 - Have the parent learn skills alongside of child, or have child teach the parent

Questions?
Comments?