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Mental Health and Youth

Signs, Symptoms & Interventions

Girl Scouts of WNY

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Agenda

- What is mental health?
- Mental Health Disorders
- Trauma
- Disruptive Behavior Disorders
- Mood Disorders
- Psychosis
- Self-injury
- Risk/Protective Factors
- Interventions
- Treatment
- What can you do?
- Resources

What is Mental Health?

- Emotional, psychological, and social well-being
- How we think, feel, and act
- Helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices

Factors Contributing to Mental Health Disorders

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems
- Stigma

Rise in Mental Illness Among Teen Girls



Mental Health Disorders

- Anxiety Disorders
- Behavioral Disorders
- Mood Disorders

Anxiety Disorders

- Anxiety disorders affect one in eight children
- Research shows that untreated children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences, and engage in substance abuse
- Anxiety disorders often co-occur with depression as well as eating disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and others
- Median age of onset is 11 years old

Anxiety Disorders

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Social Anxiety
- Specific Phobias
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Panic Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things
- May anticipate disaster and may be overly concerned about money, health, family, work, or other issues
- May worry more than seems warranted about actual events or may expect the worst even when there is no apparent reason for concern

Social Anxiety

- Intense anxiety or fear of being judged, negatively evaluated, or rejected in a social or performance situation
- May worry about acting or appearing visibly anxious (e.g., blushing, stumbling over words), or being viewed as stupid, awkward, or boring

Social Anxiety

- They often avoid social or performance situations, and when a situation cannot be avoided, they experience significant anxiety and distress
- Strong physical symptoms, such as a rapid heart rate, nausea, and sweating, and may experience full-blown attacks when confronting a feared situation

Specific Phobias

- Strong irrational fear reactions, work hard to avoid common places, situations, or objects even though they know there's no threat or danger
- People who experience these seemingly excessive and unreasonable fears in the presence of or in anticipation of a specific object, place, or situation have a specific phobia
- While some phobias develop in childhood, most seem to arise unexpectedly, usually during adolescence or early adulthood

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

- People with OCD experiences obsessions and compulsions
- Obsessions are intrusive and unwanted thoughts, images, or urge that cause distress or anxiety.
 - Concerns about contamination, cleanliness, aggressive impulses, or the need for symmetry
- Compulsions are behaviors that the person feels compelled to perform in order to ease their distress or anxiety or suppress the thoughts
 - Checking, washing/cleaning, and arranging are common compulsions

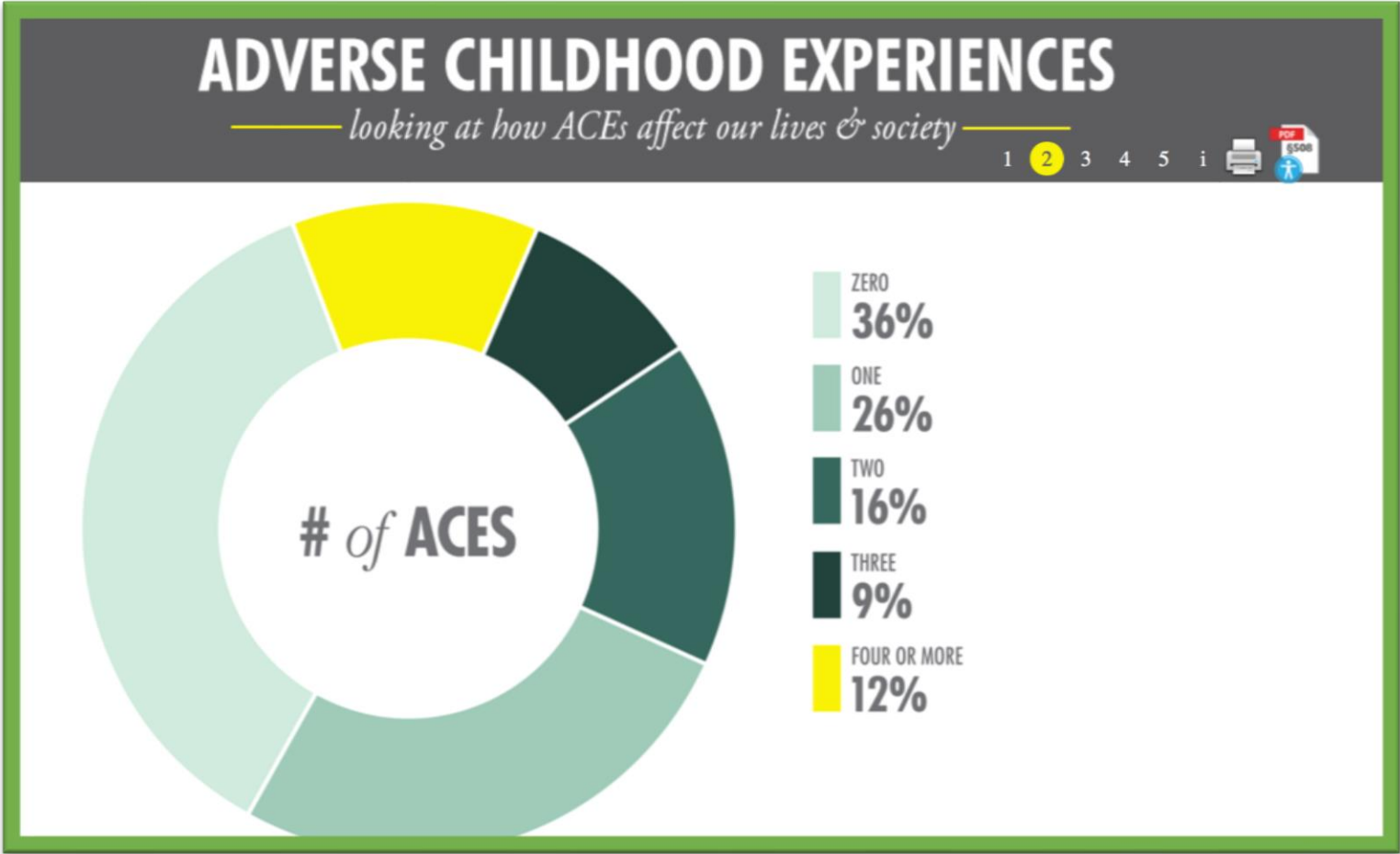
Panic Disorder

- People who experience spontaneous seemingly out-of-the-blue panic attacks and are very preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack
- Panic attacks occur unexpectedly, sometimes even when waking up from sleep
- Panic disorder usually begins in adulthood (after age 20), but children can also have panic disorder and many children experience panic-like symptoms (“fearful spells”)

Trauma

- Abuse – physical, sexual, or emotional
- Neglect
- Effects of Poverty
- Being separated from loved ones
- Bullying
- Witnessing harm to a loved one
- Natural disasters or accidents
- Unpredictable parental behavior (MH or SA)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- A serious potentially debilitating condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a natural disaster, serious accident, terrorist incident, sudden death of a loved one, war, violent personal assault such as rape, or other life-threatening events

Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

- Difficulty paying attention
- Being quiet or withdrawn
- Frequent tears or sadness
- Talking often about scary feelings and ideas
- Difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next
- Fighting with peers or adults

Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

- Changes in school performance
- Wanting to be left alone
- Eating much or less than peers
- Getting in to trouble at home or school
- Frequent headaches/stomach aches with no apparent cause
- Behaviors common to young children (thumb sucking)

Mood Disorders

- Major depressive disorder
- Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)
- Bipolar disorder
- Disruptive mood dysregulation disorder
- Premenstrual dysmorphic disorder
- Mood disorder due to a general medical condition
- Substance-induced mood disorder

Major Depressive Disorder

- Persistent feelings of sadness or irritability
- Loss of interest or pleasure in all or almost all activities once enjoyed
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Having low self-esteem
- Feeling inadequate
- Excessive guilt
- Difficulty with relationships or social withdrawal
- Sleep disturbances, whether sleeping too much or too little

Major Depressive Disorder

- Changes in appetite or weight
- Decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating or a decline in school performance
- Increased sensitivity to failure or rejection
- Indecision
- Frequent physical complaints, such as a headache, stomachache, or fatigue
- Thoughts of wishing to be dead
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts

Bipolar Disorder

- Have a very short temper
- Talk excitedly and quickly about a lot of different things
- Be unable to focus
- Rapidly jump from task to task
- Be unable to sleep but not feel tired
- Feel incredibly happy or act silly in an unusual way
- Do risky things like drinking while driving
- Do compulsive things like binge shopping
- Become overly sexual or sexually active

Psychosis – Early Warning Signs

- A worrisome drop in grades or job performance
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Suspiciousness or uneasiness with others
- A decline in self-care or personal hygiene
- Spending a lot more time alone than usual
- Strong, inappropriate emotions or having no feelings at all

Early or First Episode Psychosis

- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others don't
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs that can't be set aside regardless of what others believe
- Strong and inappropriate emotions or no emotions at all
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- A sudden decline in self-care
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

Self-Injury

- Burning and hitting oneself
- Scratching or picking scabs (to prevent wounds from healing)
- Overdosing on medications
- Pulling out one's hair, eyelashes, or eyebrows with the intention of hurting oneself
- Inserting objects into one's body

Reasons for Self-Injury

- To reduce anxiety/tension
- To reduce sadness and loneliness
- To alleviate angry feelings
- To punish oneself due to self-hatred
- To get help from or show distress to others
- To escape feelings of numbness (to feel something)

Risk Factors - Individual

- Female gender
- Early puberty
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Low-level depressive symptoms and dysthymia
- Emotional problems in childhood
- Conduct disorder
- Favorable attitudes toward drugs
- Rebelliousness
- Early substance use

Risk Factors - Family

- Parental depression
- Parent-child conflict
- Poor parenting
- Negative family environment
- Child abuse/maltreatment
- Divorce/Marital conflict
- Parental drug/alcohol use

Risk Factors – School/Community

- Peer rejection
- Stressful events
- Poor academic achievement
- Poverty
- Traumatic event
- Associating with drug-using peers
- Loss of close relationship or friends

Protective Factors - Individual

- Positive physical development
- Academic achievement/intellectual development
- High self-esteem
- Emotional self-regulation
- Good coping skills and problem-solving skills
- Engagement and connections in two or more of the following contexts: school, with peers, in athletics, employment, religion, culture

Protective Factors - Family

- Family provides structure, limits, rules, monitoring, and predictability
- Supportive relationships with family members
- Clear expectations for behavior and values

Protective Factors – School/Community

- Presence of mentors and support for development of skills and interests
- Opportunities for engagement within school and community
- Positive norms
- Clear expectations for behavior
- Physical and psychological safety

Interventions

Youth Mental Health First Aid

- Ages 12-18
- Nationally certification program
- 5-Step action plan - ALGEE
- Raises awareness/reduces stigma
- Identify signs and symptoms
- Learn how to respond in a crisis

Interventions

- Trusting relationships
- Exercise
- Play
- Nutrition
- Parental involvement
- Mentoring
- Social supports

Treatment

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- “The way we think affects the way we feel and behave.”
- Social skills training – Conduct Disorders
- Problem solving skills training (PSST)
 - Emotional education and self-monitoring of feelings and behavior
 - Self-talk

Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)

- Emphasizes taking responsibility for one’s problems
- Helps children examine how they deal with conflict and intense negative emotions

Treatment

Medication

- Preferably a child or adolescent psychiatrist
- Should not be used alone
- Comprehensive evaluation
- Comprehensive treatment plan
- On-going assessment

What can you do?

- Communicate
- Recognize that mental health directly affects academic performance
- Seek help from a mental health professional
- Allow youth to talk about troubling events and describe their emotions
- Continue to educate yourself

What can you do?

- Be culturally sensitive
- Create awareness – physical vs. mental
- Document
- Work with parents – be sensitive

Suicide Prevention Resources

- Chautauqua County
 - 24 Hour Hotline
 - 800-724-0461
 - Kids Helpline
 - 877-543-7400
- Monroe County
 - Mobile Crisis Team
 - 585-275-5151
- Crisis Services of Buffalo and Erie County
 - 24 Hour Hotline
 - 716-834-3131
 - Spectrum Kids Helpline
 - 716-834-1144
- Niagara County Crisis Services
 - 716-285-3515

QUESTIONS???

THANK YOU!!!

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