Understanding and Recognizing Childhood Depression

A PARENT’S GUIDE

Live Session Being Recorded

- This is a reminder that our live session is being recorded for future playback for those parents who could not attend today’s session.
Coordinator : Introduction
John Basilice, Family Education and Community Involvement Coordinator

I will be the person receiving your texts and working the controls of today’s session.

Later today you will be able to ask questions if you have a microphone or a web-enabled microphone. You can also text your questions in the text box of the control panel.

More to come on that item later.

Today’s Presenter
Kristen McClure, MSW, LCSW is a Charlotte-based psychotherapist who specializes in teen and childhood anxiety treatment, depression and bipolar disorder. She has extensive experience working in private practice and in agencies delivering services to children and families dealing with mood disorders and trauma based disorders.
Kristen’s approach is based on identifying the best path to success through assessment, planning and intentional exploration of treatment goals. Her practice is based on empowering the people she serves to make informed decisions on living life to the fullest potential.

Kristen is an avid reader and a fan of the fiction work of Stephen King and the spiritual writing of Eckhart Tolle. When Kristen is not helping others she is caring for her furry four legged children, her dogs Otis, Sable, and new puppy Cosmo.
What is Childhood Depression?

- Medical and bio-chemical condition
- Should be approached like “diabetes”

Clinical depression manifests as a spectrum disorder subsyndromal to syndromal
- Child or adolescent must have at least
- 2 weeks of persistent change in mood manifested by either
  - a) depressed or irritable mood and/or
  - b) loss of interest and pleasure

- other symptoms including:
  - wishing to be dead,
  - suicidal ideation or attempts
  - increased or decreased appetite, weight, or sleep
  - decreased activity, concentration, energy, or self-worth or exaggerated guilt
What is Childhood Depression?

- The National Institute of Mental Health indicates that about 11% of teens have had a depressive disorder at some point in their lives.
- About 3.3% have experienced a “seriously debilitating episode.”

Additionally, 5-10 percent of children suffer from depression that is just below the level of meeting the criteria for diagnosis.

Each successive generation since 1940 is at greater risk of developing depressive disorders and that these disorders have their onset at a younger age.
What is Childhood Depression?

Depression is NOT:

- A character flaw or weakness
- Untreatable
- A life sentence to be on medicine
- A plea for attention
- Something a person can “snap out of!”

Risk Factors

- Stress
- Genetics
Facts about Childhood Depression

Depression has different symptoms in children than in adults:
- moodiness
- irritability
- low frustration tolerance
- temper tantrums
- somatic complaints
- social withdrawal
- Looks less like sadness than it does in adults

Facts about Childhood Depression

- Depression in children is highly correlated with academic and social problems, suicide and later substance abuse.
- Children who have one episode of depression will more than likely have other episodes in childhood or depression that persists into adulthood.
- Depression in children a serious problem, but if identified early its impact can be lessened.
Facts about Childhood Depression

- Many adults I see in therapy tell me they wish they had learned the coping skills and techniques to manage depression as a child. They feel strongly if someone had recognized their behavior as a symptom of childhood depression they would be much better off today.
- Most parents and doctors do not know or understand what a childhood depression symptom is.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

- A childhood depression symptom may look much like a symptom of adult depression or it may look very different.
- Children have less ability to verbalize their feelings and are more likely to give us clues about their inner state through their behavior.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

- Unfortunately the behavioral expression of childhood depression can result in adults viewing depressed children as having behavioral problems.
- Instead of being treated for mental illness, depressed children are often scolded, shamed and punished.

They are unpleasant to be around
- One very common childhood depression symptom is an irritable mood. Think, for a moment, about how you behave when irritable. You may snap at your coworkers, friends or spouse. You are likely to lose your temper and show very little patience.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They are unpleasant to be around

- Children who are irritable may be rude, disrespectful, and may refuse to do what you ask. They are less likely to follow the rules at school or at home and frequently talk back to parents and teachers.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They complain of boredom

- A child who is bored may bother you, follow you around the house and demand that you entertain them.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They no longer like to do things they used to think were fun

- A child who is experiencing this childhood depression symptom will stop enjoying the activities they were the most interested in.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They may display changes in eating patterns or appetite

- Children who experience this childhood depression symptom may seem picky and whiny or complain about their food. Children I see often complain about how the food is “bad” or doesn’t taste right.
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What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They may not want to get up or go to bed

- Children may sleep more or less than normal. Behaviorally this can translate into refusal to go to school or to go to bed.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

**They may have low energy**

- Depressed children may complain of feeling tired and lack the energy to complete the tasks they need to do at home and school. This childhood depression symptom often causes children to behave in a way that can be misinterpreted as lazy.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

**They may have low energy**

- If parents or teachers describe a child as lazy I am immediately suspicious that the child is depressed. Adults usually respond to this behavior by name calling “get your lazy self up!” or punishing.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

**They can’t concentrate**

- Kids with this childhood symptoms of depression may get labeled as ADHD. Then they are given stimulants which can have a disastrous affect if the child has bipolar disorder.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

**They have thoughts of worthlessness or guilty feelings**

- Children who are depressed will often make negative self statements such as “I can't do this” or "I’m not good at anything". Busy parents often miss these statements or may be irritated by them.
What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

They have thoughts of worthlessness or guilty feelings

- Younger children won’t attempt to complete tasks or activities because of fear that they are not good enough to do so.
- Kids with this childhood depression symptom may also blame themselves for things that they have nothing to do with.

What Does Childhood Depression Look Like?

Other symptoms

- Other symptoms include unpleasant behaviors such as tantrums, inability to handle frustration, complaining or crying. At school depressed children may be hostile or aggressive, display a drop in school performance, or may frequently go to the school nurse.
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**What Can I do?**

- If you think your child is exhibiting these symptoms, and you have a family history of depression, than it is very likely that your child is depressed.
- It is important to find a qualified helper who is licensed.
- This may include a Social Worker (LCSW), Counselor (LPC) or a Psychological Associate (LPA).
What Can I do?

- It is important to seek help from a medical or mental health professional.
- There are many forms of treatment and help that may include individual, family or play therapy.
- Medication management may be a part of your child’s return to wellness.

What Can I do?

- Depression does not have to be a life sentence.
- People who experience depression and receive help can return to a life with joy and happiness.
Finding a Qualified Helper?

In my practice the first appointment is for an assessment where we discuss:
- extended family
- medical history
- academic performance
- social issues
- support systems
- strengths

Parents

Explore conflict and stress and how you are handling it
- Explore communication in the home
- Look at your own needs for support and help in the form of therapy
- Look at your ability to be hopeful and instill hope and confidence in your child
Finding a Qualified Helper?

- I will first meet with parents and children for four sessions so we can become acquainted.
- Next, we will get together and create a treatment plan. We will figure out together how we need to proceed.
- It is important to work WITH a qualified helper to help treat your child’s depression.

Treatment

- Treatment: Mild Supportive Treatment
- Education about causes symptoms course and treatment
- Help through listening, reflection problem solving and coping skills...HOPE
- Family involvement: to decrease stress in family and help child.
- School involvement depending on nature of school impairment (diabetes)
Treatment

- 4-6 weeks for mild cases
- Moderate may require more intense work with thoughts (CBT mindfulness based treatments too)
- More severe: More specific therapy or antidepressants or both
- 40-90 percent have another diagnosis that needs to be treated and will impair treatment (ADD or anxiety)

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Feedback and Gratitude

- We want to hear from you!
- *(EVAL INFO)*

Questions and Answers