



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

Saturday May 9th is children's mental health awareness day! Did you know that mental health disorders are the most common diseases of childhood? Mental illness in children can be hard for parents to identify and that is completely normal. It is also normal for children to have times when they struggle, we all do. This newsletter will be a little more informational and will help parents to better understand how to recognize warning signs of mental illness in children and how you can help your child. We understand that this is unprecedented times, and that right now more than ever children and families are feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Please understand that you are not alone.

Mental health disorders in children are generally defined as delays or disruptions in developing age-appropriate thinking, behaviors, social skills or regulation of emotions. These are distressing to children and disrupt their ability to function well at home, in school or in other social situations. It can be difficult to understand mental health disorders in children because normal childhood development is a process that involves and changes all the time. Additionally, the symptoms may differ depending on a child's age, and children may not be able to explain how they feel or why they are behaving a certain way.

Warning signs that your child may have a mental health disorder include:

- Persistent sadness — two or more weeks
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions
- Hurting oneself or talking about hurting oneself
- Talking about death or suicide
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Changes in eating habits
- Loss of weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in academic performance
- Avoiding or missing school

It is common to feel concerns about the stigma associated with mental illness, the use of medications, and the cost or challenges of treatment. This can prevent parents from seeking care for a child who has a suspected mental illness. We understand these concerns, and want to stress that the emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults. It's time to break the stigma and realize that getting help sooner rather than later will give them best possible outcome.

Things that can help keep children mentally well include:

- Being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- Having time and freedom to play indoors and outdoors
- Being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- Going to school that looks after the wellbeing of all its students
- Taking part in local activities for children
- Feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued, and safe
- Having the opportunity to do things they are interested in and enjoy
- Being hopeful and optimistic
- Being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed in things on their own
- Accepting who they are and recognizing what their strengths are
- Having a sense of belonging in their family, school and community
- Feeling they have some control over their own life
- Having the strength to cope when something is wrong, developing resilience, and ability to solve problems

How can I help my child cope if I suspect they have a mental illness?

First make sure to seek help and normalize that we all need help sometimes. You will play an important role in supporting your child.

To care for yourself and your child:

- Learn about the illness.
- Consider family counseling that treats all members as partners in the treatment plan.
- Ask your child's mental health professional for advice on how to respond to your child and handle difficult behavior.
- Enroll in parent training programs, particularly those designed for parents of children with a mental illness.
- Explore stress management techniques to help you respond calmly.
- Seek ways to relax and have fun with your child.
- Praise your child's strengths and abilities.

Next, talk to your child's teacher, close friends, relatives or other caregivers to see if they've noticed changes in your child's behavior. Share this information with your child's doctor and reach out to your local mental health center (see contact info on next page). To make a diagnosis, your child's doctor might recommend that your child be evaluated by a specialist, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, or psychiatric nurse or other mental health professional. This is a completely normal process to find out what the best next steps will be to helping your child's mental health. Please remember you are not alone, we are here to support you. Especially during this time! So feel free to reach out.

Sources

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<https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/archives/connection-activities-parents-kids>

<https://zenhabits.net/100-ways-to-have-fun-with-your-kids-for/>

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>



MEET CENTENNIAL'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION TEAM



LAUNCHING ZOOM SECURE TELEHEALTH SERVICES!

Our ECMH team is excited to announce that consultation services are now available using Zoom Secure Telehealth Services. These services are available to client families, schools, childcare centers and community partners with group and individual meetings available. All services will be provided using this private, secure video platform, and can be accessed using most electronic devices. For more information or to set up a consultation appointment, please contact our ECMH team or your local Centennial Mental Health Center office.



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Ages 0-5

Covers the following
counties:
Logan, Morgan

For additional support during
the COVID-19 Pandemic you
can call Centennial's
**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT LINE**

You can do this by calling your
nearest Centennial office:

- Akron - 970.345.2254
- Burlington - 719.346.8183
- Cheyenne Wells - 719.346.8183
- Elizabeth - 303.646.4519
- Fort Morgan - 970.867.4924
- Holyoke - 970.854.2114
- Julesburg - 970.474.3769
- Limon - 719.775.2313
- Sterling - 970.522.4392
- Wray - 970.332.3133
- Yuma - 970.848.5412

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Ages 0-8

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Ages 0-8

Covers the following counties:
Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson,
Lincoln & Yuma

Contact your local Centennial Mental Health Center for assistance with any Early Childhood need.

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