HEALTHMATTERS
• I N - F O C U S •

Children's Mental Health Awareness

The goal is to increase public awareness of mental illness and the impact it has on people's lives. Mental illness can impact anyone, at any age. It is easy to overlook the mental health of children. Due to a lack of knowledge, children's mental health problems frequently go unreported. While their symptoms may differ, children might have the same mental health disorders as adults. According to statistics 20% of adolescents – one in five - have a mental disorder, but only a third of them get treatment.

CHILDREN AND MENTAL ILLNESSES

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Anxiety Disorders

Mood Disorders

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Eating Disorders

What causes childhood mental illness?

It might be challenging, even for medical professionals, to diagnose mental illness in children. Throughout their natural growing and development process, children undergo several physical, mental and emotional transformations that set them apart from adults. Additionally, they are still learning how to relate to people and their environment, cope and adapt. They frequently struggle to control their emotions, which increases their risk for mental illness.

Warning signs to look out for?

Warning signs that a child may have a mental health disorder can include the following:

- Abuse of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Inability to cope with daily problems and activities.
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits.
- Excessive complaints of physical ailments.
- Defying authority, skipping school, stealing or damaging property.
- Intense fear of gaining weight.
- Long-lasting negative moods, often accompanied by poor appetite and thoughts of death.
- Frequent outbursts of anger.
- Changes in school performance, such as getting poor grades despite good efforts.
- Loss of interest in friends and activities they usually enjoy.
- Significant increase in time spent alone.
- Excessive worrying or anxiety.
- Hyperactivity.
- Persistent nightmares or night terrors.
- Persistent disobedience or aggressive behaviour.
- Hearing voices or seeing things that are not there.

What can be done?

- Plan community events such as seminars and workshops for educators, parents and teachers.
- Educate children about mental health and empower the children to seek help.
- Recognise how children's mental health is affected by social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- As a parent, promote open communication and honest sharing of feelings.
- Equip children with the skills they need to identify and control their emotions.
- Allow children to talk about their feelings, experiences and emotions.
- Encourage children to challenge bullying and discrimination towards those with mental health issues.
- Seek support from family, friends and mental health professionals.

Conclusion

The mental wellbeing of children cannot be neglected. Let's create a world where mental well-being is a priority for all. Understanding and supporting children's mental health must be a collective effort. By raising awareness, empowering young minds to thrive, seek help and build resilience. Let's spread awareness and foster a compassionate environment for the young generation.

Reference:

1. https://wohum.org/mental-health-awareness-for-kids-understanding-stigma-and-overcoming-it/ dated 3 June 2024.
2. https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/mental-illness-in-children/art-20046577 dated 15 May 2024.
3. https://www.webmd.com/mental-ealth/mental-illness-children dated 27 May 2024.