RECOGNIZING AND UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

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OVERVIEW

• Behavior Problems of Children in the System

• Child Mental Health Symptoms
  – Trauma
  – Depression
  – Anxiety
  – ADHD

• Treatment Options
  – Psychotherapy
  – Psychopharmacology
CHILD BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS
CHILDHOOD BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

• Anger
• Hostile and cold
• Untrusting
• Perceiving danger everywhere
• Problems with change and transition
• Guarded
• Difficulty with redirection

• Physical and emotional reactivity
• Tantrums/Outbursts
• Holding on to grudges
• Regressive behavior
• Rejecting support
• Not following rules
• Unwilling to do what they are told
- Behavior Problems
- Trauma
- Mood and Anxiety
- Inattention, Hyperactivity, Impulsivity
- Substance Use
- Other mental health and neurodevelopmental difficulties
CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS
TRAUMA

• Physical and emotional responses of a child to events that threaten the life or physical integrity of the child or of someone critically important to the child.

• Trauma overwheels a child’s capacity to cope and elicits feelings of terror, powerlessness and out-of-control physiological arousal

• 34% of children experience at least one type of trauma

• By age 3 ½ children experience 4-5 traumatic events
TRAUMA: DEVELOPMENTS MISSING STAIRS

• Traumatic events at any age and stage of development can interfere with a child’s developmental accomplishments.

• Children who experience multiple traumatic events over long periods of time are especially likely to have multiple gaps in their development.
OUTCOMES OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

- Attachment
- Biology/Body Reactions
- Controlling Feelings
- Controlling Behavior
- Thoughts About One's Self
- Thinking
TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

• Intrusive Symptoms
  – Memories, nightmares, dissociations, flashbacks

• Avoidance
  – Of memories or external stimuli (person, place, object)

• Negative Alteration in Cognition and Mood
  – Negative beliefs, distorted cognitions, negative emotional state

• Arousal
  – Irritability, outbursts, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response
DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

- Sad and depressed mood often
- Diminished pleasure in activities
- Eating difficulties – Increase or decrease in appetite
- Sleep difficulties – Insomnia or hypersomnina
- Consistently agitated
- Loss of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Thoughts of hopelessness and even death – low self-esteem
SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

WEIGHT CHANGE

SLEEP DISTURBANCE

FATIGUE

CONCENTRATION

IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET ANY JOY OUT OF BEING DEPRESSED, YOU'VE GOT TO STAND LIKE THIS.
ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

- Feelings that the future is unpredictable & uncontrollable
- Anticipation of the negative
- Apprehension & anticipatory distress
- Avoidance
- Significant Physiological Symptoms
ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

• Inattention
  – Dislikes task requiring sustained mental effort
  – Difficulty sustaining attention and becomes distracted easily
  – Makes careless mistakes
  – Does not listen when spoken to
  – Difficulty organizing tasks
  – Difficulty problem solving
  – Loses items easily
ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

- Hyperactivity/Impulsivity
  - Fidgets, squirms in seat
  - Gets out of seat when expected to remain seated
  - Acts as if “driven by a motor”
  - Runs around or climbs when expected to be still
  - Unable to be quiet during leisure activities
  - Talks excessively
  - Blurts out answers before question is completed
  - Intrudes and interrupts activities and conversations
3 out of 4 teens in high school admit to using alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine or prescription drugs.

Illegal drug addiction can cost teens up to $180,000 per year.

45% of all high-school students in America regularly use illegal substances.
THERAPY
CONSIDERATIONS
ASSESSMENT

- Thorough assessment of concerning symptoms
- Qualified mental health professional
- Multiple Informants
  - Caregiver (bio, foster, or adoptive parent)
  - Youth
  - Teacher
  - Caseworker
PSYCHOTHERAPY

• Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  – Effective in addressing majority of childhood mental health symptoms

• Focus on:
  – Psychoeducation
  – Development of coping skills such as relaxation, affect modulation, and cognitive coping
  – Problem solving
  – Exposure exercises
• ADHD medications
  – Medications like Adderall, Ritalin, Focalin, Vyvanse, Concerta
  – Act by complex mechanisms in brain including dopamine release

  – Treat ADHD by improving focus, attention and impulsivity

  – No long-term side effects; may cause some mild side effects like stomachaches and headaches, weight loss, sleep disturbances

  – Avoid over-dosing – may cause more serious issues like psychosis

  – Risk of abuse and addiction
PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY

• Antidepressants/Anti-anxiety medications
  – Medications like Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa, Lexapro, Wellbutrin
  – Older antidepressants: Amitriptyline, Imipramine

  – Generally act by normalizing serotonin and norepinephrine functioning in the brain

  – Used to treat depression, anxiety and trauma symptoms

  – Side effects are generally mild; may include GI disturbances, headaches, some weight gain, black-box warning of increasing SI
Mood Stabilizers

- Medications like Lithium, Valproate (Depakote), Lamictal, Tegretol

- Used to treat mania, bipolar disorder, impulse control disorders and severe mood swings

- Side effects are variable, sometimes serious- skin rash, GI upset, sedation, weight gain, liver/thyroid/kidney effects, birth effects
PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY

• Antipsychotics
  – Includes 2nd generation: Abilify, Risperidone, Seroquel, Olanzapine
  – 1st generation: Haldol, Thorazine, Prolixin, Pimozide

  – Used to treat schizophrenia, hallucinations, delusions
  – Abilify and Risperidone indicated to treat severe aggression in individuals with autism

  – Serious side effects include weight gain, prolactin elevation, movement disorders, effects on heart, seizures
NOT “WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS CHILD?”

BUT “WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THIS CHILD?”

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?