



NURTURING MINDS AND HEARTS: PARENT WORKSHOP

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Define and understand mental health in the context of individuals with disabilities
- Recognize signs of mental health difficulties in children
- Explore impacts of disabilities on mental wellbeing
- Understand the importance of resilience in maintaining mental health and wellness
- Explore effective communication techniques with your children
- Understand the importance of parents' mental wellness
- Identify practical coping skills for parents and children in managing mental health
- Discuss the importance of self-care for parents in maintaining a supportive atmosphere

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being (SAMHSA)

According to the WHO, this can include resilience, the ability to manage stress, realizing our abilities, coping well, or contributing to our community.

Mental health also includes difficulty in navigating stressors, excessive worry, having little to no motivation, or difficulty finding things interesting.

Mental health greatly impacts our day-to-day functioning and may also affect our ability to relate to peers or others in our lives.

About 1 in 6 US youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. (NAMI)

50% of all lifetime mental health disorders begin by age 14, and 75% by age 24. (NAMI)

CHALLENGES OF MENTAL HEALTH

- Bullying
- Trauma
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty eating properly
- Hygiene and grooming
- Unable to relate to peers
- Feeling more isolated
- Frustration when not being able to communicate thoughts and feelings
- Discrimination
- Coping with limitations

MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITIES - HOW DO THEY INTERSECT?

- The rate of mental health disorders in people with a learning disability is double that of the general population (Cooper, 2007; Emerson & Hatton, 2007; NICE, 2016).
- About 30% of learning disabled children have behavioral and emotional problems, which can range from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder(ADHD), to depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal behaviors. (NIH)
- Students with physical disabilities are twice as likely to report feeling sad or hopeless on a daily basis and three times as likely to report attempting suicide compared to their typically developing peers (Lal, et al, 2022)

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confusing thinking or problems concentrating/learning
- Extreme mood changes
- Prolonged or strong feelings of anger or irritability
- Avoiding friends or social activities
- Difficulty understanding or relating to others
- Changes in sleeping habits, feeling tired, low energy
- Changes in eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Difficulty perceiving reality
- Lack of insight into one's own feelings
- Use of substances
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes such as headaches or stomach aches
- Thoughts of not being alive anymore
- Inability to carry out daily activities
- Aggression
- Change in school performance

(NAMI)

HOW DO THESE SIGNS AND
SYMPTOMS PRESENT IN YOUR
CHILDREN?

- Open, non-judgmental, and supportive communication
 - Active listening
 - Sharing your thoughts openly and honestly
 - Creating space for your child to share
 - Validating your children's thoughts and feelings
 - The use of "I statements", to focus on feelings and thoughts
 - Clear language
 - Positive reinforcement

APPROACHING
YOUR CHILD

USING ALTERNATE COMMUNICATION



Observe and Listen



Create a Safe Environment



Use Visual Supports



Offer Sensory Regulation



Encourage Emotional Expression



Model Emotional Regulation



Engage in Play and Physical Activities



Be Patient and Understanding

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR YOUR CHILDREN

- Creating a space where a child feels comfortable and safe is extremely important in the home environment.
- Children can use this space as a fun place to relax, somewhere to calm down when heightened, or a place that helps explain their feelings.
- Ways to create a safe space
 - Designate one area of the house that the child enjoys being, but somewhere they can also be alone
 - In the space, fill it with posters or pictures on the wall. This could be calming sayings, feelings wheels, affirmations, or reminders for your child.
 - Include activities they enjoy doing
 - Arts and crafts, coloring books, and paper to draw on
 - Fidget toys that they can squeeze or play with, including stress balls
 - Include comfortable seating such as bean bag chairs or a comfortable couch, with blankets and cozy pillows

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- As important as it is to identify these signs and symptoms in your children, it's equally important to understand these for yourself.
- Caring for a child with disabilities brings unique challenges for parents
 - Difficulty finding child care
 - Regulating emotions with a child that is dysregulated
 - Facing barriers in school and at home
 - Difficulty with communicating effectively with children
- Children are uniquely able to understand and feel stress or anxiety from their parents or caregivers. If you're feeling dysregulated, your child will likely begin to also experience an increase in symptoms.
- Self care and coping skills are important to use daily

What can you do to take care of yourself?

SELF CARE AND COPING SKILLS



MINDFULNESS
SKILLS



RELAXATION
TECHNIQUES



CREATIVE
OUTLETS



BREATHING
EXERCISES



GUIDED
IMAGERY



GROUNDING
SKILLS

SELF CARE AND COPING SKILLS



GET ENOUGH
SLEEP



MAINTAIN A
BALANCED
DIET



EXERCISE
REGULARLY



PRACTICE
GRATITUDE



VALIDATE YOUR
CHALLENGES



TAKE TIME FOR
YOURSELF

RESOURCES FOR WELLBEING

- Phone applications
 - Clarity
 - Mindshift
 - Virtual Hope Box
 - Redecor
- YouTube Channels
 - <https://www.youtube.com/c/yogawithkassandra>
- Guided Meditations
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyy3dHW4cSw>
- Positive Affirmations
 - <https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/relationships-love/g25629970/positive-affirmations/>

RESOURCES FOR CARE

- Developmental Disability Family Support Services (PerformCare)
 - Respite Care
 - Camps
 - Assistive Technology Devices
 - Home modifications
 - <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/home/ddfss.html>
 - PerformCare – 1-877-652-7624
- Respite Care Programs
 - <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/prevention-programs/respite/>



QUESTIONS?