The ABCs of Mental Health

Mental Health Resource Materials for Parents and Teachers

http://www.hincksdellcrest.org/abc
Understanding Child and Youth Mental Health

- It’s very common (13-25%)
- Not everyone gets help (only 1 in 6 access services)
- 70% of adults with a mental illness indicate that it started before they were 18 (50% before 14)
- **Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in ages 16-24** (Statistics Canada, 2002)
- If one mental health disorder is present, more than likely there will be other problems present (45% have more than 1)
Prevalence of Mental Disorders in Young People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Prevalence</th>
<th>Translation to the “average” classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Depression (6%)</td>
<td>o Depression (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Psychosis (1%)</td>
<td>o Psychosis (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Anxiety Disorders (10%)</td>
<td>o Anxiety Disorders (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o ADHD (4%)</td>
<td>o ADHD (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Anorexia Nervosa (0.2%)</td>
<td>o Anorexia Nervosa (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Total (15-20%)</td>
<td>o Total (4-5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Approximate Age of Onset of Major Mental Disorders

- **Bulemia**: 15-25yrs
- **Schizophrenia**: 15-30yrs
- **Bipolar**: 15-30yrs
- **Major Depressive**: 15-25yrs
- **Anorexia**: 15-20yrs
- **Substance**: 15-25yrs
- **OCD**: 5-30yrs
- **Anxiety**: 5-25yrs
- **ADHD**: 5-10 yrs
- **PDD/Autsim**: 0yrs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ear Ache</th>
<th>Psych Ache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pain (inside)</td>
<td>• Pain (inside)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dizzy</td>
<td>• Dizzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hard to concentrate</td>
<td>• Hard to concentrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Irritable</td>
<td>• Irritable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can’t sleep</td>
<td>• Can’t sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No appetite</td>
<td>• No appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stay home</td>
<td>• Stay home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less social</td>
<td>• Less social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical symptoms</td>
<td>• Physical symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Go for help right away</td>
<td>• ??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Peggy Austen, 2005)
Determinants of Mental Health

Individual factors
- Temperament, genetics, learning ability, social skills

Family factors
- Attachment, parenting style, communication, parental and sibling relations, family structure and circumstances

Environmental factors
- Social conditions, school, community, sense of belonging
Signs and Symptoms

- Look for changes (behaviours, appearance, mood)
  - School performance, (concentration, motivation)
  - Interactions with friends and family
  - Extreme mood swings and/or emotional outbursts of anger and rage
  - Eating and sleeping
  - Dealing with authority
  - Risk taking behaviour
  - Not doing the things he or she used to enjoy
  - Damaging other people's property
  - Worrying constantly
  - Obsessed with his or her weight
  - Lacking energy or motivation
  - Aggression to others or self
What it is

- The **ABCs of Mental Health** is a web based resource for parents and teachers of grades JK to 12.
- Drawing on information from expert advisors, the materials respond to Parents’ and Teachers’ most pressing concerns about childrens mental health and behaviour problems in the classroom or at home.
- The information helps parents and teachers to recognize behaviours that cause them concern.
- It provides prevention and early intervention strategies to promote learning and mental health, along with tips for finding help for children/adolescents with mental health problems.
- It helps build capacity to manage behaviour problems in the classroom and/or home.
What Do Parents and Teachers Want?

- Consultations with School Staff, Parents, in 2005
- What behaviours in your classroom or home are worrisome to you?
- An accessible resource
- Age appropriate materials
- Not based on a diagnosis
- How to tell if a behaviour may reflect a mental health problem
- How to address these behaviours in the classroom or home
What behaviours concern teachers and parents the most

- General issues in good mental health
- Worry and anxiety
- Sadness
- Self-harm
- Anger and aggression
- Poor social relations
- Defiance
- Attention problems
- Eating problems
- Unusual behaviours
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Chapters were all written by experts in the mental health field.
### Three steps to working with students with troublesome behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Actions</strong></th>
<th>provides descriptions of student behaviours that teachers/parents may find confusing or troubling.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>describes possible factors that may be causing or influencing the Actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course to Follow</strong></td>
<td>provides tips and ideas for responding to the Actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Actions
What this Resource Provides

• **Responses to Teachers’** or **Parents’** questions or concerns about the mental health of children from age 3 to 18

• **Descriptions** of behaviours that could indicate possible mental health problems. **Developmental Descriptions.**

• **Clear and simple guidelines** for understanding how children change as they get older, how boys and girls may differ, and how their special needs can affect their mental health.

• **Framework for understanding** behaviours as they relate to children’s mental health

• **Specific ideas for a course of action** when childrens’/adolescents’ behaviours indicate mental health problems
Using the ABCs of Mental Health

- Searchable by behaviours observed in the classroom or at home
  - Four age groups
    - Early childhood age 3 to 5
    - Middle childhood age 6 to 12
    - Early adolescence age 13 to 14
    - Adolescence age 15 to 18
- Behaviours are categorized by level of concern and need for intervention, and not by diagnosis
- Interventions for use in the classroom or at home for behaviours at various levels of severity
- The ABCs of Mental Health is provided for education and information only, it is not intended to take the place of advice from a qualified mental health professional
Actions

Framework for understanding behaviours as they relate to children’s mental health

- Framework categorizes behaviours into three levels of severity or concern
- The same framework provides levels of interventions as suggested strategies for teachers to try in the classroom, (parents to try at home) to address children’s/student’s behaviour problems
Behaviours are categorized by level of concern and severity and correlate to level of intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Light</th>
<th>Actions are behaviours within normal expectations for the child/student.</th>
<th>Strategies for promoting good mental health for children/students in the classroom or at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Light</td>
<td>Actions are behaviours that are beyond normal expectations, and that cause concern and warrant further consideration.</td>
<td>Intervention strategies for the classroom and to share with parents to try at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Light</td>
<td>Actions are behaviours that are serious enough to need referral to a mental health specialist.</td>
<td>Intervention strategies that will require the support of mental health professionals, possibly outside the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When to be concerned?

• May be signs of an underlying mental health disorder if they are:
  – intense;
  – persist over long periods of time;
  – inappropriate for the child's age; and
  – interfere with the child's life.
B is for Beliefs

- Possible factors that may be causing or influencing the child’s/student’s behaviour
- Consideration of these different factors could lead to different strategies for supporting the child/student
- Biological, congenital, health factors
- Family circumstances and events
- Disabilities
- Cultural or religious factors
- Trauma, loss, or turbulent environment
C is for Course to Follow: What Teachers and Parents Can Do

- A framework for planning interventions in the classroom and at home
- Promoting good mental health of all students in the classroom and at home.
- Knowing when and how to deal with troubling behaviour in the classroom and at home
- Knowing when a child’s behaviour would require mental health support
Welcome!

Parents and teachers often have questions about the behaviour of children and adolescents. They may worry about whether a behaviour is appropriate for a particular age or developmental stage, or a sign that something might be wrong. They may wonder why it is occurring, and how best to respond.

The ABCs of Mental Health provides two free, web-based Resources - one for teachers and one for parents – to help answer these questions. The Resources include ideas for promoting the mental health of children and adolescents, information about how children change as they get older, descriptions of behaviours that might indicate a problem, and practical suggestions for steps to take.

If this is your first visit to this website, we suggest that you start with the Introduction. Otherwise, go directly to one of the Resources. (See links to the right.)
How to Use the Resource
Two Access Methods

I wish to utilize the Resource to:

• I wish to investigate a worrisome behaviour or potential mental health problem

• Engage in review a chapter related to potential mental health problems
Choose the age of the child of concern to you

3-5 years old (early childhood)

6-12 years old (middle childhood)

13-14 years old (early adolescence)

15-18 years old (adolescence)
The Worried Child - Separation
Worries – Behaviour List

- crying or clinging; cry easily
- withdraw socially
- sad
- listless
- difficulty concentrating
- anxious
- agitated
- demanding; intrusive
- need constant attention
- repetitive questions
- worry about health and safety
- fears (of animals, of being abandoned, of being alone)
- physical problems/complaints (headache, upset stomach or stomachache, extreme tension)
- doesn’t want to go to school/ refuses to go to school
- does not settle quickly after separating from the significant adult
- no soothing is effective.
- does not take an interest in the activities of other children
- remains preoccupied with the adult who has left
- afraid to go alone to washroom or other parts of school building.
- refuses to go to school.
- frequent requests to phone home from school
- frequent requests for a parent to come
- refuses to go on school trips unless accompanied by a parent
- requests permission to leave early/leaves school or class early
- does not make an adjustment to new school after moving
- does not attend full days at school for a week or more
Resources Now Available

- Parent Resource for ages 3 to 18 years, in four age groups
- Expanded Teacher Resource for ages 3 to 18 years in four age groups

http://www.hincksdellcrest.org/abc
An open, internet based resource

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