

Student's Mental Health

17 November 2021/ 5:30PM - 7PM/ Kent County Middle School's Media Center & Virtually via Zoom

Attendees

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About NAMI

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Locally, our NAMI is NAMI Kent & Queen Anne's County (NAMI KOA), located in Chestertown MD.

NAMI offers education, training, resources and advocacy.

Programs:

- Family-to-Family
- Family Support Groups
- End the silence

Mental Health Stigma

- When someone (even yourself) views a person in a negative way just because they have a mental health condition
- Feelings of shame, being judged – can be internal
- Rejection, bullying, discrimination, self-harm/suicide
- Results in making things worse
- Delaying or avoiding seeking help
- Change it! Tell your story, listen to others, accept and don't judge.
- People more likely to suffer from MH Stigma
 - Marginalized groups – Black, Hispanic, poor
 - Lack of awareness of/access to mainstream resources/supports
 - Certain religious groups – “faith healing”
 - Gender – male “toughness” – female “emotionality”

Mental Health Conditions in Children & Adolescents

- “Illness” - disorder - a condition with adverse life impact
- Depression - includes bipolar

- Anxiety - includes OCD
- Eating disorders
- ADHD
- Autism
- Schizophrenia/Psychosis
- PTSD
- Personality Disorders

Warning signs of a Mental Illness

- Feeling persistently sad
- Increased moodiness, sharp mood swings
- Talking about suicide; threats to self or others
- Suddenly more irritable, agitated or anxious
- Major changes in sleeping or eating patterns; nightmares
- Regression (thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of separation)
- Marked deterioration in school or home functioning
- Persistent physical complaints and/or visits to the school nurse
- Giving up previously fun activities or interactions with friends
- Acting very withdrawn
- Sharp increase in defiance
- Increased aggression, conflict with peers/family members
- Abusing substances
- Hallucinations, delusions or paranoia

What to do when you suspect a mental health condition in your child

- Talk with your pediatrician
 - Rule out physical causes
- Get a referral to a mental health specialist
 - Psychologist, counselor, social worker in the community
 - Psychiatrist
- Talk to your child's teacher or school counselor
 - Consider formal or informal in-school supports
 - disability - based supports (IEP, 504 plan)
- Connect with other families
- Take care of yourself
- Recognized the value of self-awareness and self-advocacy - for your child and for yourself

- And above all, talk with your child!
 - Parents, and sometimes teachers, are the first line of support for kids and teens. It's important for you to have an open line of communication with them and build a sense of trust. When your kids and teens are having difficulties, you want them to feel comfortable turning to you for help.
 - Be able to identify when your kids are struggling emotionally. Kids and teens tend to internalize their feelings. If something is troubling them, they may not speak up and ask for support. Sometimes, they don't realize that help is available.
 - Tips for those difficult conversations:
 - Make them feel safe ("you're not in trouble").
 - Listen to them (don't dismiss the concerns or be quick to offer suggestions).
 - Don't "argue" with their feelings or tell them not to feel that way! Validate their feelings.
 - Be genuine (open, authentic, relaxed).
 - Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know" (help them find out).
 - Affirm and support their need for help (help them find it).

Trauma in Children and Adolescents

- Many events can be highly stressful but not necessarily traumatic
 - Witness or victim of violence
 - Abuse – physical, sexual, emotional (or witness a parent abused)
 - Serious injury or medical condition
 - Divorce, family separation; death of parent or sibling
 - Being threatened or bullied
 - Other chronic negative life circumstances
 - Difficulty with developmental tasks, struggles with identity, sexuality
 - The pandemic has resulted in high levels of loneliness and anxiety, especially among adolescents
- Psychological Trauma
 - When the event has lasting impact
 - Adversely affects social/emotional/behavioral functioning
 - (refer to earlier slide on "What to Look For")
 - Manifests at home and school
 - In school can be seen as "bad" behavior, treated with discipline rather than understanding
- ACES – the lifelong adverse health impact of childhood trauma
 - Disease, early death, substance abuse, disability, dysfunction, etc.
 - Greater recognition of trauma's physical and mental health impacts

Resilience

- Resilience
 - Ability to recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity
- Psychological Resilience
 - Ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly
- Resilience in Children
 - Refers to children/adolescents who are doing better than expected, given a history that includes risk or adverse experience
 - Not a trait or simple thing that some children possess – it's a set of skills and habits which can be learned, combined with temperament
 - There is no such thing as an 'invulnerable child' that can overcome any obstacle or adversity that they encounter in life. Children do better when not exposed to high levels of risk or adversity

The resilience process is the process of generating a positive response to adverse events or threats.

Appraisal of threat or problems, reframing, coping, and celebrating a step up.

How to Promote Resilience – What Can Parents Do?

- Resilience is the product of a number of developmental processes over time, that have allowed children to experience small exposures to adversity or some sort of age-appropriate challenges, to develop mastery and continue to develop competently. This gives children a sense of personal pride, competence and self-worth.
- Help with steps 1-4 in the process of resilience. Ask questions and brainstorm, not telling or commanding.
- Think positive – model positive attitudes and emotions, positive problem-solving and persistence
- Express love and gratitude – praise much more often than you criticize
- Be open about your feelings, and label them, positive or negative
- Foster competency – physical, academic, artistic, social
- Fitness: healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.

Additional resources and contact:

- Additional Resources (available electronically)
 - Childhood Trauma (National Association of School Psychologists - NASP)
 - Building Resiliency (NASP)
 - Talking to Kids When They Need Help (American Psychological Assn. - APA)

- Presenters/NAMI KQA Contact Information
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Attachments:

 Student Mental Health - SECAC 11-17-21 - final.pptx

 Childhood Trauma.docx

 Building Reliency.docx

 Talking to Kids When They Need Help.docx

 Student Mental Health - SECAC 11-17-21 - supplemental slides.pptx - Students' of Color