

Depression & Anxiety in Children and Youth

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop on the experiences of depression & anxiety among children and youth. As a school counselor, it is extremely important to me to spend time learning how I can best support the students and families at Kissel Hill and in our community. Medical illnesses such as depression and anxiety have no boundaries and can affect anyone - even at a young age.

There are four types of depression commonly found in youth: Major Depression, Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood, Dysthymia, and Bipolar Disorder. Since 2015 the prevalence of youth experiencing a major depressive episode (MDE) has increased by 12.5% (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2015). A major depressive episode is defined as: "a period of two weeks or longer during which either there is a depressed feeling or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image." Depression is more than feeling sad or blue - it creates a severe impairment at home and school.

On the other hand, anxiety is normal in children and every child experiences various phases of anxiety. A phase is temporary (i.e. studying for a big test, giving a presentation, moving to a new school, etc.) and most times is harmless. However, an anxiety disorder is ongoing, and children with an anxiety disorder may worry excessively about many things, including school, family, or the future in general. Children may get "stuck" in worried thoughts and have a difficult time doing normal activities. Anxiety disorders are the leading mental health issue among children and teens, affecting 1 in 8 youth.

Here's the good news:

Depression and Anxiety are both very treatable!

The greatest challenge in treating depression and anxiety is being able to recognize the need to seek help. Research done by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found only 20% of children diagnosed with depression or anxiety are actually being treated. Treatment looks different for each child/family but is most effectively done with ongoing counseling services and consultation with medical professionals.

Contact Mrs. Mathin

If you would like more information, please contact me:

Mrs. Britnee Mathin, M.S., NCSP
717-626-3703
bmathin@warwicksd.org

Tips for Families

There are many preventive measures families can take to help reduce the risk factors for developing depression and anxiety.

- **Show affection and acceptance**
- **Take time to talk**
- **Be involved**
- **Avoid over involvement & encourage autonomy**
- **Establish family rules & consequences**
- **Encourage good health habits**
- **Be a good role model for handling conflict**
- **Help your child to manage emotions**
- **Support you child when something is bothering them**
- **Encourage professional help seeking when needed**