

Mental Health 101

Early Signs and Symptoms in Children, Youth, and Adolescents

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Alameda County
Health Care Services Agency

Alameda County ^{ac}  ^{bh}
Behavioral Health Care Services

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES



**Stars Behavioral
Health Group**

*Partnering with People for
Positive Change*

Workshop Objectives

- Increase knowledge of Mental Health and Wellness and to introduce signs and symptoms of Behavioral Health challenges and Mental Illness in children and youth.
- To Define Stress and Trauma
- To Explore Types of Trauma
- To Examine the Impact of Chronic Stress and Complex Trauma

What is Alameda County Behavioral Health?

Alameda County Behavioral Health is part of a larger Managed Health Care plan that provides mental health and Substance Use Disorder services to health care services to youth and their families who have full scope Medi-Cal and who meet service criteria.



**Children and Youth
Ages 0-17**



**Transition Age Youth (TAY)
Ages 18-24**



**Adults
Ages 25-55**



**Older Adults
Ages 55+**

What is Mental Health?

- ▶ Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

What About Mental Health Disorders?

- ▶ A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others. If you have – or think you might have – a mental illness, the first thing you must know is that you are not alone. Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don't like to, or are scared to, talk about them. However:
- ▶ 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- ▶ 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year
- ▶ 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- ▶ 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- ▶ Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- ▶ Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- ▶ Family history of mental health problems

Mental Illness Signs and Symptoms

People may expect a person with serious mental illness to look visibly different from others, and they may tell someone who doesn't "look ill" to "get over it" through willpower. These misperceptions add to the challenges of living with a mental health condition.

Social inequality has been associated with the risk of developing mental health challenges.

Signs and Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges in Adolescent Age Youth

The following information comes from the Mental Health First Aid curriculum. If you or anyone you know are interested in getting trained in Mental Health First Aid for children and Youth, please visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/>

This is not an exhaustive and many other signs and symptoms may or may not be present.

- An Unusually sad mood
- Lack of Energy and Tiredness
- Having Trouble Sleeping
- Isolating from Friends and Family
- Lack of Interests in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Obsessive or Compulsive Behavior
- Unrealistic and/or excessive fear and worry
- Decreased concentration and memory
- Headaches and dizziness
- Loss of self-esteem and/or confidence
- Rapid thinking and speech

This sounds like every teenager I know! How do I really know what's "normal" and what needs further attention?

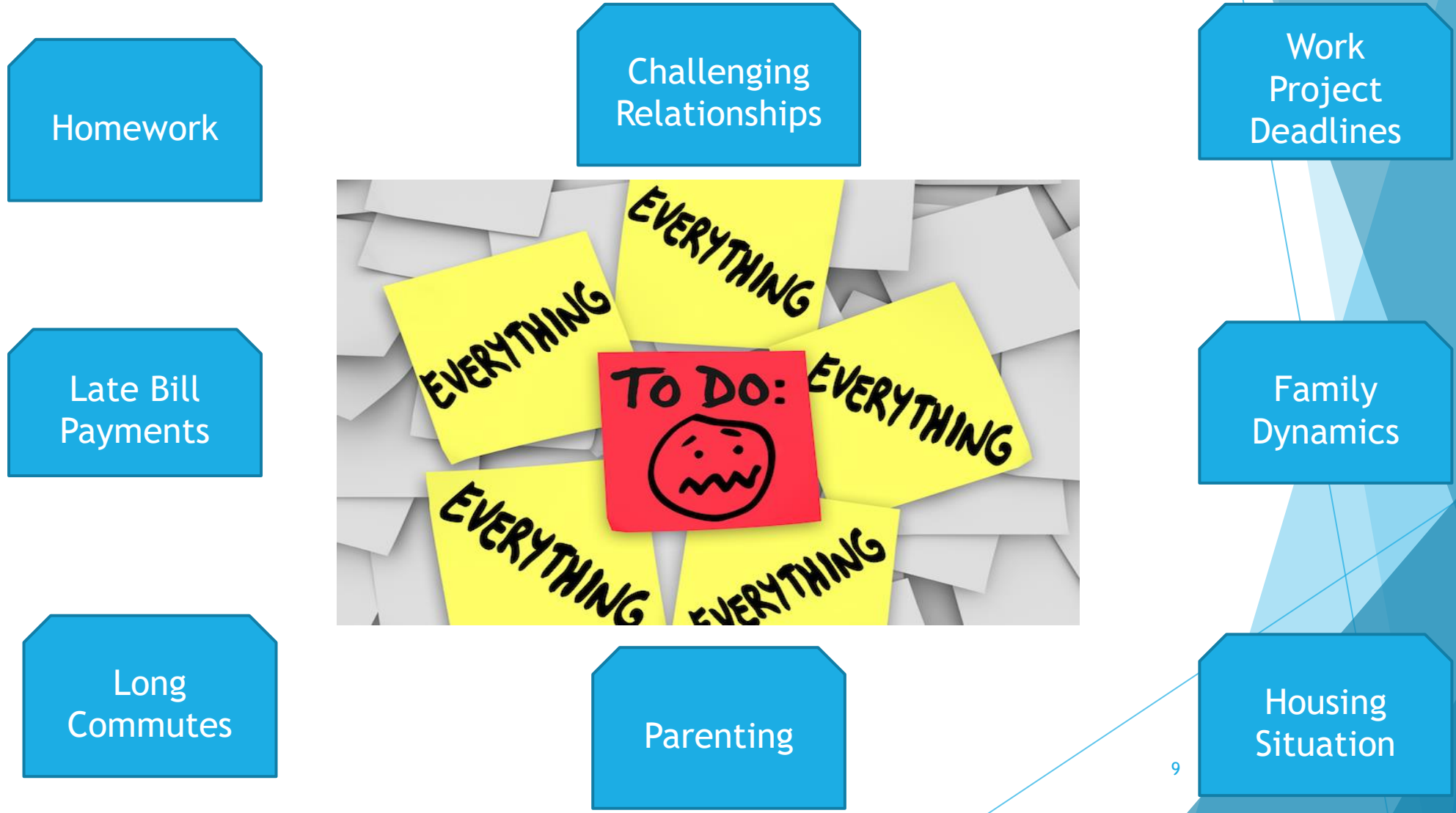


There are about 1 in every 6 children within the age group of 2-8 years who have some or the other neurodevelopmental, behavioral or emotional difficulty

What about Stress? Is that a Mental Illness?

- ▶ If you were to “Google” stress you may find the following definitions:
 - Pressure or tension exerted on a material object
 - A constraining force or influence
 - A physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension
- ▶ **The American Psychological Association (APA) Defines Stress as follows:**
 - By definition, stress is any uncomfortable "emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes."¹

What's "stressing you out?"



Types of Stress

We all experience different types of stress throughout our lives. The types of stress and the timing of that stress determine whether and how they impact us.

Positive Stress- Is moderate, brief, and generally a normal part of life. Learning to adjust to this type of stress is an essential component to healthy development.

- Starting at a new school or a new job
- Buying a new car or house
- Starting a new romantic relationship

Tolerable Stress- Includes events that have the potential to alter the developing brain negatively, but which occur infrequently and give the brain time to recover.

- Failing a class and/or not passing an exam
- Auditions, interviews, try-outs that result in “not making the team”

Toxic Stress- Includes strong, frequent and prolonged activation of the body’s stress response system. Toxic stress is constant and often unrelenting in nature.

- Chronic Abuse and/or Neglect
- Chronic Medical Conditions
- Prolonged Incarceration

Covid-19 and the Impact on Children, Youth, and Young Adults

- ▶ In young children and adolescents, the pandemic and lockdown have a greater impact on emotional and social development compared to that in adults.
- ▶ The nationwide closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91% of the world's student population.
- ▶ The prolonged period of stress could have a long-term negative impact on their development.
- ▶ Compared to adults, this pandemic may continue to have increased long term adverse consequences on children and adolescents.

Reference

Singh, S., Roy, D., Sinha, K., Parveen, S., Sharma, G., & Joshi, G. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on mental health of children and adolescents: A narrative review with recommendations. *Psychiatry research*, 293, 113429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113429>

But what about Trauma?

Trauma is any type of distressing event or experience that can have an impact on a person's ability to cope and function. Trauma can result in emotional, physical, and psychological harm.

Trauma comes in many shapes and forms, but there are some common scenarios that are generally considered traumatic.

Trauma has no boundaries with regard to age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or many other categories that capture populations of people. In fact, certain populations may have more exposure to trauma than others.

Types of Trauma

There are a number of ways in which trauma is experienced. Here are some examples of the types of traumas that may be experienced by individuals, families and communities.

- ▶ Physical and/or Sexual Abuse
- ▶ Natural or Manmade Disasters
- ▶ Emotional Abuse
- ▶ Neglect
- ▶ War, Terrorism, or Political Violence
- ▶ Victim and/or Witness to Domestic Violence
- ▶ Death of a Parent, Child, or Caregiver
- ▶ Victim and/or Witness of Bullying
- ▶ Historical Trauma*
- ▶ Community Trauma*
- ▶ Vicarious Trauma*

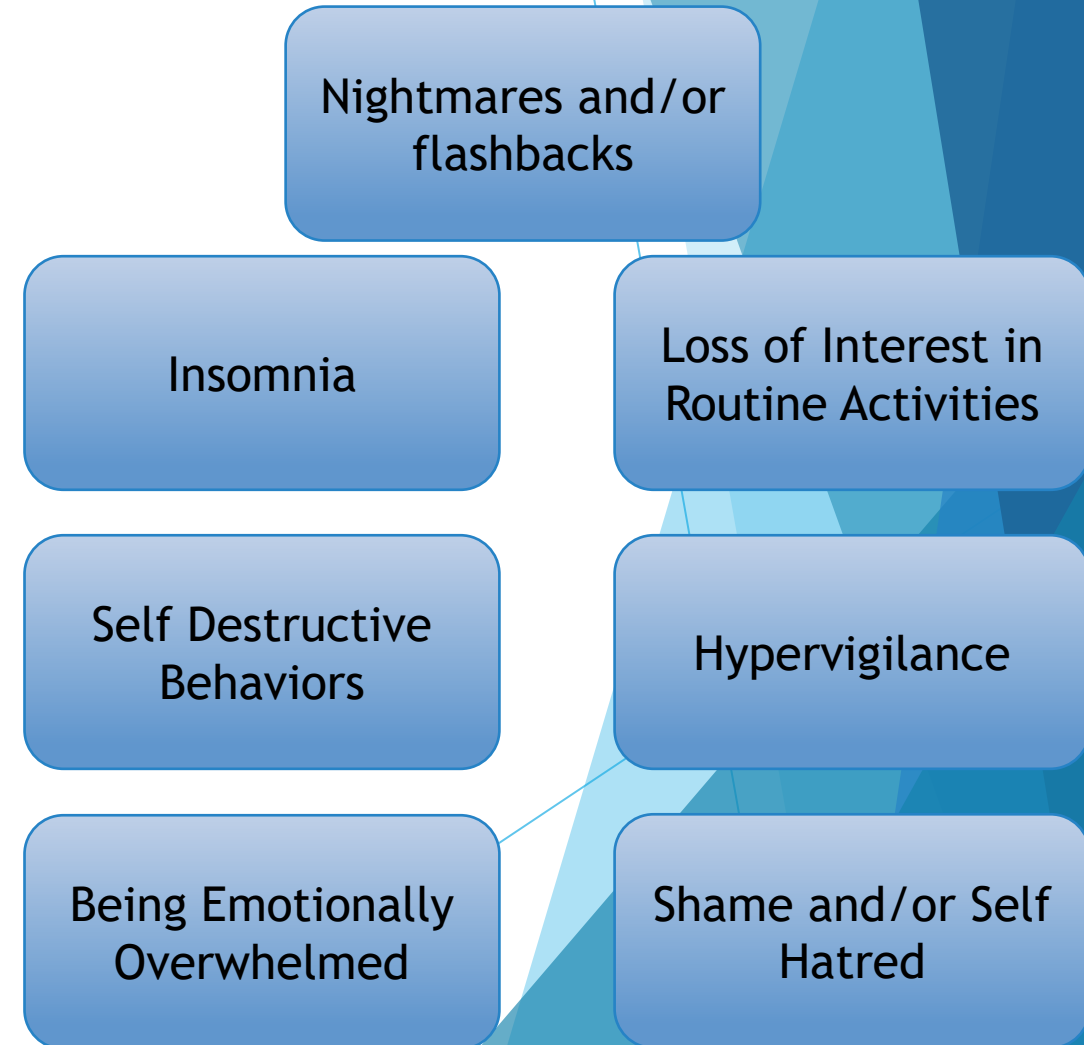


How do we know if someone has experienced a traumatic event?

Most people at some point in their lives will experience psychological trauma. The impact of this experience varies from person to person.

While many people who have experienced a traumatic event will go on with their lives without any lasting negative effects, others will have more difficulty and experience traumatic stress reactions.

Effects of Experiencing Traumatic Events



Trauma Triggers

What are they?

A trigger is a reminder of past traumatizing events. These may be sights, sounds, smells, places etc. that causes one to feel unsafe, anxious, helpless, and fearful. Here are some simple examples of triggers and the 'conditioned responses' they unleash.

Getting Triggered

- Someone criticizes something you've said or done, and you instantly get defensive and angry, then verbally go on the attack.
- Someone criticizes something you've said or done, and you instantly feel crushed and defeated, then go silent and try to 'disappear.'
- Walking into your childhood home, your body suddenly tenses up and your eyes scan for threats.

Triggers can be obvious or subtle in our awareness or not

Reactions can be fast or creep up in you slowly

You can change how you respond to triggers

How to Manage Trauma Triggers

The road to wellness and recovery when dealing with trauma can be challenging but overall mental health and wellness can be realized

The University of Southern California's Adolescent Trauma Treatment Center suggests the following in their "Integrative Treatment of Complex Trauma for Adolescents" Treatment Guide:

In order to begin to manage Trauma Triggers, those impacted must be willing and able to:

- ▶ Learn about triggers, including their historic nature
- ▶ Identify specific instances during which he or she has been triggered,
- ▶ Determine, based on these times,
 - (a) what seem to be the major triggers in his or her life and
 - (b) how to identify when he or she is being triggered,
- ▶ Detect the "unreal," non-here-and-now nature of triggered thoughts and feelings, i.e., that they are more relevant to the past than the present, and
- ▶ Problem-solve strategies that might be effective once triggering has occurred.



**HOW TO COPE
WHEN TRAUMA
GETS TRIGGERED**

What happens if nothing is done to address Chronic Stress and Trauma?

Data from The Center for Disease Control shows a correlation between the impact of trauma and overall health and wellness outcomes. An inability to address chronic stress and trauma can lead to moderate to severe mental and physical health challenges. While this isn't the case for all, those impacted by trauma are more likely to have unfavorable health outcomes.

What are some of the mental and physical health issues :

- Clinical Depression
- Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Risk of Suicide
- Engaging in High Risk Behaviors
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Higher Risk for Stroke

Strategies for Self-Care

- ✓ **Seek Professional Help.** Some situations require the support of licensed mental health professionals. Don't ignore the warning signs in yourself or in others. Prevention and Early Intervention are key to wellness and recovery.
- ✓ **Make your wellness and recovery and priority.** If you don't, no one else will either. Do things you enjoy that are positive and safe. (i.e. painting, playing an instrument, reading, etc.)
- ✓ **Set limits to manage expectations.** This means with your spouse, children, family and friends. While stress is a part of life, setting limits can lower the instances of chronic stress.



- ✓ **It is ok to say "no".** If you don't want to participate in a family or social activity because the setting, attendees etc. are too triggering, it's okay to step away.
- ✓ **Just Breathe.** Sometimes we need to pause, take a breath and regain control of the horse. Get that frontal lobe back in control so you can wrangle that horse that knocked you off.
- ✓ **Get some air.** Take a walk, get some sun and fresh air. Take the kiddos to the park (although that could be stressful). Take the time to enjoy some time away even if only for just 10 minutes or so.
- ✓ **Take the time to reflect.** Meditation, prayer, journal writing, etc. Take an opportunity to reflect on your health and wellness journey.

Tips for Improved Health and Wellness

- ▶ Mobilize a support system -- reach out and connect with others, especially those who may have shared the stressful event
- ▶ Talk about the traumatic experience with empathic listeners
- ▶ Cry, cry again, and then cry some more
- ▶ Workout exercise like jogging, aerobics, bicycling, walking
- ▶ Relaxation exercise like yoga, stretching, massage
- ▶ Humor, laugh a little
- ▶ Hot baths
- ▶ Music and art
- ▶ Maintain balanced diet and sleep cycle as much as possible
- ▶ Avoid over-using stimulants like caffeine, sugar, or nicotine
- ▶ Commitment to something personally meaningful and important every day
- ▶ Hug those you love, pets included
- ▶ Proactive responses toward personal and community safety -- organize or do something socially active
- ▶ Write about your experience -- in detail, just for yourself or to share with others



Where can I get help for myself or someone else?



**CALL THE NAMI
HELPLINE**
800-950-
NAMIinfo@nami.org M-F,
10 AM - 6 PM ET
[Find Help in a crisis](#)

**Crisis Support Services of Alameda
County**
24 hour crisis line 1-800-273-8255
<https://www.crisissupport.org/>

Alameda County Trauma Informed Care

[https://alamedacountytraumainformedcar
e.org/trauma-survivors-and-family/local-
resources/](https://alamedacountytraumainformedcare.org/trauma-survivors-and-family/local-resources/)

Family Education Resource Center (FERC)
440 Grand Ave. Oakland, CA 94610
510-746-1700 Toll Free 1-888-896-3372
<https://ferc.org/>

Pool of Consumer Champions
510-639-1338
<http://pocc.org/>

*You may also contact your health care provider for particular referrals for physical or mental health services. If you have Medi-cal as your primary health insurance plan and are in need of mental health services, please contact **Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services ACCESS line at 1-800-499-9099***

