Riding the Wave: How the Pandemic Has Impacted Children’s Mental Health

Presented by: Jacqueline Small, LCSW
CoreyAnn Friedrich, LCSW
Objectives

• Typical Youth Development
• Behavioral Health Stats Before and After the Pandemic
• Recognizing Changes in Behavior
• How to talk to your kids
• Anxiety and Depression-Impact of the Pandemic on our Youth and the Family Unit
Typical Youth Development

Stages of Psychosocial Development

- Infant
- Toddler
- Pre-schooler
- Grade-schooler
- Teenager
- Young Adult
- Middle-age Adult
- Older Adult

- Integrity vs Despair
- Generativity vs Stagnation
- Intimacy vs Isolation
- Identity vs Role Confusion
- Industry vs Inferiority
- Initiative vs Guilt
- Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt
- Trust vs Mistrust

Proposed by Erik Erikson
TRUST vs. MISTRUST (Infancy 0-1 ½ years)

❖ Can I trust the world?

❖ Secure attachment is developed when infant receives consistent, predictable and reliable care
AUTONOMY vs. SHAME & DOUBT
(Early Childhood 1 ½ - 3 years old)

- Assert independence
  - Walking away from caregiver
  - Picking a toy of their own choice
  - Making clothing and food choices
- Is it okay to be me?
INITIATIVE vs. GUILT
(Preschool 3-5 years old)

❖ Plan activities, make up games, initiate activities with others
❖ Is it okay for me to do, move and act?
When You:
Cut it for me,
Write it for me,
Open it for me,
Set it up for me,
Draw it for me or
Find it for me,

All I learn is:
that you do it better than me
INDUSTRY (Competence) vs. INFERIORITY (School age 5-12 years old)

❖ Eager to learn and accomplish more complex skills (reading and writing)
❖ Peer group has greater significance and source of child’s self-esteem
❖ Can I make it in the world of people and things?
I always look down on myself...
IDENTITY vs. ROLE CONFUSION (Adolescence 13-19 years old)

❖ Sense of self, personal identity through exploring personal values, beliefs, morals and goals
❖ Who am I? Who can I be?
Behavioral Health Stats

- CY 2019: 2,613
- CY 2020: 2,767
- CY 2021: January-June 1,573 → at this rate, well over 3,000 patients will be seen by the end of the calendar year.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among persons aged 10-24 years in the United States.

34

- CDC

1 out of 5 adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder only 50% ever receive the help they need
Recognizing Changes in Behavior

**Normal Teen Behavior**
- Spending more time with friends, less time with family
- Difficulty getting up for school
- Needing more sleep or having a larger appetite during growth spurts
- Feeling sad or angry after a fight with a friend or break up
- Experimenting with drugs, sex, self-harm behavior (cutting)

**Concerning Teen Behavior**
- Isolating self from family and friends; stopping all social activity
- Refusal to attend/participate in school; sudden changes in mood or signs of distress/depression
- Change in energy levels, sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Sadness, anxiety or anger that lasts more than a few weeks
- Risk taking behaviors, disregard for rules, self-harm to relieve pain
How to Talk to Your Kids

❖ Timing is Everything

❖ Focus on Observed Behaviors

❖ Validate

❖ Self-disclosure

❖ Be Accepting of the Response
Anxiety & Depression

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Symptoms
- Excessive anxiety and worry
- Increased muscle aches or soreness
- Impaired concentration
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Difficulty sleeping

Signs of Depression
- Sadness
- Appetite changes
- Trouble sleeping
- Withdrawal from social life
- Suicidal thoughts
- Irritability
- Lower energy
Impact of the Pandemic