

Mental Health Disorders Are More Common Than One Might Think.

In fact, they affect one in every five young people today, interfering with their social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Common childhood disorders include depression, anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorders, autism, and obsessive-compulsive disorders, like self-cutting, Anorexia, Bulimia and obsessive, ritualistic behaviors.

Such disorders are both biological (e.g. they may be genetic) and environmental (resulting from exposure to violence, stress, loss, toxins). When left undiagnosed and untreated, children and their families suffer needlessly. Children can't just "get over" these problems alone. They need your help to overcome them, so they become happy, healthy, well-adjusted adults.

Fortunately, most children are resilient. When mental health issues are diagnosed and treated early, they often have excellent long-term outcomes. If you are concerned about your child's emotional health or development, it's important to get a check-up with a qualified therapist... just as you would see your pediatrician if you were concerned about your child's physical health.

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are "medically necessary." This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists

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IS YOUR CHILD OKAY?

Evaluating Mental Health
Disorders in Children



Brought to you by the
California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists



OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT

About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 28,000 practicing Marriage and Family Therapists. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage them to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.



WHAT'S NORMAL?

All children play, act out, and occasionally do odd or alarming things. Sometimes these behaviors are transitory and developmental. But if your child shows feelings and behaviors that concern you—or persist long-term—find a therapist that specializes in treating mental health disorders in children. A diagnostic assessment can determine if a behavior is just a phase or something more serious that requires intervention.

Warning Signs Your Child Needs Help

- Anxious or often worried
- Poor concentration or inability to sit still, focus attention
- Sad and hopeless feelings that do not go away
- Very angry or crying most of the time, overreacting to things, declining performance in school
- Unexplained fears
- Suicidal tendencies
- A need to wash, count, or perform certain rituals hundreds of times per day to avoid unsubstantiated danger
- Obsessive dieting/exercise, unexplained weight loss, avoiding food, bingeing and purging, excessive visits to the bathroom after meals
- Loss of interest in things he or she once enjoyed
- Daydreaming too much and not completing tasks
- Feeling overwhelmed by life
- Hearing voices that cannot be explained
- Setting fires, purposefully killing or hurting animals
- Breaking the law without regard for other people

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- Reward good behaviors.** Children profoundly want to please their parents. You can ease family tension and build self-esteem by noticing and rewarding positive behaviors in your child on a daily basis. If you do so consistently but bad behaviors don't decrease, they may need professional attention.
- Seek help.** Sometimes parents need to relieve their own anxiety about their child to understand whether or not an issue is a serious one. If it is serious, marriage and family therapists are uniquely trained to assess the possibilities and diagnose and treat the true problem (i.e. trauma, family dynamics, a true disorder).
- Be informed about medications.** While medications can provide relief from unpleasant symptoms, they do not address the underlying causes of the emotional distress. Individual or family therapy is an appropriate first step in diagnosis because it may offer an effective non-chemical intervention. In other situations, medication and therapy work most effectively together.
- Seek out support groups and information.** Once you have a diagnosis, there's just no substitute for someone who has walked in your shoes. Your therapist can help connect you to appropriate support groups, information resources, and other specialists who can help you and your child.