

The Committee on Children, Youth and Mental Health

The Committee on Children, Youth and Mental Health began in an effort to:

1. Offer those in lay ministry knowledge of mental health issues
2. Equip them to spot young people who are in need
3. Offer curated resources to families and those working with children and youth
4. Help congregations begin open dialogue about mental health
5. Offer hope and community for people who have interest in mental health issues

According to the NAMI, National Association on Mental Illness, 1 in 6 US youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. As a Church we need to begin open conversation to address this startling statistic. We are a beloved people of God, who strive to proclaim the good news of God in Christ. We are a people of hope that aim to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We are a people that with God's help strive for justice and peace, and respect the dignity of every human. Our goal is not to offer counseling and diagnose mental health issues, but to offer resources, support and information for families, lay ministers and clergy.

[Resources from the Episcopal Church](#)
[Episcopal Mental Illness Network](#)
[St. Luke's Durham, NC](#)
[National Alliance on Mental Health](#)
[Committee's Curated Resource List](#)

Anxiety

- The most common mental health concern in the US
- 7% of children aged 3-17 experience anxiety each year
- Most people develop symptoms before age 21
- Anxiety disorders make up a group of related conditions
- Can run in families
- Can be due to environment, a stressful or traumatic event
- Can cause self-identity issues

Books:

[Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine](#), by: Julia Cook (2 to 7 years)
[David and the Worry Beast](#), by: Anne Marie Guanci (7 to 12 years)

Bullying

- CDC reports 33% of children 12-18 report experiencing bullying
- 70% of all children report bullying is a problem at their school.
- Being bullied has lasting effects on mental health including social isolation, depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Goes under reported
- Other children participate in bullying because they are afraid of being bullied themselves.
- Children are afraid to talk about it with adults.

Resources:

[Stop Bullying](#) from the US Government
[Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center](#)
[Helping Kids Deal with Bullies](#)

Books:

[Llama Llama and the Bully Goat](#) (2 to 7 ears old)

[The Bully Blockers Club](#) (2 to 7 years)

[Marlene, Marlene, Queen of Mean](#) (2 to 7 years)

[The Juice Box Bully](#) (7 to 12 years)

[Confessions of a Former Bully](#) (7 to 12 years)

[The Bully Book](#) (7 to 12 years)

[Dear Bully](#) (7 to 12 years)

[Blubber](#) (7 to 12 years)

Death and Dying/Grief

- Children experience grief differently than adults
- Children experience grief differently at different ages
- Children often feel responsible for being the cause of what they are grieving for (divorce, dying, any loss).
- Children are develop fear as a reaction to a loss.
- Children often hide their grief or hold it to prevent further sadness in the family

Resources:

[Sesame Street Helping Kids Grieve](#)

[New York Life: Grieving Families](#)

[Rainbow Support Groups](#)

[National Alliance for Grieving Children](#)

Books:

[My Favorite Color is Blue Sometimes: A Journey through Loss with Art and Color](#)

[Remember the Secret](#) (2 to 7 years)

[Sad Isn't Bad](#) (2 to 7 years)

[The Tenth Good Thing About Barney](#) (2 to 7 years)

[My Son...My Son...A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide](#) (13 to adulthood)

Depression

- Rates for childhood depression have been rising
- Different symptoms depending on the person
- Affects day-to-day functioning over a period of time
- Changes in sleep, appetite, concentration, energy, interest in activities
- Can cause physical aches and pains

Resources:

[Child Mind Institute](#)

[ADAA: Childhood Depression](#)

Divorce

- Younger kids (K to 3rd Grade)
 - Blame themselves or their bad behavior
 - Can complain of physical aches
 - Experience separation anxiety or have emotional outbursts
 - Regress to younger behaviors
- Grades 4-6
 - Most likely show anger, embarrassment or frustration
 - Can stir up conflicts with peers
 - May show a lack of interest in activities or show tearful distress
- Grade 7-12
 - Experiment with risky behaviors
 - Display extreme moodiness or negativity
 - Could demonstrate poor school performance
 - Disinterest or distraction
 - May feel guilty

Resources:

[Support Groups for Children: Divorce](#)

Books:

[My Family's Changing](#) (2 to 7 years)

[Dinosaurs Divorce](#) (2 to 7 years)

[When My Parents Forgot How to be Friends](#) (7 to 12. Years)

[What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce: A Survival Guide for Kids](#) (7 to 12. Years)

Eating Disorders

- Eating disorders in children and teens cause serious changes in eating habits that can lead to major, even life threatening health problems.
- In children and teens, eating disorders can overlap. For example, some children alternate between periods of anorexia and bulimia.
- Eating disorders typically develop during adolescence or early adulthood. However, they can start in childhood, too. Females are much more vulnerable. Only an estimated 5% to 15% of people with anorexia or bulimia are male. With binge eating, the number rises to 35% male.
- Eating disorders may develop in those dealing with anxiety, feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, addiction issues, and fear of being overweight.

Resources:

[Reading List](#)

Parenting

- Parenting a child who lives with a mental disability or illness is stressful
- Parents may feel guilty for their child's mental health struggle.
- Parents may feel socially isolated if they perceive their child is different or struggles with a disability.
- Parents may experience grief or sadness at the loss of their dream for their child
- Parents may experience a wide range of emotions when seeking help for their child.

Resources:

[Social Media](#)

[Parenting Resources: ACE and Resilience Handouts](#)

Books:

[Tear Soup](#) (2 to 7 years)

[Telling a Child About Death](#) (for parents)

Signs to Look for that a child may need help:

- **Preschool/early elementary school years:**
 - Behavior problems in preschool or daycare
 - Hyperactivity way beyond what the other kids are doing
 - Trouble sleeping
 - Persistent nightmares
 - Excessive fear, worrying, or crying
 - Extreme disobedience or aggression. Because it's often within a child's nature to disobey or intrude on a playmate's space, an excessive degree of this behavior is what should concern you, says Dr. Klykylo, such as deliberate destructiveness or hurting peers or animals.
 - Lots of temper tantrums all the time
 - Persistent difficulty separating from a parent. Klykylo acknowledges that many children experience separation anxiety at first; there could be a problem if this goes on for months.
- **Grade School Years**
 - Excessive fears and worries
 - Extreme hyperactivity
 - Sudden decrease in school performance
 - Loss of interest in friends or favorite activities
 - Loss of appetite
 - Sudden changes in weight
 - Excessive worry about weight gain
 - Sudden changes in sleep habits
 - Visible prolonged sadness
 - Substance use or abuse
 - Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- **Tween and Teen Years**
 - All of the above
 - Destructive behavior, such as damaging property or setting fires
 - Constantly threatening to run away or running away, which can be a precursor to self-harm, says Klykylo

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Comments or writings that suggest a desire to harm himself or others

Stress

- Childhood stress can be present in any setting that requires the child to adapt or change. Stress may be caused by positive changes, such as starting a new activity, but it is most commonly linked with negative changes such as illness or death in the family.
- In small amounts, stress can be good. But, excessive stress can affect the way a child thinks, acts, and feels.
- Physical symptoms can include:
 - Decreased appetite, other changes in eating habits
 - Headache
 - New or recurrent bedwetting
 - Nightmares
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Upset stomach or vague stomach pain
 - Other physical symptoms with no physical illness
- Emotional or behavioral symptoms may include:
 - Anxiety, worry
 - Not able to relax
 - New or recurring fears (fear of the dark, fear of being alone, fear of strangers)
 - Clinging, unwilling to let you out of sight
 - Anger, crying, whining
 - Not able to control emotions
 - Aggressive or stubborn behavior
 - Going back to behaviors present at a younger age
 - Doesn't want to participate in family or school activities

Resources:

[Tools for Helping Children Manage Stress](#)

[Helping Children Deal with Change and Stress](#)

[Coping with Stress and Violence](#)

[School Stress Takes a Toll on Health, Teens and Parents Say](#)

Books:

[Wemberley Worried](#)

[What to Do When You Worry Too Much](#)

[What to Do When You're Scared and Worried](#)

[When My Worries Get Too Big](#)

[I Feel Worried](#)

[Coping Skills for Kids Workbook](#)

Film:

[Resilience: The Biology of Stress & The Science of Hope?](#)

Trauma

- A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to a child's life or bodily integrity.
- Witnessing a traumatic event that threatens life or physical security of a loved one can also be traumatic. This is particularly important for young children as their sense of safety depends on the perceived safety of their attachment figures.
- Traumatic experiences can initiate strong emotions and physical reactions that can persist long after the event.
- Traumatic danger can come from outside of the family (such as a natural disaster, car accident, school shooting, or community violence) or from within the family, such as domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse, or the unexpected death of a loved one.

Resources:

[How to Become a Trauma Informed Congregation](#)

Books:

[A Terrible Thing Happened](#) (2 to 7 years)

Self Harm

- Often begins in tweens
- Most commonly the result of feelings of sadness, distress, anxiety or confusion
- Offers a way to cope with negative emotions

According to MHA, Mental Health America, recent studies found that 1/3 to 1/2 of adolescents in the US have engaged in some type of non-suicidal self-injury

Resources:

http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/resources/suicide_resources.html Mental Health Ministries