

The Youth Mental Health Project EMPOWERS families and communities to act with the KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and RESOURCES they need to support the SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, and BEHAVIORAL health of youth.



TREATMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AND CONDITIONS

1 in 5 children in the U.S. has a diagnosable mental health condition yet, less than 20 percent of those youth receive the treatment they need.¹

Early intervention can help children/adolescents develop important coping and adaptive skills (e.g., resilience), allowing them to thrive socially, emotionally, academically, and physically. With proper treatment and support, people with any mental health diagnosis can lead productive and fulfilling lives.

In fact, 80-90% of people seeking treatment see improvement in their symptoms.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?

Just like with physical health, there are many different options available to help your child gain strength, resilience and recovery from a mental health problem or mental illness. Unfortunately, there is no one treatment that works for every person and, typically, a combination of different approaches is needed to help your family and your child cope with and manage emotions, feelings and behaviors that cause problems in their lives.

Many of the mental health or behavioral problems children struggle with can be effectively treated with evidence-based therapies.

For the purpose of this fact sheet, evidence-based practices refers to types of psychotherapy which have been proven effective based on scientific research, rather than theory alone.

Psychotherapy involves a mental health professional having interactions with the child and/or family with the goal of making positive changes and helping them improve their overall mental health. Below are some of the types of psychotherapy, which have different interventions, strategies and approaches.

The most common types of treatments for mental health struggles are psychotherapy and psychiatric medication. There are, however, many complementary and alternative treatments available, including movement-based, biological, or energy-based approaches such as nutritional supplements, mindfulness, meditation, biofeedback, exercise, and massage, among others. Studies have shown that an integrated health approach can be beneficial to overall physical and mental health, which often means using a combination of complementary and alternative and traditional medical models. Regardless of the type of treatment you seek, collaborative efforts that include parents as a critical part of the healthcare team are essential.

By directly educating families and communities about youth mental health, and indirectly helping to reduce the blame, shame, silence, and misunderstanding that surrounds it, The Youth Mental Health Project helps to increase prevention and early intervention that can reduce the incidence and severity of youth mental health conditions.

1. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Evidence-based psychotherapy practices, therapies and interventions:

- **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)** focuses on a child's distorted or confused thoughts (cognition) and how those patterns impact his or her emotions, moods and behaviors. CBT can teach children specific tools and skills that will help them identify negative thoughts and replace them with thoughts that result in more appropriate feelings and behaviors. CBT can be effective in treating a variety of conditions, including depression and anxiety.
- **DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY (DBT)** is a modified form of CBT usually used to treat older adolescents who have chronic conditions that become debilitating and can lead to suicidal feelings and/or thoughts, intentionally self-harmful behaviors, and increased conflict with others. DBT can be used to treat depression, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorder. DBT teaches communication skills to manage painful emotions and their resulting behaviors or conflicts, with a specific focus on mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation and interpersonal effectiveness. Typically DBT will include individual and group skills sessions.
- **EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING (EMDR)** is a form of therapy used to treat PTSD by helping the brain and body process the actual traumatic memories, along with all of the physical and emotional sensations associated with that memory, to find relief.
- **FAMILY THERAPY** focuses on helping family members learn how to improve and nurture the interactions within the family so that they are better able to function together, provide each other support, and improve communications. Focusing on family dynamics and systems, family therapy views family relationships as a vital component of mental health. Family therapy sessions can include the child along with parents, siblings, and grandparents.
- **GROUP THERAPY** is a form of psychotherapy where there are multiple patients led by one or more therapists. Using the power of peer interactions and group dynamics, group therapy seeks to improve social and communication skills and increase understanding of mental health conditions or problems. There are many different types of group therapy.
- **PLAY THERAPY** is generally used for younger children and involves the use of toys, blocks, dolls, puppets, drawings and games to help the child identify and communicate emotions and feelings. Using play materials and games, the therapist observes the child to identify and understand patterns or themes that explain the child's problems. Through a combination of talk and play, the child will learn to understand and manage his or her emotions, feelings, and behaviors.
- **PSYCHOEDUCATION** is a therapeutic intervention for both the child and the family members and is an important component of the treatment process. Psychoeducation provides information and education about diagnosed mental health conditions and illnesses to improve empathy, problem-solving, communication and support. It includes educating family and friends on coping strategies, resources, and how to recognize the signs of relapse.
- **SELF-HELP AND PEER SUPPORT GROUPS** can help address feelings of isolation and help people gain insight into their mental health condition. Members of support groups may share frustrations, successes, referrals for specialists, where to find the best community resources and tips on what works best when trying to recover.

For more information:
The Youth Mental Health Project
ymhproject.org
National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov