

# Childhood Psychiatric Disorders

Depression, Anxiety Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder

## Depression in Children

The behavior of depressed children and teenagers may differ from the behavior of depressed adults. Child and adolescent psychiatrists advise parents to be aware of signs of depression in their youngsters.

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying
- Decreased interest in activities; or inability to enjoy previously favorite activities
- Hopelessness
- Persistent boredom; low energy
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Low self esteem and guilt
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, or hostility
- Difficulty with relationships
- Frequent complaints of physical illnesses such as headaches and stomachaches
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Poor concentration
- A major change in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Thoughts or expressions of suicide or self destructive behavior

**Notes:**

## Anxiety Disorders in Children

### **Separation Anxiety**

- Try to avoid going places by themselves
- Refuse to go to school or daycare
- Be reluctant or refuse to participate in sleepovers
- Follow a parent around
- Demand that someone stay with them at bedtime, or "appear" in their parent's bedroom during the night
- Awake from nightmares about being separated from loved ones.

## **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**

Generalized anxiety disorder usually affects children between the ages of six and eleven. It is characterized by excessive worry and anxiety over a variety of things, including, but not limited to:

- Grades
- Performance in sports
- Punctuality
- Family issues
- Earthquakes
- Health

The affected child cannot control his/her worry and it interferes with normal activities. Physical symptoms of GAD include:

- Restlessness
- Fatigue/Inability to sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension

Children with GAD tend to be very hard on themselves, striving for perfection, sometimes redoing tasks repeatedly. They may also seek constant approval or reassurance from others.

## **Social Anxiety Disorder**

- Hesitance, passivity, and discomfort in the spotlight
- Avoidance or refusal to initiate conversations, perform in front of others, invite friends to get together, telephone others for homework or other information, or order food in restaurants
- Avoiding eye contact
- Speaking very softly or mumbling
- Minimal interaction and conversation with peers
- Appearing isolated or on the fringes of the group
- Sitting alone in the library or cafeteria, or hanging back from a group in team meetings
- Overly concerned with negative evaluation, humiliation, or embarrassment
- Difficulty with public speaking, reading aloud, or being called on in class

**Notes:**

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

There are three types of ADHD: Inattentive, Hyperactive/Impulsive and Combination

### **Some symptoms of the Inattentive type of ADHD are:**

- being easily distracted from a task, lesson, or conversation
- difficulty keeping the mind on any one thing
- getting bored with a task before it's completed
- skipping over details
- making careless mistakes
- difficulty listening when directly addressed
- difficulty following instructions or finishing tasks
- disorganization and forgetfulness

### **Symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity**

Youngsters with hyperactive or impulsive symptoms of ADHD seem to be always in motion. Sitting still can be very difficult for them. They may try to do several things at once, bouncing around from one activity to the next.

Children experiencing the hyperactive/impulsive form of ADHD may:

- fidget and squirm or have trouble staying seated at all
- move around constantly, often running or climbing inappropriately
- have difficulty with quiet, sedentary activities
- talk excessively
- blurt out answers before questions are completed
- speak tactlessly or inappropriately
- exhibit difficulty waiting
- interrupt or intrude on others

### ***Positive characteristics of children with ADD/ADHD***

Lest you think ADHD is nothing but trouble, consider some of the positive traits associated with people, including children, who have ADHD:

- **Creativity** – Children who have ADD/ADHD can be marvelously creative and imaginative. The child who daydreams or has ten different thoughts at once can become a master at problem-solving or creative expression. Someone with ADD can be a fountain of ideas, an invaluable asset in brainstorming sessions. In a creative or problem-solving situation, divergent thinking can be very useful in coming up with multiple possible solutions and allows for rare insights in such fields as art, music, business, and science. Children with ADD may be easily distracted, but sometimes they notice what others don't see.
- **Flexibility** – Because children with ADD consider a lot of options at once, they don't become set on one alternative early on and are more open to different ideas.

- **Enthusiasm, spontaneity, liveliness** – Children with ADD are rarely boring! They're interested in a lot of different things and have lively personalities. In short, if they're not exasperating you (and sometimes when they are), they're a lot of fun to be with.
- **Energy, drive, and tenacity** – When youngsters with ADD/ADHD are motivated, they work or play hard and strive to succeed. It actually may be difficult to distract them from a task that interests them, especially if the activity is interactive or hands-on. Keep in mind, too, that ADD/ADHD has nothing to do with intelligence or talent. Many children with ADD/ADHD are intellectually or artistically gifted.

**Notes:**

### **Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

A pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior lasting at least 6 months, during which four (or more) of the following are present:

- often loses temper
- often argues with adults
- often actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules
- often deliberately annoys people
- often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior
- is often touchy or easily annoyed by others
- is often angry and resentful
- is often spiteful or vindictive

**Notes:**

**For all disorders criterion is met only if the behaviors and symptoms occur more frequently than is typically observed in individuals of comparable age and developmental level and impair functioning.**