



CLASSROOM MENTAL HEALTH

Presented by:

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The Institute of Child Psychology believes that:

- Children are inherently good
- Secure attachments are the cornerstone of all healthy relationships: a connected child is a happy child
- Connection not separation is the key to effective discipline
- Play is a child's language and should be an integral part of a their life
- Simplifying your classroom's culture will strengthen your connection to one another
- Awareness of your own childhood wounds is a critical step to becoming a mindful caregiver
- Parents should matter more than peers
- Discipline should take into account the neurological development of the child
- There is a difference between what a child wants and what they need
- You cannot spoil a child with love
- Children need warmth, connection, consistency, and predictability

Biopsychosocial framework:

Biological: genetic predisposition, neurochemistry, immune response, fight - flight, physiological responses

Psychological: learning, emotions, thinking, attitudes, memory, beliefs, stress management strategies

Social: social supports, family background, school, poverty, physical exercise, biofeedback, cultural traditions, interpersonal relationships

Brain Development:

Sequential (back to the front):

Use-Dependent (neural networks and pruning):

Experiences Build Brain Architecture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJkws>

Age 5- slows down. 10years old, 90% of its weight.
 Brain spurts at 6/7 years old and at 11/12 years old
 Ability to reason, cause and effect and grasp aspect
 concepts (www.acsd.org)

Attachment Styles:

Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent	Disorganized
Works alone and with others	Works alone	Constant need for teacher	Push-pull
Confident to try new things	Will work alone, even when unsure	Overly dependant on teacher	Selfsoothing behaviours (banging head)

Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent	Disorganized
Socially competent	No engagement	Quick to blame/ turn against teacher	Controlling of relationships
Cope with roadblocks	Destroy/ not hand-in work	Unable to focus on task at hand	Difficulty regulating
Task and teacher	Learner-Task	Learner-teacher	Difficulty engaging
Content	Withdrawn	Anxious	Angry

Every kid needs a champion:

https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion

Toolbox:

Connection rituals, survey learners, reflect, be a student of your student's cultures, authenticity, hold space

Emotional Health:

- R**-ecognize emotional states in self and other
- U**-nderstand causes and consequences of behaviour
- L**-abel feelings accurately
- E**-xpress emotions appropriately
- R**-egulate emotions effectively

Toolbox:

Quick teaching, different types of engagement, compelling questions, engineered controversy, role model, get personal, celebrations, name it to tame it, non-verbal communication, kindness projects, go noodle

Environment:

Seating: Fatigue and pain impact performance and cognition
Unattached seats, different seats, move, postures, groupings

Temperature:

Brain is sensitive/heat lowers scores on physical and intellectual tasks/cool brains: more relaxed, receptive and on task/high temps: serotonin and norepinephrine (aggression).

Alternatives, ribbons, be mindful

Light:

Californian study > more sunlight > 20% faster in math and 26% faster in reading

Melatonin and serotonin (mood, alertness and performance)

Seasonal Affective Depression

North facing classrooms, bright lighting, outdoor education, daylight

Noise:

Elevated stress levels, hearing impaired and at-risk children
difficulty separating teacher and background noise

Soften noise, tapestries, allergy sensitive carpeting, sound
systems, white noise, scheduling

Other suggestions:

Warm (stimulate) yellow on three walls, light blue (calms) on
the back, contrasting colours as accents / decor, scents

Anxiety:

Anxiety and hidden emotions:

Fear of dying, embarrassment, failure, judgment,
acceptance, safety, worthiness

Anxiety disorders:

Separation anxiety, OCD, Panic Disorder, PTSD, GAD,
Phobias, Social Anxiety

Thoughts - transitions, safety, illness, death, germs, abstract

Feelings - worry, sadness, anger, guilt

Physical - headaches, stomachaches, fidgety, dysregulated,
muscle tension, fatigued

Behaviours - avoidance, procrastination, excessive studying,
list making, reassurance

1 in 8 children

Generalized worry, most days, 6 months

Anxiety Toolbox:

Attachment, Empathize - Normalize - Educate - Recognize,
“heysigmund.com, the worry monster, explore thoughts,
play, exercise, be the alpha, simplify and teach courage

Separation Anxiety

4% of children, most common anxiety disorder in children,
affects boys and girls equally, ages 3, 7-9, junior high

Brick house - age 3, may re-emerge

Wooden house - withdrawal, preoccupation

Straw house - refusal, interferes with routines, excessive in
frequency, concern and fears, somatic complaints

Toolbox:

Early intervention, transitions, schedules, leadership roles,
small moments, meet a teacher, extended village, trauma:
touchstone

Don't: blame, shame, diagnose. Document and Refer!

Fears:

Safety, 50% of young children - 6 or 7 fears, developmentally normal. Avoidant behaviours, difficulty distinguishing between safe and unsafe situations, secondary purpose, can co-occur with other disorders

Specific Fears:

Beliefs:

Magical thinking, object permanence, line of logic, reality and fantasy, triggers to a trauma, parental rejection

Toolkit

Teach coping strategies, routines, model, use media and professions, find courageous moments, use attachment, plan of action, connect with the parents

Don't: blame, shame or diagnose! Document and refer!

Panic Disorder:

Facts:

2.7% kids, girls twice as likely, teen years, out of the blue-
last a few minutes - 30 minutes, hangover feeling

Toolbox:

Adult reassurance, time away from the group, nature, education - “ the body will regulate”, adult anchor, meds, script activities, avoid surprises

Persistent behaviours:

Obsessions: contaminations, harm to self, perfectionism, symmetry, forbidden thoughts

Rituals: washing, hand cleansing, tapping, ordering, mental rituals

Can change, ages 7-12 (many say early childhood). more common in boys than girls

Thoughts - “I’m responsible / If I don’t do this...then this...”/ I have to get an A/

Feelings - worry, sadness, anger and shame

Physical - headaches, stomachaches, detachment, muscle tension, breathing

Behaviors - avoiding touching certain objects, repeating phrases in numerical sets, cleaning supplies, excessive hygiene routines, very secretive and distressed if interrupted

Childhood OCD: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ2r5XZXAcU>

Toolbox:

track behaviour, explore stressors, listen, acceptance, team approach

PANDAS/ PANS

Rare neuropsychiatric condition

Eating issues, sensory issues, restlessness, unusual movements, intense irritability, fears, phobias, attention and memory, separation anxiety, motor skill deterioration, urinary frequency or bedwetting

Antibiotics, medical intervention, CBT, Anti-anxiety meds

Excessively complaint / perfectionist

Cognitive thinkers, highly verbal, controlling environment, poor self esteem, anxiety, alpha children, socially and emotionally withdrawn

Cause for concern:

Happens persistently, avoidance, won't hand in work, erasing, wont sleep, self-critical

Toolkit:

Role-model, courage, classroom psychological safety, emotional expression, pair the child, talk about self kindness

Social anxiety:

Developmentally normal, social experiences alter brains, area of brain responsible for processing social events processes cognitive events too. Social relations lower blood pressure, impact the immune system, lasting change in stress- response system. Social status: modifies serotonin: attention, memory, aggression and neural growth

Social stress:

flocking, girls more likely to mobilize social supports- boys status - power or status/ gils- friendship or tasks, cortisol levels increase when separated, monkeys- dopamine lels, difference and racial bias, peer pressure

Thoughts - I'm shaking, no-one likes me, I'm stupid,
something is wrong with me

Feelings - embarrassment, worry, helplessness, shame

Physical feelings - blushing, tumbling, shaking, detachment,
muscle tension, sweating

Behaviours - crying, mumbling, avoiding eye contact, crying,
parent

Toolkit

Create opportunities to connect, information gathering,
groups and cooperative learning, social skills, drama and
poems, model speech, don't label, extracurricular activities,
acceptance and normalization

Post - Traumatic Symptom Disorder

4% of youth age 13-18 will be diagnosed with PTSD, girls
more likely and for longer. Higher risk for depression,

anxiety, emotional regulation and substance issues,
desensitizes core securities, intervention is critical

Symptoms and strategies for PTSD in children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HzYOxHNhNU>

Experiences of trauma

abuse, neglect, violence, bullying, accidents, injury, loss of
caregiver, intergenerational trauma, war

Hyperarousal:

Hyperaware, sensitive, high levels of anxiety, emotional
outbursts, overwhelming feelings high rushes of adrenaline

Optimal state: Regulate, triggers

Hypo-arousal: Shut down, disconnected, numb

Externalizing - panic attacks, startle response , nightmares, flashbacks, emotional dysregulation, sensitivity to stimuli

Internalizing - somatic complaints, repetitive play, diminished curiosity, regressive behaviours, repression, avoidance, postural and coordination issues

Disassociation - distracted, forgetful, reduced organization, isolated, challenges bonding, easily stressed, daydream, imaginary worlds, fear of mental illness, voices

Toolkit:

build connections, foster emotional skills, safety and routines, self-care, whats the need, open communication, triggers, bilateral movement, healing

Emotional Regulation

Oppositional Defiant behaviour, Conduct Disorder,
Intermittent Explosive Disorder

Anger iceberg:

Fear, isolation, loneliness, abuse, trauma

Common misbehaviour reasons:

Developmental, attachment issues, strong emotions need a
release, defences evoked, barriers to feeling, communication
challenges

The Big 5 :Frequency, length, settings, severity, experiences

Time-outs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So7sJW23xM8>

Yelling:

Dysregulated adult, reaction, 2 amygdala's at war, release of cortisol: brain can not think or learn

When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not join their chaos" - L.R. Knost

Toolbox:

Be an empathetic leader, playful teaching, find a point of connection, one adult, safe spaces, leadership role, connection through conflict, model non-verbal communication, alpha, calm limits with eye contact, join hen shift, teach reparation

Depression

Major depressive disorder, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, dysthymia

Depression iceberg: anxiety, emptiness, fatigue, guilt,
helplessness

Influencing factors:

Brain Chemistry:

Genetics:

Temperament:

Imagination:

Connection:

Trauma:

Changes:

Home:

Depression Signs and Symptoms:

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helplessness, weight changes, guilt, abandoning hobbies,
difficulty sleeping , thoughts of death, decreased energy,
isolation, anger, food regulation issues

Selfharm

Harm to body without intent to complete suicide (cutting,
burning, ingesting foreign objects, hitting, picking at wounds,
hair pulling)

6-17% of girls, 2-6% of males

Relief, control, reaction

Related to depression, anxiety, self-esteem , abuse, trauma,
rejection

Decreases in school holidays

Watch out for:

increased absenteeism, change in bathroom habits, secrecy,
change in clothing, things that don't belong, online groups

Suggestions:

Pain expression - paint, scribble, journal, compose, music

Calm - bath, animals, nature, massage

Numb - call, text, write, temperature, senses, exercise

Instead of cutting - red pen, ice, rubber bands

Suicide

30-35% of early adolescent girls/ 15-20% of early adolescent
boys: contemplated

10% of girls, 5% boys attempted

Three times as many boys as girls complete suicide, leading
causes of death, often history of self-harming, cyberbullying

Risk and protective factors

Child - belonging, supportive adult, access to services

Harmony, parenting styles, mental illness, substance use, values

School - temperament, thinking style, emotional wellbeing

Events - trauma, supportive adult, access to services

Society - economics, culture, discrimination, supports

Helping:

Relationship, stay calm, seriously, contact admin and follow procedures, connect with the guardians, seek medical help

Toolbox:

Classroom environment, buddy system, teacher relationship, role model, healthy lifestyles, technology, mastery, special projects, personal growth, happy chemicals

Working with the student:

listen, don't judge, empathize, go slowly

Working with the family:

Resources, expectations, be sensitive, plan

Attention issues

Predominantly inattentive Type, Predominantly Hyperactive Impulsive Type, Combined Type

ADHD and the brain:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u82nzTzL7To>

Toolbox:
short, simple rules, routines, student partners,
accommodations, reduce distractions, movement, recess,
choices

Rewards

Brain designed to predict, enjoy and remember rewards.
Rewards temporarily stimulate physical responses, complex behaviours are often impaired by rewards. Reward prediction system - initial improvement, performance drops as brain habituates, predictability, marker value, suspect ability

Rewards:

Be discriminate : special populations, short lengths of time, specific reason, low cost, get mileage from anticipation
Abstract rewards

Motivation:

Lack of connection, learned helplessness, cultural, under threat, neurological issues, substance use, tasks are irrelevant, mental health issues

Increasing motivation:

Involve students, process models and end goals, role model,
change your state, experience success, flow state

Who to contact:

ICP, 811, health link

Counselling agencies (play therapy)

Mobile Mental Health: 1-403-266-1605

911

Hospital emergency

Distress Line: 780-482-4357

Mental Health Support: 1-877-303-2642

Bullying helpline: 1-888-456-2323

Resources

Websites:

<http://www.ascd.org>

<http://www.anxietybc.com/parenting/parent-child>

<http://www.childtrauma.org/>

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/>

<https://www.handinhandparenting.org/>

<https://www.heysigmund.com/>

<http://www.sickkidscmh.ca/ABC/Introduction.aspx>

<https://www.positivediscipline.com/teachers>

Books:

Gary Chapman: The Five Love Languages of Children

John Gottman: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child

Michael Hollander: Helping Teens Who Cut, Second Edition: Using DBT skills to end self-injury

Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate:
Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More

Daniel Siegal and Tina Bryson:

No Drama Discipline

The Whole Brain Child

Parenting from the Inside Out

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/>

Rebecca Woolis: When Someone You Love Has A Mental Illness: A Handbook for Friends and Caregivers

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