Childhood Mental Health Disorders

Autism Spectrum Disorder
Symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder cluster around two areas: deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts; and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.

- Social communication and social interaction deficits
  - Social-emotional reciprocity
  - Nonverbal communication behaviors used for social interaction
  - Developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships
- Restricted, repetitive behaviors, interests, or activities
  - Stereotyped or repetitive movements, use of objects, or speech
  - Insistence on sameness
  - Fixated interests
  - Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input

Severity of symptoms are noted as mild, moderate, severe
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

ADHD
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has been called attention-deficit disorder (ADD) in the past. But ADHD is now the preferred term. In some children, signs of ADHD are noticeable as early as 2 or 3 years of age.

Signs and symptoms of ADHD may include:
- Difficulty paying attention
- Frequently daydreaming
- Difficulty following through on instructions and apparently not listening
- Frequently has problems organizing tasks or activities
- Frequently forgetful and loses needed items, such as books, pencils or toys
- Frequently fails to finish schoolwork, chores or other tasks
- Easily distracted
- Frequently fidgets or squirms
- Difficulty remaining seated and seemingly in constant motion
- Excessively talkative
- Frequently interrupts or intrudes on others' conversations or games
- Frequently has trouble waiting for his or her turn

(Source: Mayo Clinic, 2013)
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Major Depressive Disorder
Five or more of the following symptoms in the same two-week period:
  • Depressed mood
  • Diminished interest or pleasure in activities
  • Weight loss or weight gain
  • Insomnia or hypersomnia
  • Psychomotor agitation or retardation
  • Fatigue or loss of energy
  • Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
  • Diminished ability to think or concentrate or indecisiveness
  • Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempt/plan
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Separation Anxiety Disorder
Developmentally inappropriate and excessive fear or anxiety concerning separation from those to whom the individual is attached, as evidenced by at least three of the following and lasting at least 4 weeks:
  • Excessive distress when anticipating or experiencing separation from home or from attachment figures
  • Excessive worry about losing attachment figures or possible harm to them
  • Excessive worry about experiencing an untoward event that causes separation from attachment figures (getting lost, having an accident, becoming ill)
  • Fear about being alone or without attachment figures
  • Reluctance or refusal to go out, away from home, to school
  • Reluctance or refusal to sleep alone
  • Repeated nightmares involving the theme of separation
  • Repeated complaints of physical symptoms
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Social Anxiety Disorder
  • Excessive fear or anxiety about social situations with peers and adults (conversations, meeting people, performance in front of others, being observed)
  • Fears of being negatively evaluated by others
  • Expressed in children through crying, tantrums, freezing, clinging, or failing to speak in social situations
  • Social situations are avoided or endured with intense fear or anxiety
  • Lasting for six months or more
(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms are generally grouped into four types: avoidance and emotional numbing, intrusive memories, alterations in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

Symptoms of avoidance and emotional numbing may include (one or both):
- Trying to avoid memories, thoughts, or feelings related to event(s)
- Avoidance of external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) associated with the event(s)

Symptoms of intrusive memories may include one or more of following:
- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of event(s)
- Recurrent, distressing dreams about the traumatic event(s)
- Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks)
- Intense, prolonged psychological distress when exposed to cues associated with the traumatic event(s)
- Marked physiological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)

Symptoms of alterations in cognitions and mood include (two or more):
- Inability to remember important aspects of the event(s)
- Negative beliefs about oneself, others, or world
- Distorted cognitions about cause or consequences of the event, leading to the individual blaming self or others
- Persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, anger, shame, guilt)
- Markedly diminished interest or participation in activities
- Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
- Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (e.g., happiness, satisfaction, love)

Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity (two or more):
- Irritable, angry outbursts
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Problems with concentration
- Sleep disturbance

(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
Oppositional Defiant Disorder
A pattern of angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behavior, or vindictiveness lasting at least 6 months as evidenced by at least four symptoms from any of the following categories:

- Angry/irritable mood
  - Often loses temper
  - Is often touchy or easily annoyed
  - Is often angry and resentful
- Argumentative/defiant behavior
  - Argues with adults
  - Defies or refuses to comply with requests or rules
  - Deliberately annoys others
  - Blames others for mistakes
- Vindictiveness/spiteful
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Conduct Disorder
A repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated, as manifested by at least three of the following 15 criteria in the past 12 months from any of the categories below:

- Aggression to people/animals
  - Bullies, threatens, or intimidates others
  - Initiates physical fights
  - Has used a weapon that can cause serious physical harm to others
  - Has been physically cruel to people
  - Has been physically cruel to animals
  - Has stolen while confronting a victim
  - Has forced someone into sexual activity
- Destruction of property
  - Deliberately engaged in fire setting
  - Deliberately destroyed others’ property
- Deceitfulness or theft
  - Has broken into someone else’s house, building, or car
  - Lies to obtain goods or favors or to avoid obligations (cons others)
  - Has stolen items of nontrivial value without confronting a victim (shoplifting)
- Serious violation of rules
  - Stays out at night despite parental prohibitions, beginning before age 13
  - Has run away from home overnight at least twice
  - Is often truant from school, beginning before age 13
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2013)