

# Parenting and Youth Anxiety and Depression

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**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

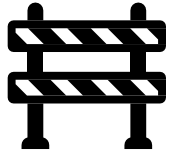
# Overview



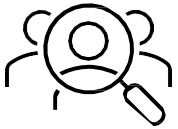
Defining Anxiety & Depression

Signs & Symptoms Across Developmental Stages

How to Support Your Child

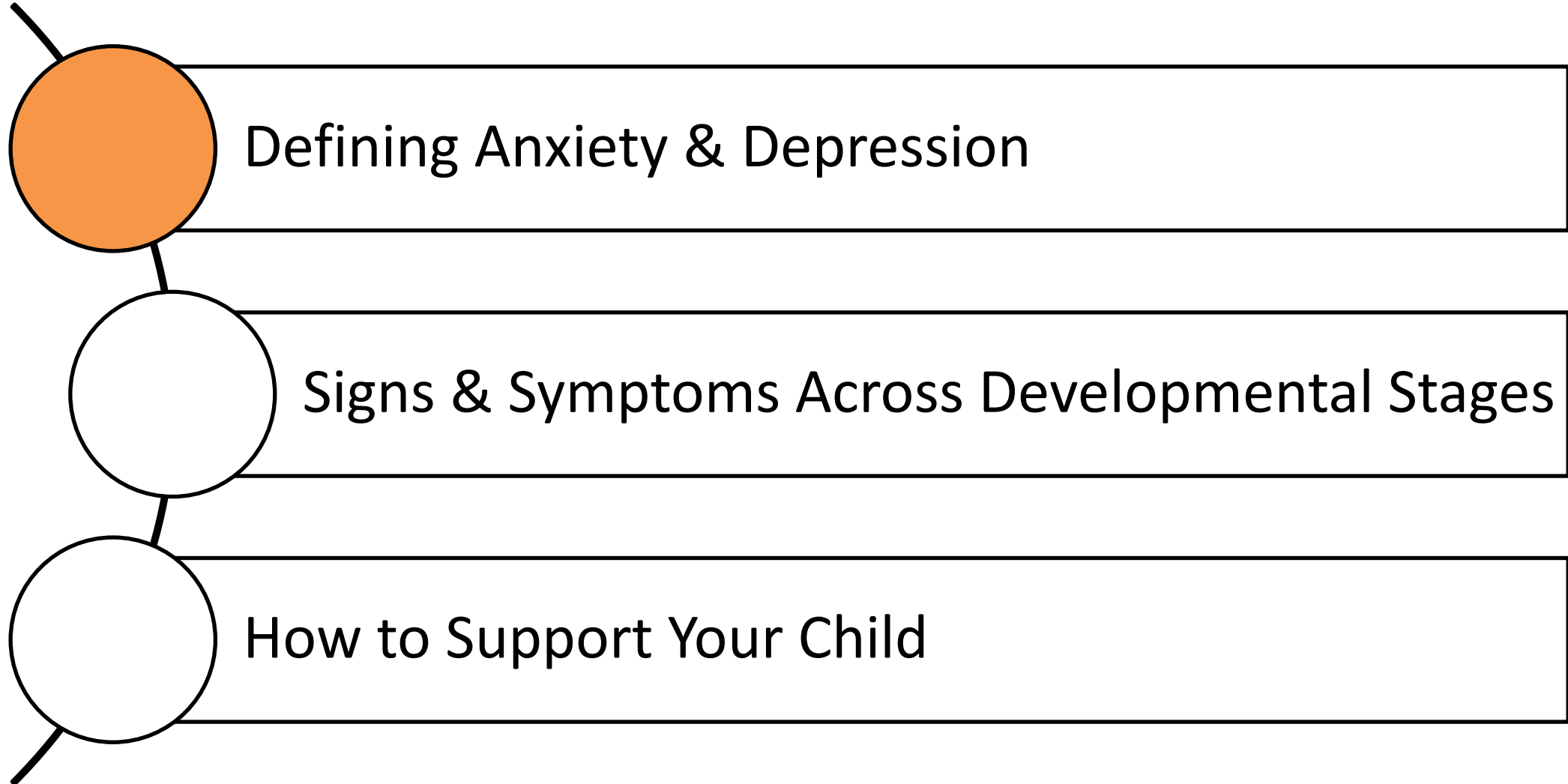


Disclaimer: For this presentation, “parenting” is used broadly to represent those who may fill those roles and “families” is also meant inclusively, referring to all individuals with responsibility for a young person (including parents, stepparents, guardians, foster families, grand families, kinship families, chosen families, older siblings, or other caregivers).



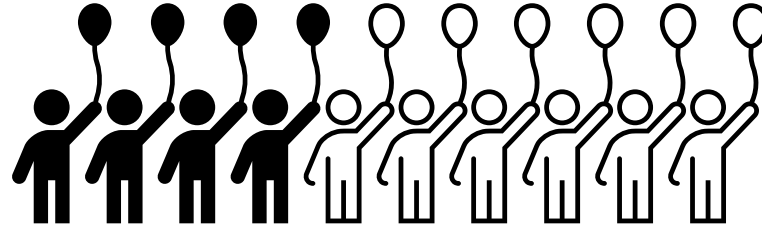
Purpose: Caring for every child’s mental health is an important component of parenting, as positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development. Confident, well-informed parents make better parenting decisions, benefiting the family system. Today’s presentation will include information on anxiety and depression in children and youth and discuss how to get help should your family need.

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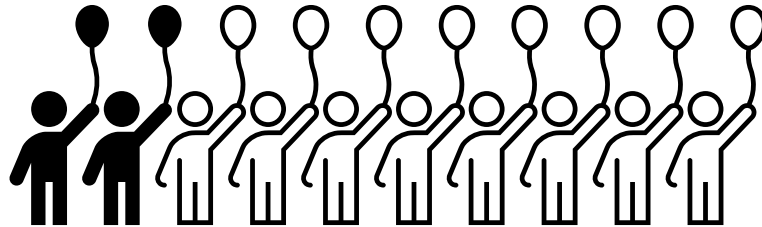
# How many children experience depression or anxiety?

Persistent sadness or hopelessness



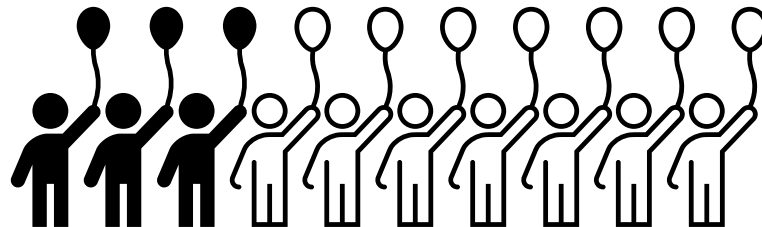
(4 in 10 children)

Depression



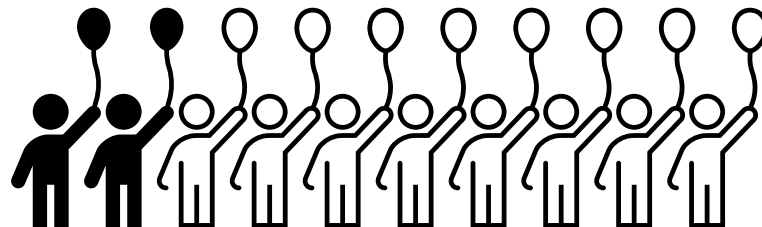
(2 in 10 children)

Anxiety



(3 in 10 children)

Serious suicidal thoughts



(2 in 10 children)

# Defining Depression and Anxiety

## Depression

- Occasional sadness is a normal part of growing up.
- If children are sad, irritable, or no longer enjoy things, and this occurs day after day, may be indicative of depression

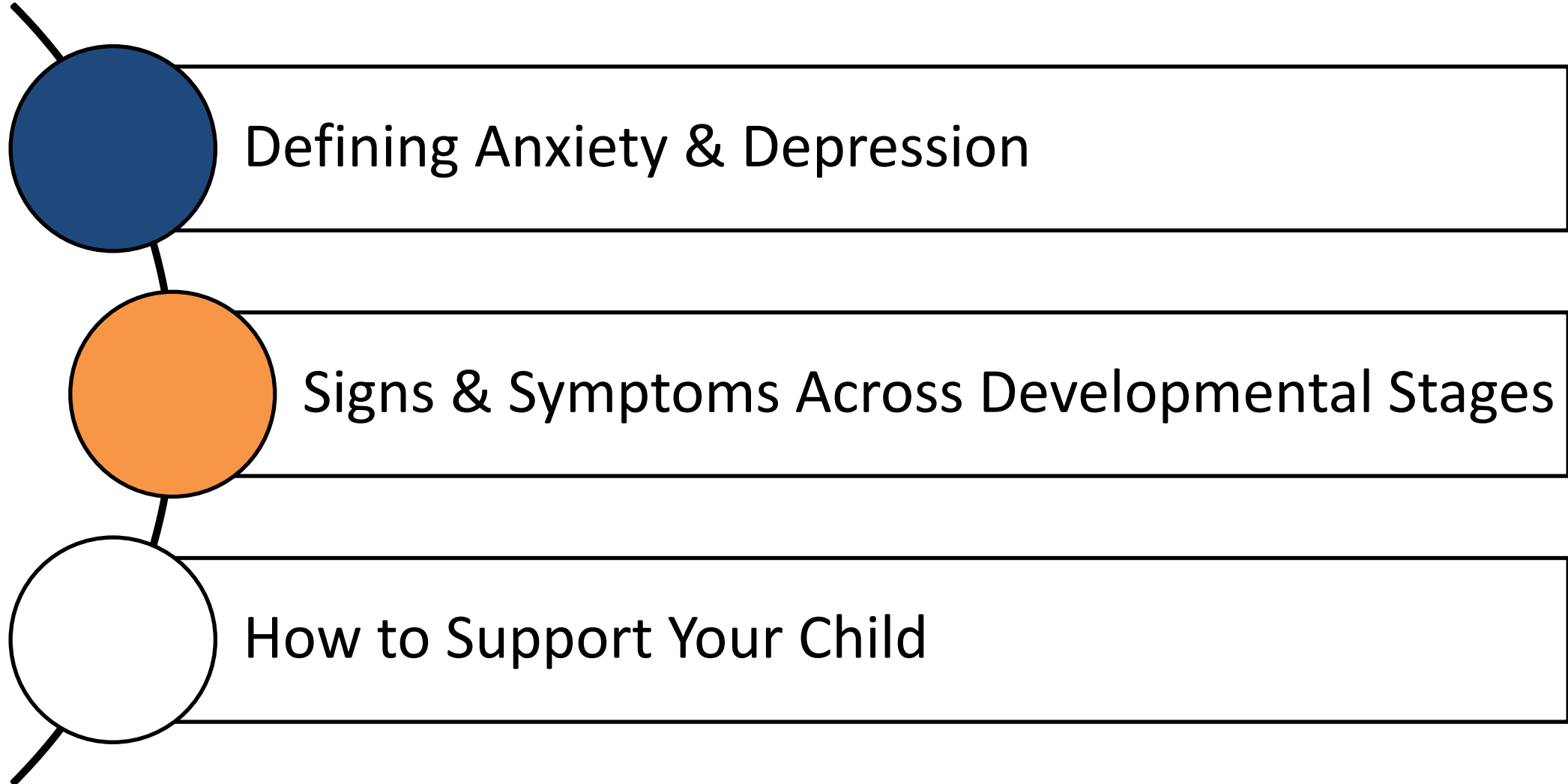
## Anxiety

- Fears and worries in children can be common and developmentally appropriate.
- Fearful anticipation of further danger or problems accompanied by an intense unpleasant feeling or physical symptoms

# What causes anxiety and depression in children?



# Overview





# Typical or Not?

It can be difficult to understand mental health disorders in children because normal childhood development is a process that involves change.

Behaviors may be signs of an underlying mental health concern or disorder if they:

- are intense,
- persist over long periods of time,
- are inappropriate for the child's age, or
- interfere with the child's life.



Is this age appropriate?

How intense and how persistent are these behaviors?

Do these behaviors interfere with my child's life?

# Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

## General signs and symptoms of potential distress:

- **Physical Symptoms:**\* Headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, persistent physical complaints.
- **Emotional Symptoms:** Low self-esteem, low energy, mood swings.
- **Behavioral Symptoms:** School avoidance, withdrawing from friends and family, risky behavior.

*\*Some physical disorders can cause symptoms that are similar to those of mental health conditions; therefore, it is important to rule-out physical health conditions for more effective, appropriate care.*

# Common signs and symptoms of Anxiety include:

## Early Childhood



- Frequent crying
- Excessive Clinginess
- Sleep difficulties
- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- School avoidance
- Excessive worry

## School-Age



- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt
- Difficulty separating from parents
- Withdrawing from social engagements
- School avoidance
- Fear of harm
- Preoccupation with “what if”

## Adolescence



- Irritability
- Concentration
- Avoiding situations
- School performance
- Sleep issues
- Increased sensitivity to criticism
- Substance use

# Signs & Symptoms of Depression

**Depression can be difficult to recognize because it can manifest in different ways depending on the person's age.**

- In children and youth, *irritability* can be a sign of depression, while sadness is more common in adults.
- The biggest thing to look for in children and youth is a *change in their typical behavior*.

# Common signs and symptoms of depression include:

## Early Childhood



- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Lack of interest in activities
- Absence of joyfulness
- Physical complaints
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lower energy
- Irritability

## School-Age



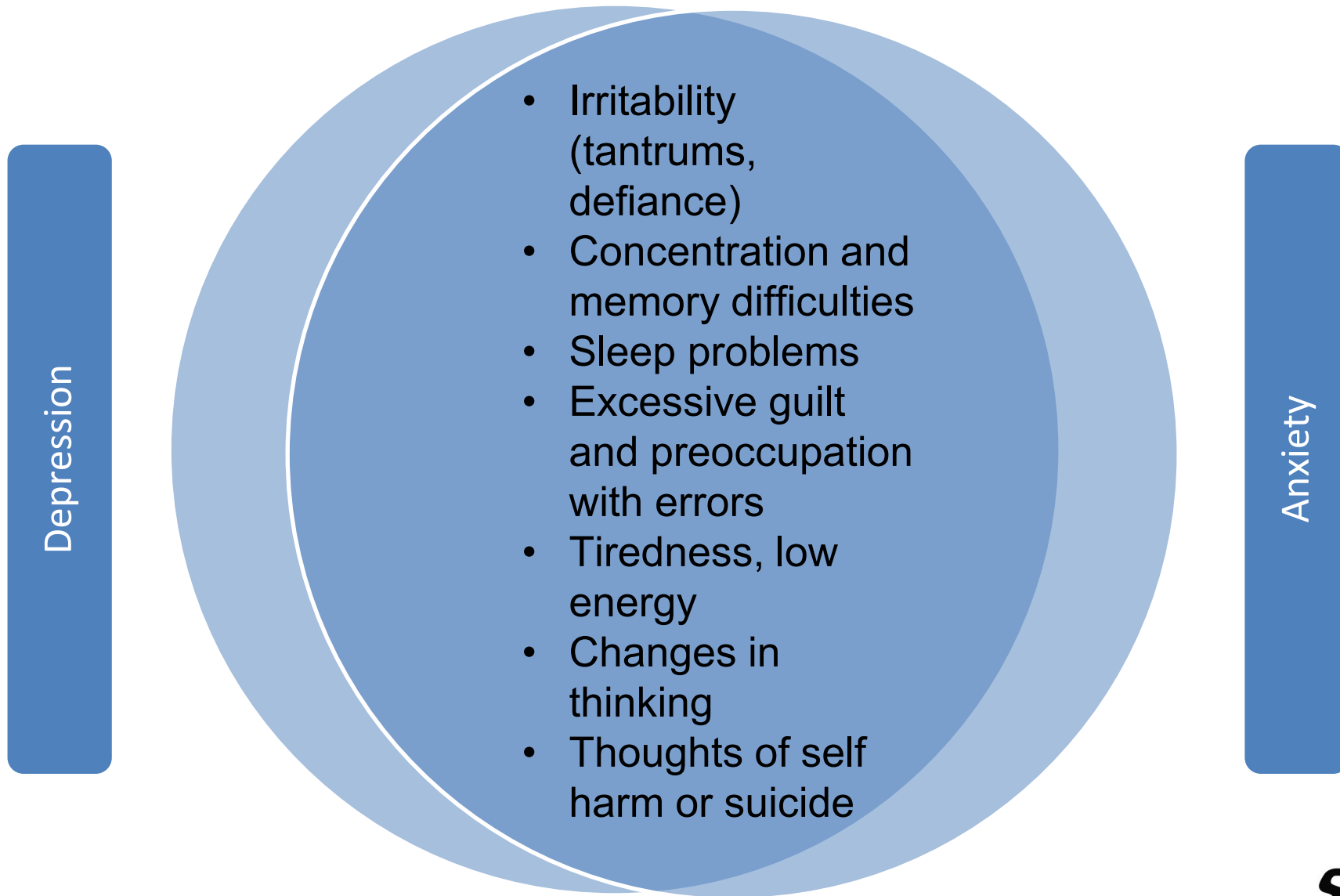
- Moodiness/Irritability
- Acting out/Oppositionality
- Hopelessness
- Excessive guilt
- Decreased energy
- Heightened sensitivity to criticism
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Thoughts of self harm and suicide (more common in older children)

## Adolescence



- Irritability
- Substance use
- Lack of interest in personal grooming or appearance
- Self-loathing
- Social withdrawal/Isolation
- Poor school performance
- Feelings of emptiness
- Sleep disturbance
- Sudden weight changes
- Self-harm and thoughts of suicide

# Significant Overlap of Symptoms Between Anxiety and Depression



# Overview



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# Screening for Anxiety & Depression

**NEW** US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations:



1. Anxiety screening for children and youth ages 8-18.

2. Depression screening for children and youth ages 12-18.



# How to Support Your Child with Anxiety

**Parents have an important and essential role in helping children deal with anxiety disorders.**

- Validate their feelings.
- Help children manage their symptoms.
- Set realistic expectations.
- Talk through worries.
- Model healthy ways of handling anxiety.

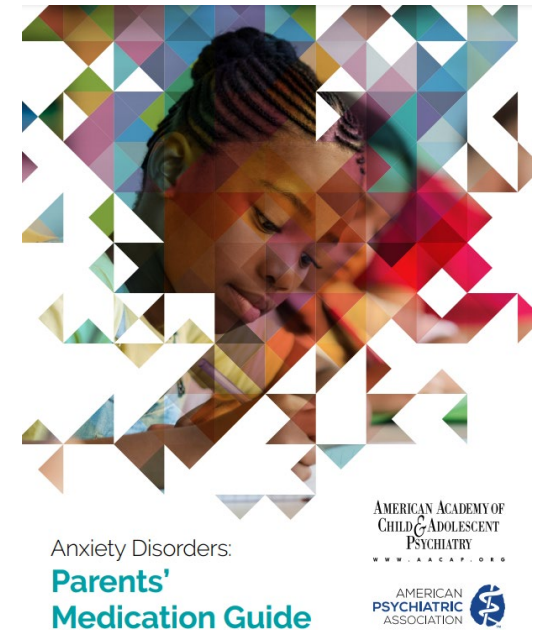
# How to Support Your Child with Depression

**Depression can cause isolation and loneliness. One of the most important things you can do to build trust with your child is to focus on their feelings.**

- Listen carefully & provide emotional support.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- Help your child feel connected.
- Know that change is possible.

# Treatment Options

- Meet with pediatrician or behavioral health provider
- Education on symptoms and treatment of depression and anxiety in children and youth
- “Talk Therapy” (psychotherapy)
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) are first line choices
- Medications



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# How to Get Help



**SAMHSA**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

For help finding treatment: [800-662-HELP \(4357\)](tel:800662HELP)

Search SAMHSA.gov

Search

Home

Search For Treatment

State Agencies

Facility Registration

FAQs

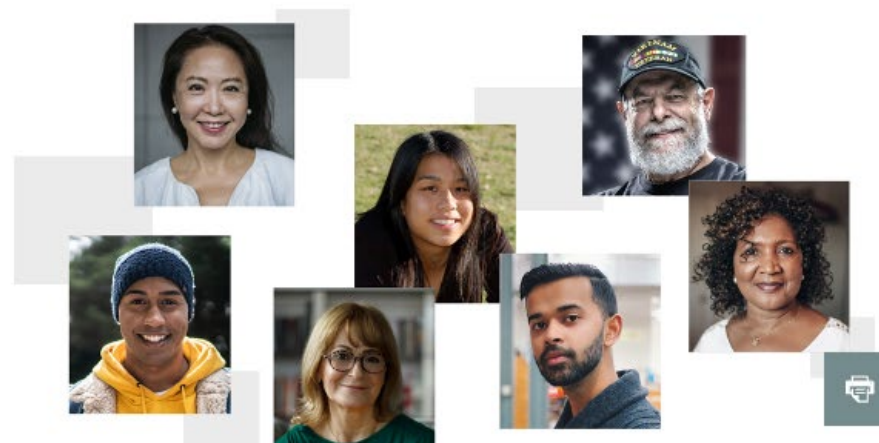
Help

About

Contact Us

**Millions of Americans have  
mental and substance use  
disorders. Find treatment here.**

Welcome to FindTreatment.gov, the confidential and anonymous resource for persons seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders in the United States and its territories.



**Find a Treatment Facility** ⓘ

Enter your address, city, zip code, or facility name

Search

# NEW SAMHSA RESOURCE: FindSupport.gov

## You can find support



### Find health care or support

Get the best ways to search for a health care professional or program.

Find health care or support



### How to cope

Learn about the signs that you may need help, how to ask for help, and ways to take care of yourself.

How to cope



### Learn about treatment

Find out about treatment types, how to make an appointment, and how to prepare yourself for treatment.

Learn about treatment



### How to pay for treatment

Find options for covering costs with or without insurance, including free and low-cost programs.

How to pay for treatment



### Helping someone

Learn how to talk to a loved one about getting help and how to take care of yourself.

Helping someone



### Get help now

Sometimes help can't wait. There are people you can call, text, or chat for help right now.

Get help now

**Find Health Care or Support**  
[www.findsupport.gov](http://www.findsupport.gov)

**988**

**SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE**

***SAMHSA***  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# Resources for Parents & Caregivers about Children's Mental Health

**ACF's Behavioral Health Webpage** includes federal resources for parents and caregivers, teens and young adults, tribes.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/behavioral-health>

**ACF's Office of Early Childhood Development Behavioral Health Webpage** includes resources for parents and caregivers with young children.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/initiatives/behavioral-health>

**SAMHSA's Resource Page for Parents and Caregivers** includes a list of mental health resources, including the recording and slides from ACF-SAMHSA training for parents and caregivers.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/families/parent-caregiver-resources>



## Teens and Young Adults »

[We Think Twice Resources on Mental Health](#)

[Youth Engaged 4 Change Resources on Mental Health and Well-being](#)

[Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health \(December 2021\)](#)

[Learn more](#)



## Parents and Caregivers »

[Embrace, Encourage, & Engage: Family & Caregiver Access to Child & Youth Mental Health Resources](#)

[Parent and Caregiver Loss](#)

[Early Childhood Social Emotional Development and Mental Health and Caregiver Well-Being](#)

[SAMHSA Parent and Caregiver Resources](#)

[Learn more](#)



## Early Childhood

[Early Childhood Social Emotional Development and Mental Health and Caregiver Well-Being](#)

[HHS-ED Dear Colleague Letter on Socio-Emotional Development and Mental Health](#)

[Mental Health Resources for Head Start and Early Care Education Programs](#)

[Learn more](#)



## Parent and Caregiver Resources

Talking to children about mental illness can be an opportunity for parents and caregivers to provide their children with information, support, and guidance. Mental illness in children can be hard for parents and caregivers to identify. As a result, many children who could benefit from treatment don't get the help they need. It's important to know what to watch for and how to get help.



# Thank You

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance use and mental illness on America's communities.

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

And we encourage you to visit SAMHSA Store for mental health and substance use resources

<https://store.samhsa.gov/>

And

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

And

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)