
認識心理疾病： 關注孩子的心理健康

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What is mental health?

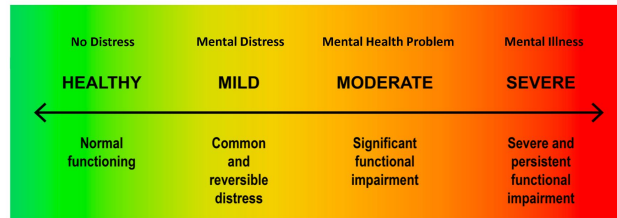
- Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.
(World Health Organization)
- Common indicators of mental health:
 - Ability to cope with life's challenges and bounce back from adversity (emotional resilience)
 - Effective stress management
 - Self-awareness
 - Healthy Relationships
 - Respect for Self and Others
 - Emotional regulation



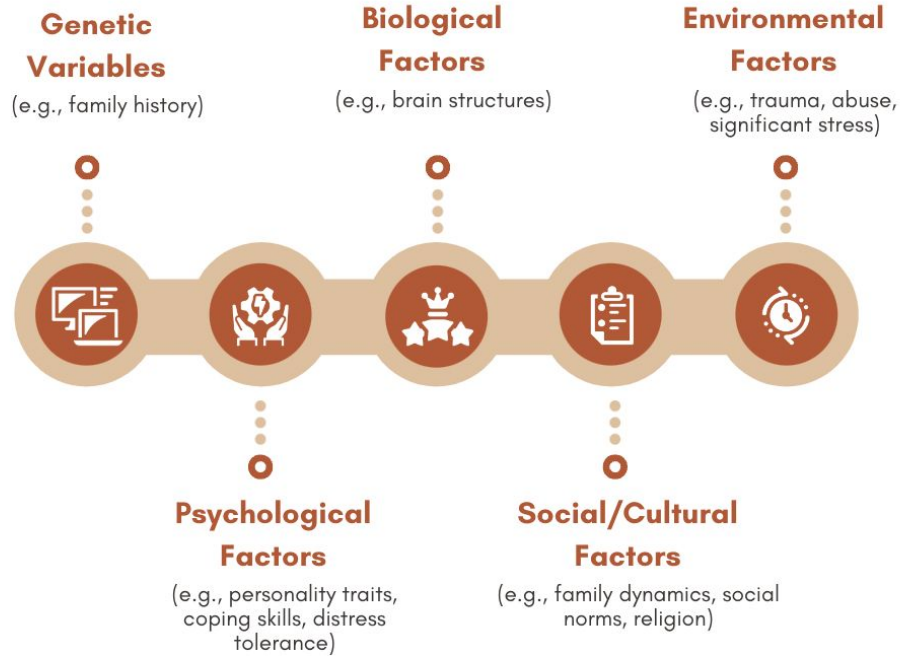
What is mental illness?

- Mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that causes significant distress or impairment
- Mental illnesses can include things like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, or bipolar disorder.

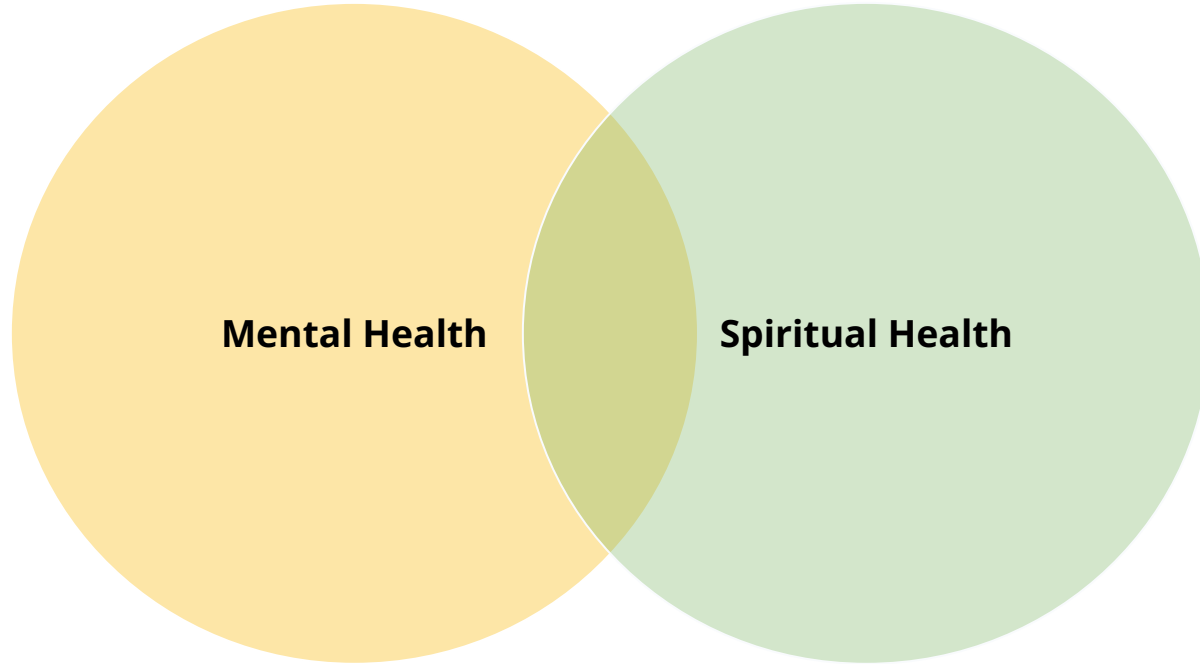
Mental Health Continuum



Risk factors for mental illness:



Mental Health vs Spiritual Health



Overlapping, but distinct.

Sin ≠ Mental Illness

- ✓ Sin produces guilt, shame, depression, anger, anxiety.
- ✓ Sin is the root of psychological problems.
- ✓ Sin can be masked by medication or psychological diagnosis.

AND

- ✓ Mental health is also impacted by our **inherent fallen nature** + by **other's sins**
- ✓ A mature Christian can face serious psychological problems while unrepentant sinners might function psychologically well

Mental Health ≠ Spiritual Health

- There is a biological basis to mental illness
 - The brain is complex, and sometimes there are misfires and imbalances just as there may be clots in blood vessels or weakness in the alveoli of the lungs.
- Christians are not immune to mental illness:
 - 26% of U.S. protestant pastors struggle with a mental illness personally (Earls, 2022).
 - Bible figures struggled with psychological difficulties like persistent low mood (e.g., David, Elijah, Jonah, Job, Jeremiah)

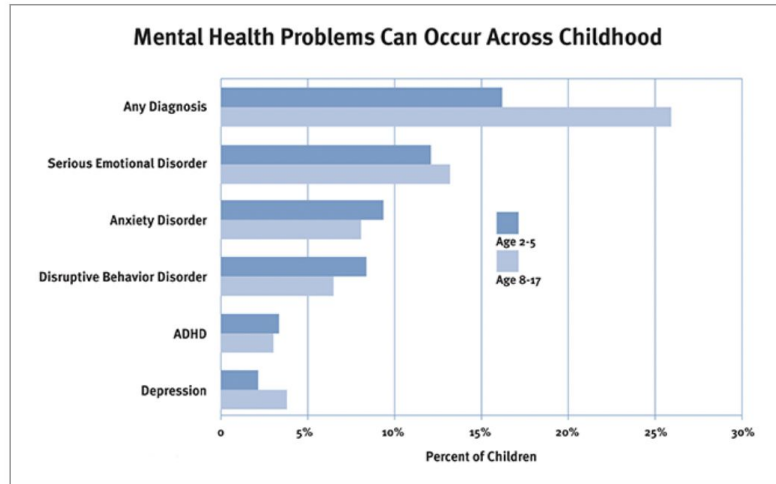
“Just as our wills and our thinking and our emotions are tainted by the effects of sin, so are serotonin (血清素) levels and dopamine receptors (多巴胺接受器).”

- Mark R. McMinn

Mental Illness in Youth

Mental illness can begin at a young age.

- 48.4% of mental illness begins before age 18 (Solmi et al., 2022)
- Mental health problems can begin in early childhood



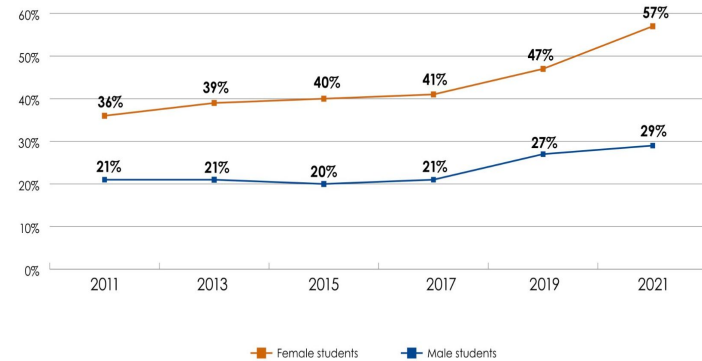
Mental Health Problems Can Occur Across Childhood. Source: Egger & Angold (2006). Credit: Center on the Developing Child.

Our youth are hurting.

INDICATOR HEALTH4.A: PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH AGES 12–17 WHO EXPERIENCED A MAJOR DEPRESSIVE EPISODE (MDE) IN THE PAST YEAR BY AGE AND GENDER, 2021



PERSISTENT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS AMONG U.S. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY SEX, 2011-2021



Persistent Feelings of Sadness or Hopelessness Among U.S. High School Students, By Sex, 2011-2021 (CDC)

- more than 4 in 10 (42%) high school students felt persistently sad or hopeless
- nearly one-third (29%) experienced poor mental health.
- more than 1 in 5 (22%) students seriously considered attempting suicide
- 1 in 10 (10%) attempted suicide.

(CDC, 2022)

No child is “immune” from mental illness.

- Halo effects can be dangerous
- Kids who are “good Christians” or from “good Christian families” experience serious mental illness.
 - Our spiritual health does not always mirror our mental health
- Obedient (“乖”) children experience serious mental illness.
 - Perfectionism is an associated risk factor for many mental illnesses
 - These children often exhibit “internalizing disorders” and experience many hidden symptoms

How do we help kids build their mental health?



Mental wellbeing begins in infancy.

- Early experiences shape neural pathways related to emotions and behavior.
 - Secure attachment with caregivers fosters emotional regulation and resilience.
 - Positive parent-child interactions lay the groundwork for healthy relationships.
- Early experiences shape habits and behaviors that can either support or hinder mental health.
- Mental health skills (e.g., emotion regulation, problem-solving, stress management) take years to develop and refine.
 - This also prevents/reduces negative patterns and maladaptive coping strategies
- Mental health issues that emerge in childhood often persist into adulthood, if left untreated.

Social Emotional Development (SED)

- SED refers to how children learn to express their feelings, develop relationships, and practice social skills.
- Strong SED serves as “protective factors” to buffer against mental health risks.
- Cultural norms and values may define the functional meaning of different socio-emotional characteristics



SED in the first years of life.

- Complex emotions begin during the first year of life:
 - 0-6 months: infants may express surprise, interest, joy, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust
 - “Self-conscious” or “other-conscious” emotions (e.g., jealousy, empathy, embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt) appear in the second half of the first year and by the second year
- Toddlers begin developing a sense of identity
- Self-regulation begins in infancy
 - Initially appear as self soothing
 - Become much more complex after age 3




Adolescence can be a vulnerable period.

- Biological changes including puberty
- Continual brain development (but brain is not fully developed!)
- Hormone changes
- Overwhelming pressures to perform (e.g., grades, college)
- Tough schedules (i.e., not enough time for rest, relaxation)
- Bullying including anti-racism to Asians

Supporting children through building skills:

1. Emotion literacy
2. Coping Skills
3. Resilience and self-esteem

PAUSE + REFLECT: Building Emotional Literacy



Make a list of emotion words!
(1 minute)

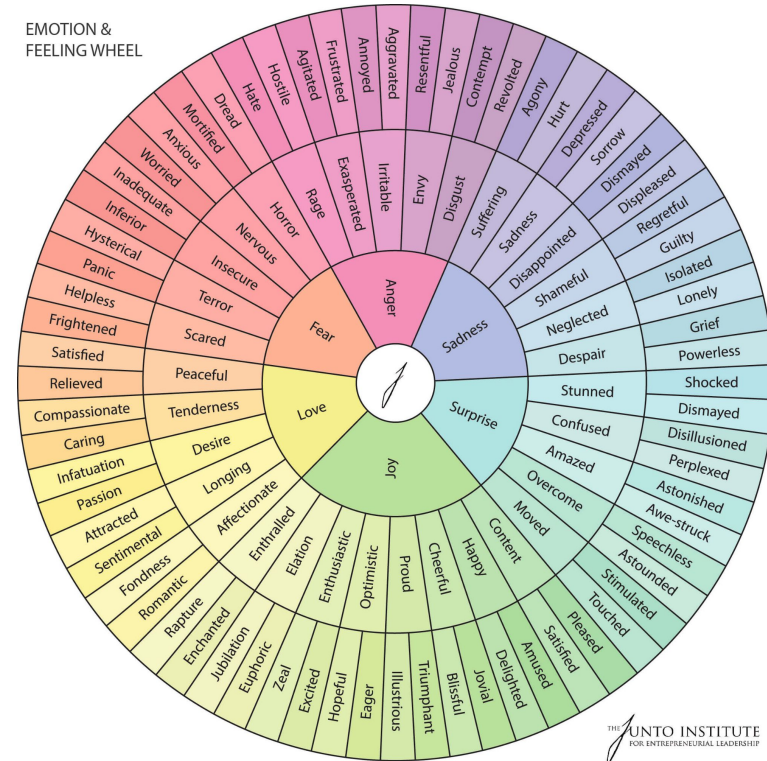
PAUSE + REFLECT: Building Emotional Literacy

- Did that feel easy or hard?
- Was one type of emotion (e.g. “positive” or “negative”) easier for you to think of?
- Was it easier for you to do in one language versus another?

Building Emotional Literacy

- Emotional literacy refers to the ability to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions effectively.

EMOTION & FEELING WHEEL



Building Coping Skills

- Talk and model how you manage feelings
 - And model what you should do if you don't do a good job - the first time!
- Practicing coping skills (and having a plan!)
 - Can include coping corners or coping tool box
 - Can be for general stress, distress...or for when you are feeling sad, mad, or anxious
- Maintain helping habits (e.g., sleeping well, eating well, fellowshiping)

PAUSE + REFLECT: Building Coping Skills

- What are your go-to coping skills when you are upset?
- Are there certain patterns?
 - Reliant on certain conditions? (e.g., ability to go outdoors, done with others)
 - Things that take a lot of time?
- Are they consistently helpful?
- How can you build on your own list?
- What are your children's coping skills?



Promoting Resilience and Self-Esteem

- Resilience (韧性): ability to cope mentally and emotionally with a crisis, or to return to pre-crisis status quickly
- Self-esteem (自尊): confidence in one's own worth, abilities
- Strategies:
 - Allow opportunities for “small fails”
 - Promote a growth mindset (not a fixed mindset!)
 - Discourage perfectionism
 - Foster areas of strengths and self-confidence

PAUSE + REFLECT: Building Self-Esteem

You're so smart!

Your hard work and dedication really paid off!

You are a good kid.

I like how you take time to listen to other's feelings and thoughts.

You are such a good Christian!

I am so proud of the way you read your bible every day.

Create Responsive Relationships

- Responsive relationships form the foundation for resilience and a buffer against other difficulties
- Helps children deal with stress, regulate emotions and behaviors, and build hope for the future
- Is defined by:
 - **Attunement** to each other's emotional state + needs
 - **Flexibility** to change as relationships changes (e.g., toddlerhood, teenage years)
 - **Understanding** that there may be cultural differences (and strive to learn about them!)
- Relationships happen in consistent community (church + fellowship is important)

What do I do if I'm concerned about mental illness?



Early Intervention is Key

- Kids do not always grow out of mental illness
- Prevention and early treatment is KEY and waiting often leads to more serious mental illness or other serious life-threatening dangers

Early Signs of Distress

- Changes in behaviors
 - Eating too much or too little
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Withdrawing away from family or friends
 - Pulling away from activities they usually enjoy
- Significant decline in academic performance
- Physical complaints without apparent medical cause
- Little or no energy
- Increased irritability or anger
- Expressing feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Signs of self-harm

Distress/Impairment are Key Indicators!

Suicidality

"I'm worried about your safety. Are you having thoughts about harming yourself or others? Are you having thoughts of suicide?"

- Be direct.
 - Makes it feel like it's safe to talk about this topic
 - Does not put thought of suicide into someone's head
- Seek help



Call or text available 24/7
<https://988lifeline.org/>

Encourage professional help!

- Seeking professional help does not mean lack of faith; it is a proactive step towards healing.
- Professional help is available for a range of concerns, from daily stressors to more complex mental health issues.
 - Diagnoses can help with medical insurance coverage
 - Therapists can help with skill building (e.g., emotion regulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal skills, increasing healthy habits)
- Most individuals struggle with seeking help
 - Hearing that seeking help is OK can make a big difference.

Psychologist (or licensed therapist) vs Psychiatrist

PSYCHOLOGIST

- Doctorate degree
- Training focused on talk therapy
- Frequently specialize in an area of training including specialty mental health
- Receive training for neurodevelopmental/psychological assessments

LCSW/LMFT

- Master's degree
- Training focused on talk therapy
- Often more generalized training

PSYCHIATRIST

- Training focused on medication management of mental illness
- May have additional experience in talk therapy, if sought out

Emotional wellness takes effort to teach and learn.

- **Complementary perspectives:**
 - The Bible provides guidance on managing emotions, emphasizing qualities like love, patience, and self-control.
 - Psychology teaches practical skills through evidence-based strategies in which to accomplish these goals
- **Interdisciplinary approaches:**
 - Treatment can include both secular psychology + biblical counseling
 - **Caution:** Coordinating care together is often very important



“Is it important to find a Christian therapist for my child?”

Things to consider:

- “Do you need a specialist?”
- “How important is it for you to use the therapy space to hold the impact of sin on your daily life?”

Thank you!

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