The Challenges Youth Face: Recognizing & Addressing Feelings

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Maine AAP Spring Conference Series

“Resilience Rx”

• “Resilience University” in July 2020
• Working with families on ways to foster resilience “one messy moment at a time”
• Collecting data; 40 families at varying stages
• Interested in integrating evidence-based resilience building strategies into existing systems

Mental Health Pre-COVID


Maine Pre-COVID

• 1 in 4 children in Maine has at least one mental health disorder (i.e. depression, anxiety, or ADHD)
• Higher than the national average of 1 in 6

Suicide rates were increasing & above the national average

1:6 Maine high school students considered suicide = 13,000 kids

7,200 Maine adolescents attempted suicide in the last year

> 45% of Maine teens had vaped; about the same percentage tried Marijuana and drank alcohol in the last 30 days

Globally

US is #32 out of 38 for children’s mental well-being

(UNICEF)
Pandemic: A Tiered Crisis


Covid & Mental Health

- A total of 16 studies
- Eleven studies from China, two from India, and one from Spain, Italy, and Iran
- Prevalence of all forms of depression was 20%, anxiety 35%, and stress 53% in the combined study population of 113,285 individuals
- The prevalence rate of all forms of depression, anxiety, stress, sleep problems, and psychological distress in general population was found to be higher during COVID-19 pandemic.

Covid & Mental Health

- Limitations on mental health services
- Many counselors only virtual, closed to new patients
- In 2019, 42% of kids 6-18 yo were covered by MaineCare
- In Androscoggin, York and Cumberland county <25% of counselors see kids and accept MaineCare
- CCS Psychiatry saw weekly referrals go from 60/wk pre-COVID to over 100/wk and had to limit access geographically

AAP Resilience Project

- Increase protective factors
  - Parental resilience
  - Social connections
  - Concrete help in times of need
  - Parent knowledge of child development
  - Social and emotional competence of children
- Life supplies the challenges to test and strengthen the protective factors

Unfortunately, many families face great difficulty finding treatment, in part because too few professionals are trained to provide evidence-based therapy to young children. Families face many other barriers as well: cost, transportation, time off from work to participate, and sticking with something that can be extremely difficult emotionally. “We have really strong evidence that we can intervene effectively,” Gleason says. “But most children don’t have access to these treatments.”

“Roadmap For Resilience”

Nadine Burke Harris

So this is what we wrote about in the surgeon general’s report “Roadmap for Resilience.” And that’s where the cross-sector response is so critically important. Because that is where the cumulative dose of buffering that we deploy in our society is critically important. It is critically important if our educators, and our law enforcement, and our judges, and our early childhood workers, and the guy at the grocery store understand how they can be part of the solution, how they can be a source of buffering for a child. It is critically important that we are making investments to support those families and those communities that are disproportionately impacted. Because it is a matter of long-term health and well-being for this generation. When we’re talking about a major generational trauma, we recognize that we have to implement supports, trauma-informed systems. Because we know now that we’re going to see a generation with these impacts if we don’t do anything.

Evidenced-Based Buffering Interventions

Positive Childhood Experiences Mitigate ACEs Effects

Positive childhood experiences

Positive Childhood Experiences questions asked how often the respondent:
1. Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
2. Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
3. Enjoyed participating in community traditions
4. Felt a sense of belonging in high school
5. Felt supported by friends
6. Had at least two non-parent adults who took genuine interest in them
7. Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home

How do we help?

Behavior problems
Irritability
Defiance
Drug use
Cutting/Self-harm
Unhealthy relationship with food, exercise
Social anxiety
School refusal
Behavior: a cry for help with feelings?
- What is the emotion behind the behavior?
- Lean in & be curious
- Careful not to jump to punishment/discipline
- What might have led to this behavior?
- "BACK THE BUS UP"

How can we be “part of the solution”?
- Careful that PCEs/ACEs do not just become lists of things kids should or shouldn’t have
- Protective factors are within reach for all families, despite ongoing adversity
- Two step approach...

LOOK Beyond the Behavior
- Plenty of opportunities
- Fewer distractions, some strategies are out of reach
- Remember: each unpleasant feeling will come and go
- Each person’s job is to care for themselves while that unpleasant feeling is there
- Acknowledge your OWN emotions too!

Encourage healthy coping strategies
- Hungry, Tired or Cold?
  - Food, Sleep or a Blanket
- Angry, Lonely, Afraid or Frustrated?
  - Breathing Exercises, Meditation, Mindfulness, Exercise, Journaling, etc.
Social-Emotional Learning

A 4-Step Process for Building Student Resilience By Michele Lew (Edutopia, Nov 2018)

Step 1: Teach students to identify their stressors.
Step 2: Identify what students normally do when presented with stressors.
Step 3: Brainstorm alternative ways to respond to stressors.
Step 4: Practical application and maintenance of coping skills.

"Coping skills are fluid and flexible... It’s important they don’t get caught up in thinking they can only use certain skills since that can become a new source of stress.... Coping skills are a powerful way for all students to build resilience, self-awareness, and self-regulatory skills as they face the stressors of life."

AAP Recommendations During COVID

“For all ages and stages, facilitating resilience is key. Pediatricians can remind families about the strength they provide for their children by being present, empathic, and nurturing. Practicing techniques together such as mindfulness, relaxation, and focusing on the present moment can help the entire family build coping skills to deal with uncomfortable and frightening feelings. When practiced regularly, children and caregivers can build skills that promote self-regulation and greater awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others that last long beyond the duration of the pandemic.”

“Ten Things”

- Exercise
- Talk with friends
- Cuddle with the dog
- Dance party
- Listen to music
- Go for a walk
- Sing!
- Headspace/Calm

See One, Do One, Teach One
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognizing &amp; Addressing Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See past behavior to emotions/feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing stress with evidence based buffering strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tell me about what is hard?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building resilience “one messy moment at a time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWND: What Would Nadine Do?</td>
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