

Helping Children and Teens Living with Anxiety in the Age of COVID

October 20, 2021

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Intelligence, Creativity, Compassion...



“Having an anxiety disorder is like being stuck in that moment when you realize you’ve leaned too far back in your chair, but have not yet fallen.” – teenage patient



Adaptive Anxiety vs. Disordered Anxiety

Adaptive Anxiety

- Keeps us safe
- A response to real danger
- Prevents the repeating of mistakes

Disordered Anxiety

- Results in functional impairment
- Equivalent to a “false alarm”
- Leads to unnecessary avoidance

Why this is so important

Children and Adolescents

- Median age of onset 11 – earliest of all forms of psychopathology
- 8 % of children between ages 13 and 18 currently have an anxiety disorder
- 31.9% will have an anxiety disorder between the ages of 13 and 18
- 8.3% will have “severe” anxiety disorder
- Only 18 % of these teens receive treatment

Adolescents Girls

- 38% of girls will have at least one anxiety disorder between the ages of 13 and 18, (compared with 26.1% for boys)
- Compared with 4.2% of girls will have ADHD, 10.2% will have a substance abuse disorder, 3.8% will have an eating disorder

It Didn't Use to be This Way

- Teens are 5 to 8 times more likely to show symptoms of an anxiety disorder compared with teens during WWII
- Depression in teens increased by 37% between 2005 and 2014
- College freshmen report highest stress and lowest mental health in 25 years

Where Does it Come From?

- Doing well in school.....43%
- Family finances.....31%
- Getting into good college.....29%
- The way I look/weights.....26%
- Managing extracurriculars....12%
- Friends.....11%
- Family conflict.....7%

Percent Increase From 2009 to 2019 Among High School Students

- Persistent sadness or hopelessness: 26% to 37%
- Seriously considering attempting suicide: (14% to 19%),
- Making a suicide plan (11% to 16%)
- Attempting suicide (6% to 9%)
- White, woman or sexual minority (lesbian, gay or bisexual) students were at higher risk than non-white, men and heterosexual students.
 - Ivey-Stephenson AZ , Demissie Z , Crosby AE , *et al* (2020)
 - Johns MM , Lowry R , Haderxhanaj LT , *et al* (2020)

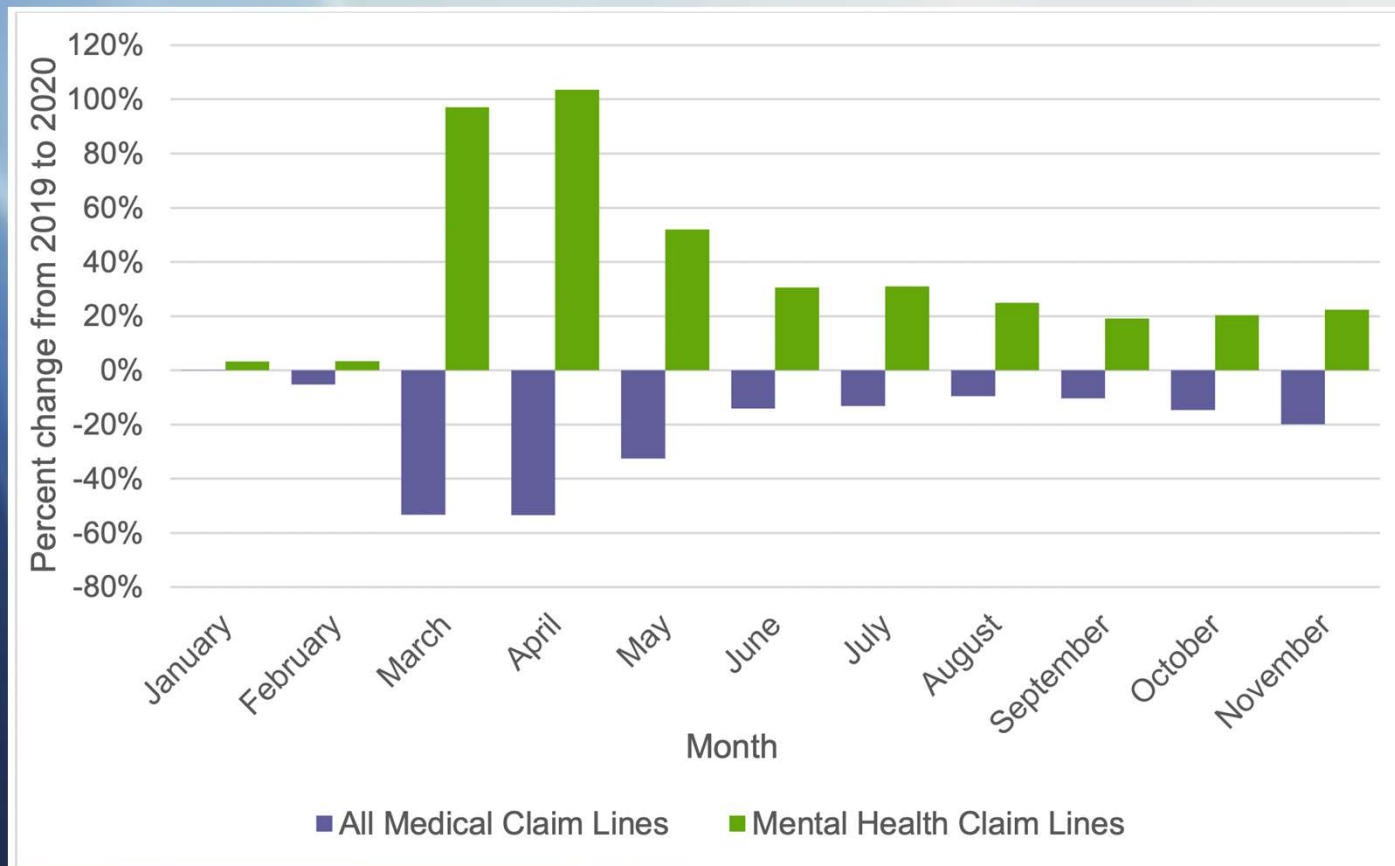
Emerging Data

13 to 18-year-olds largest 12-month increases during pandemic:

- 334% increase in intentional self-injury
- 119% increase in overdoses
- 93.6% increase in GAD
- 89.7% increase in adjustment disorders
- 83% increase in MDD

- FAIR health white paper 3/2/21

Medical Claims ages 13-18



- FAIR health white paper 3/2/21

“Pooled estimates obtained in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that 1 in 4 youth globally are experiencing clinically elevated depression symptoms, while 1 in 5 youth are experiencing clinically elevated anxiety symptoms. These pooled estimates, which increased over time, are double of prepandemic estimates.”

Racine et al., 2021

The background of the slide is an abstract composition of blue and white. On the left side, there are several diagonal, wavy lines in various shades of blue, ranging from a deep navy to a light sky blue. These lines sweep across the frame towards the right. The right side of the image is a solid, light greyish-white color, creating a sharp contrast with the blue elements.

What Can We Do About This?

Self-Compassion

- Self-Compassion vs. Self-Judgment
- Common Humanity vs. Isolation
- Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification

Psychoeducation regarding Stress and Anxiety

- What is anxiety and stress?
- What is “normal”
- Review of basic coping skills

Importance of Resilience

- Foster connections
- Model altruism
- Structured Routine
- Take breaks and have unstructured time
- Teach and model self-care
- Acceptance of change
- Help children move towards goals
- Nurture a positive self-view
- Model optimistic outlook
- Facilitate self-discovery

“It’s not less of a car. You’re just driving it on the wrong surface”



Learned Optimism

- Adversity
- Belief
- Consequence
- Disputation
- Energization

Tolerance for Uncertainty

“Anxiety’s Kryptonite”

- A skill we all have
- Cognitive Reappraisal
- Acceptance model

Self-Efficacy

- An individual's belief in his/her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments
- I know I can do it because...
 - Mastery experiences
 - Vicarious Experiences
 - Verbal Persuasion
 - Emotional States

Why Does the Bird not Fear the Branch Breaking?



Flexibility is Strength



Which is the Path to Success?

