



Promoting resilience in supporting Social, Emotional and Mental Health

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Aims for today

- To increase awareness of common mental health difficulties in children and adolescents
- To consider approaches to support children's wellbeing
- To find out where to get further mental health support

What is children's mental health?



What is children's mental health?

Good mental health is characterised by a person's ability to fulfil a number of key functions and activities, including:

- the ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions
- the ability to learn
- the ability to form and maintain good relationships with others
- the ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty.

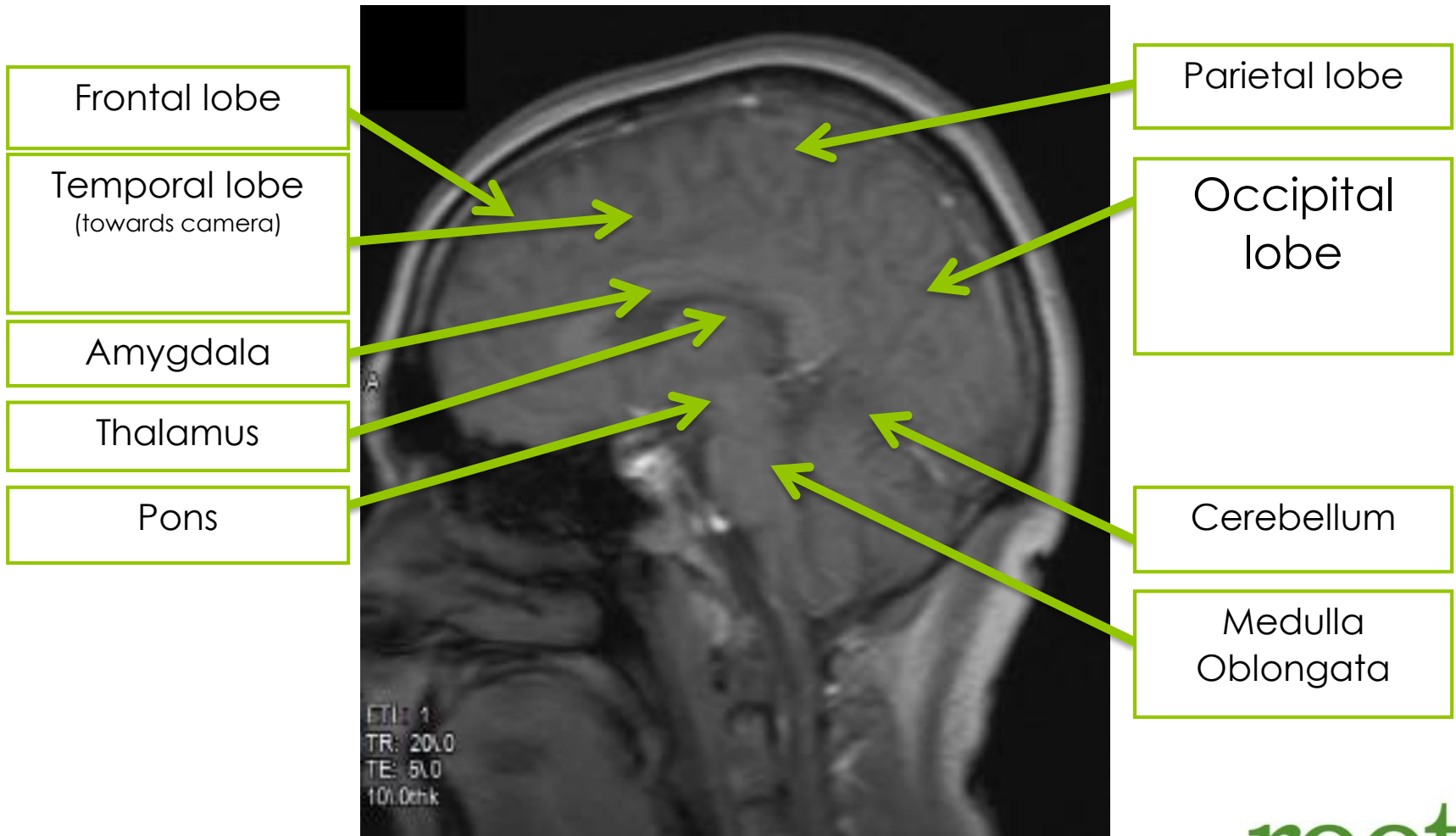
(Mental Health Foundation)

Mental health difficulties in childhood

- ALL children have some degree of mental health and it is NORMAL to feel sad, anxious, shy, angry, happy and excited at different times.
- However, 1 in 10 children will experience a diagnosable mental health problem which negatively impacts on at least one area of their life (Mental Health Foundation)

Brain development

(in approximate development order)



The Mentor's Mantra

The four steps to an intervention:

1. You are safe;
2. It's alright to think about it;
3. It's alright to talk about it;
4. Let me help you deal with it.

These will allow recognition, acknowledgement and freedom to talk about the problem.

Establishing trust

- Eye contact
- Structure
- Routine
- Predictability
- Meeting their needs
- Empathy
- Emotional containment

What do mental health conditions look like?

The following few slides show the signs and symptoms of high end mental health conditions, it is important to recognise them to help identify low level mental health conditions that you can deal with and high end ones that you need to refer on.



Anxiety Disorders

What is Anxiety Disorder?

An inaccurate perception of danger or threat leading to physiological, behavioural and emotional responses that are persistent, excessive and interfere with daily life - 'Fight or Flight or Freeze'



Anxiety Disorders

Signs to watch out for

- General Anxiety Disorder – fear or worry most of the time with no obvious cause, e.g. panic attacks
- Separation anxiety – clingy, tearful, reluctant to try new things
- Social anxiety – difficulties in social groups or presenting as excessively self-conscious
- School-based anxiety – headaches and nausea in mornings, tears or anger at separation, refusal
- OCD – Recurrent intrusive thoughts with behavioural compulsions to reduce the distress caused by the thoughts



Anxiety

Signs to watch out for

- Physiological symptoms – shaking, sweaty, fast breathing
- Agitated, aggressive, difficulty concentrating, excessively tired, nauseous, not eating, withdrawn
- Low confidence, poor social skills, vulnerable to bullying or being a bully
- Excessive avoidance – defiance, withdrawal, absence from school
- Increased risk of alcohol misuse in adolescence as a means to reduce anxiety symptoms



Depression

Signs to watch out for

- Persistent sad or empty mood – may present as irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, low confidence, low self-esteem
- Diminished interest or pleasure in activities
- Changes in body weight
- Sleepiness, loss of energy, agitation, poor concentration
- Recurrent thoughts of death or self-harm



Deliberate Self-Harm

Signs to watch out for

- Cutting, Scratching, Burning
- Self poisoning – tablets, street drugs, alcohol
- Release from unbearable emotions (anger, tension frustration, anxiety, depression)
- Self punishment
- Context of inadequate support networks or means to address problems
- Injuries can lead to hospital admissions and possibly suicide attempts



Eating Disorders – Anorexia Nervosa

Signs to Watch out for

- Extreme fear being fat, preoccupied with body shape and weight or distorted perception of body
- Restricted food intake, excessive exercising, laxative use, vomiting
- Can fail to gain expected weight, not just about weight loss. Amenorrhoea (absence of menstrual cycle), delayed puberty, stunted physical development
- From 'normal' to obsessional dieting behaviour
- Social withdrawal, low self-esteem, poor concentration, lack independence from family



Eating Disorders - Bulimia

Signs to watch out for

- Alternates between restricted food intake and large amounts of food in binges, followed by vomiting or laxative use
- May not present as over / under weight
- May avoid eating with others. Secondary social and relational difficulties as a result
- Can become preoccupied / organised around buying food, eating, purging
- Unlikely to disclose behaviour or seek help.



Psychosis

Signs to watch out for

- Altered perceptions and thoughts, loss of touch with external reality, lack of insight
- 1/3 people diagnosed with psychosis experience their first episode before age of 19
- Positive Symptoms (hallucinations, delusions begin) and Negative Symptoms (self-neglect, lack of motivation) in unique combination
- Typically preceded by early symptoms up to 12 months before
- Family history of mental illness is a risk factor, there is a suggested link to cannabis and drug use



Trauma

Signs to watch out for

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Follows a specific incident that involved death, serious injury or threat to self or others.
- Symptoms include persistent re-experiencing (intrusive recollections, psychological distress and physiological symptoms if exposed to reminders) and avoidance / numbing



Trauma

Signs to watch out for

Complex Developmental Trauma

- Exposure to sustained or multiple traumatic experiences throughout childhood, can lead to chronically over-activated stress-response system with impact on developing brain.
- Symptoms include difficulties in hyper-vigilance, agitation, aggression, poor capacities in self-control, planning, attention, relating to others.



General Points

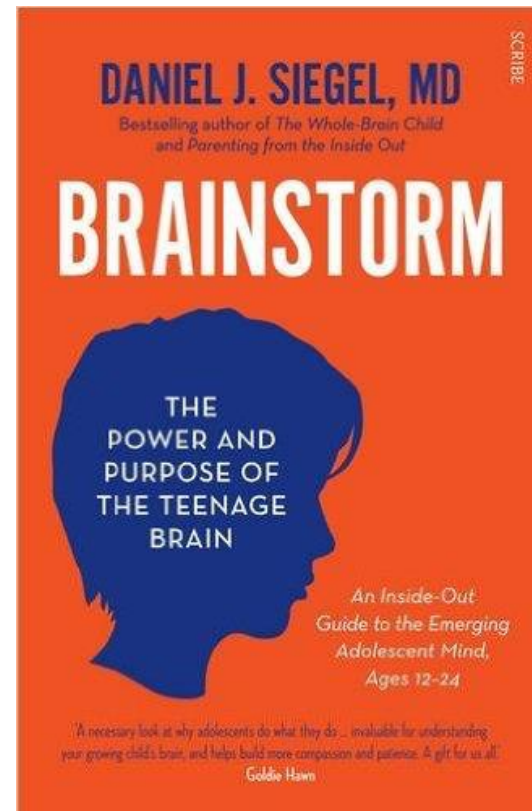
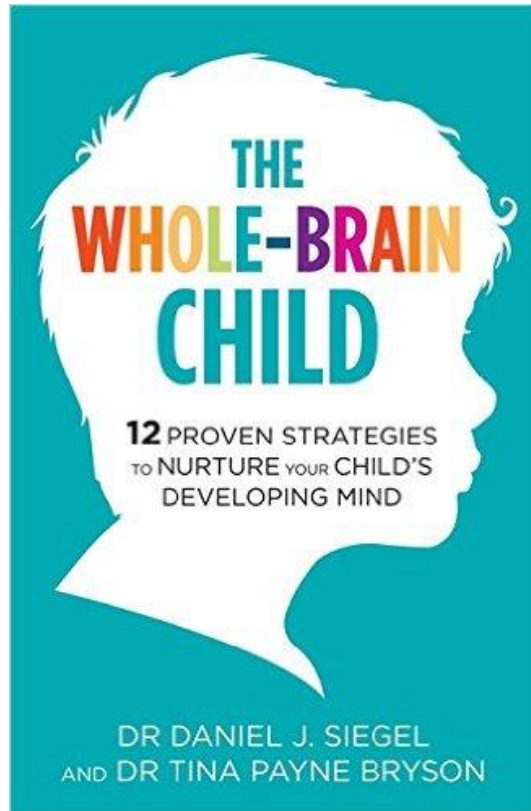
- Use the Mentor's Mantra
- Each young person and his / her experience of mental health difficulties is unique, it is often a combination of several difficulties
- Feeling heard and understood is very powerful
- **If you are concerned about your child's or your own mental wellbeing, please seek support from local services – your GP or a teacher or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in school is usually the best place to start. They can help make a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or to other services for support.**



Positive mental health habits

- Gratitude
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Peer mentoring
- Be able to talk
- Be heard

Useful resources



These books include lots of practical tips for how to support young people's developing minds and wellbeing. They can be useful for parents, carers, young people and professionals.

Useful resources

- Young Minds: The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing. This website includes lots of information about mental health support services plus advice for young people, parents and professionals

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/guide_to_mental_health_services

Useful resources

- The Mental Health Foundation website has lots of information about supporting mental health in children and adults
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/getting-help>

Useful resources

- Information and advice on support for parents, carers and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities:
- Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS): <https://westsussex.local-offer.org/services/7>
- West Sussex Parent Carer Forum: <http://www.wspcf.org.uk>