



# YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

A Parent's Guide to Recognizing  
Mental Health Disorders in  
Young School-Aged Children

[www.MHATEXAS.org](http://www.MHATEXAS.org)  
[www.TEXASSUICIDEPREVENTION.org](http://www.TEXASSUICIDEPREVENTION.org)



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**E**lementary school years are a critical time in a child's development. During these years your child grows physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. As your child goes through these amazing changes, some of them can be stressful and could lead to mental health concerns. Be sure to pay attention to the behaviors listed below:

- Has unexplained feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Doesn't care about favorite activities or is "too tired to play"
- Feels angry and hostile toward people and surroundings
- Has a change in sleeping patterns
- Acts younger than his/her age
- Has trouble sitting still or concentrating most days
- Runs away from home
- Shown significant weight loss or weight gain
- Does poorly in school
- Feels unprovoked anger/aggression
- Complains of frequent headaches and/or stomachaches
- Worries or fears "bad things will happen"
- Has repetitive thoughts or actions
- Refuses to go to school
- Talks about death/suicide

**Mental health problems are common and can be serious; however, they are also treatable. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent long-term problems.** For example, untreated depression leaves children at high risk of substance abuse. These and other behavioral and emotional symptoms may related to one or more of the following disorders/illnesses:

- **Depression** is when a child feels sad or irritable for longer than two weeks.
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is when a child experiences difficulty controlling actions, paying attention, and being still.

- **Anxiety Disorder** is when a child constantly worries, feels anxious, and sometimes panics. He/She may refuse to attend school or sleep alone.
- **Eating Disorders** is when a child worries constantly about being fat. Anorexia is when a child starves his or herself. Children with bulimia may make themselves throw up to control their weight.
- **Learning Disabilities** are when the reading, math and/or writing of a child are below expected age, school, and intelligence level. These children can become frustrated and discouraged, seeking attention through misbehavior and conduct problems.

Children naturally tend to have frequent mood changes, but if any of the above symptoms occur over an extended period of time, talk to a mental health professional, your pediatrician, local mental health authority, school nurse or counselor.

For more information about the mentioned mental illnesses you can contact the following organizations:

**Mental Health America of Texas**  
[www.mhatexas.org](http://www.mhatexas.org)  
[www.texassuicideprevention.org](http://www.texassuicideprevention.org)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
En Español: 1-888-628-9454  
TTY: 1-800-799-4889

**American Association of Child  
and Adolescent Psychiatry**  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)  
1-800-333-7636

**Mental Health America**  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)  
1-800-969-NMHA

**National Institute of Mental Health**  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

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