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Understanding My Child's Journey

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Introduction

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- Mother of two children
- Licensed Psychotherapist
- SAC Registered Counsellor
- 8 years of experience working with children, teenagers & adults
- www.rangecounsellingservices.com

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What is Mental Health?



- Umbrella term for state of one's well-being
- Refers to **emotional, psychological (cognitive) & behavioural health**
- Includes the ability to feel, think, act
- Each component has a great influence on the other
- All 3 components are important for mental wellness

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Signs of Mental Health Issues

- Emotional regulation problems
- Feelings of distress, sadness
- Intense feelings of worries, fear
- Inability to cope with daily issues
- Easily stressed
- Self-harming thoughts



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Examples of Mental Health Issues

- Anger Management & Conflict Resolution
- Depression, Anxiety & Mood Instability
- Eating concerns & Body-Image
- Grief & Loss
- Self-Esteem & Personal Development
- Self-Harm & Suicidality
- Stress Management
- Trauma



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Examples of Mental Health Disorders

Mood disorders	Depression, mania or bipolar disorder
Anxiety disorders	Social anxiety, phobias, GAD
Psychotic disorders	Schizophrenia, Delusional disorder
Personality disorders	Borderline, antisocial
Eating disorders	Anorexia nervosa, Bulimia
Trauma-related	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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What triggers Mental Health Issues?



Internal – Not within our control *(Biological, Genetics, Hereditary conditions)*	**External –** Mostly within control (Situations, circumstances, events)
Physical health conditions (e.g. a certain disability)	Stressful situations
Neurological conditions (e.g. Epilepsy)	Family circumstances
Genetics might possibly have a role	Traumatic experiences

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Which category do you belong to?

Internal – Not within our control *(Biological, Genetics, Hereditary conditions)*	**External –** Mostly within control (Situations, circumstances, events)
Physical health conditions (e.g. a certain disability)	Stressful situations
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Genetics might possibly have a role	Traumatic experiences

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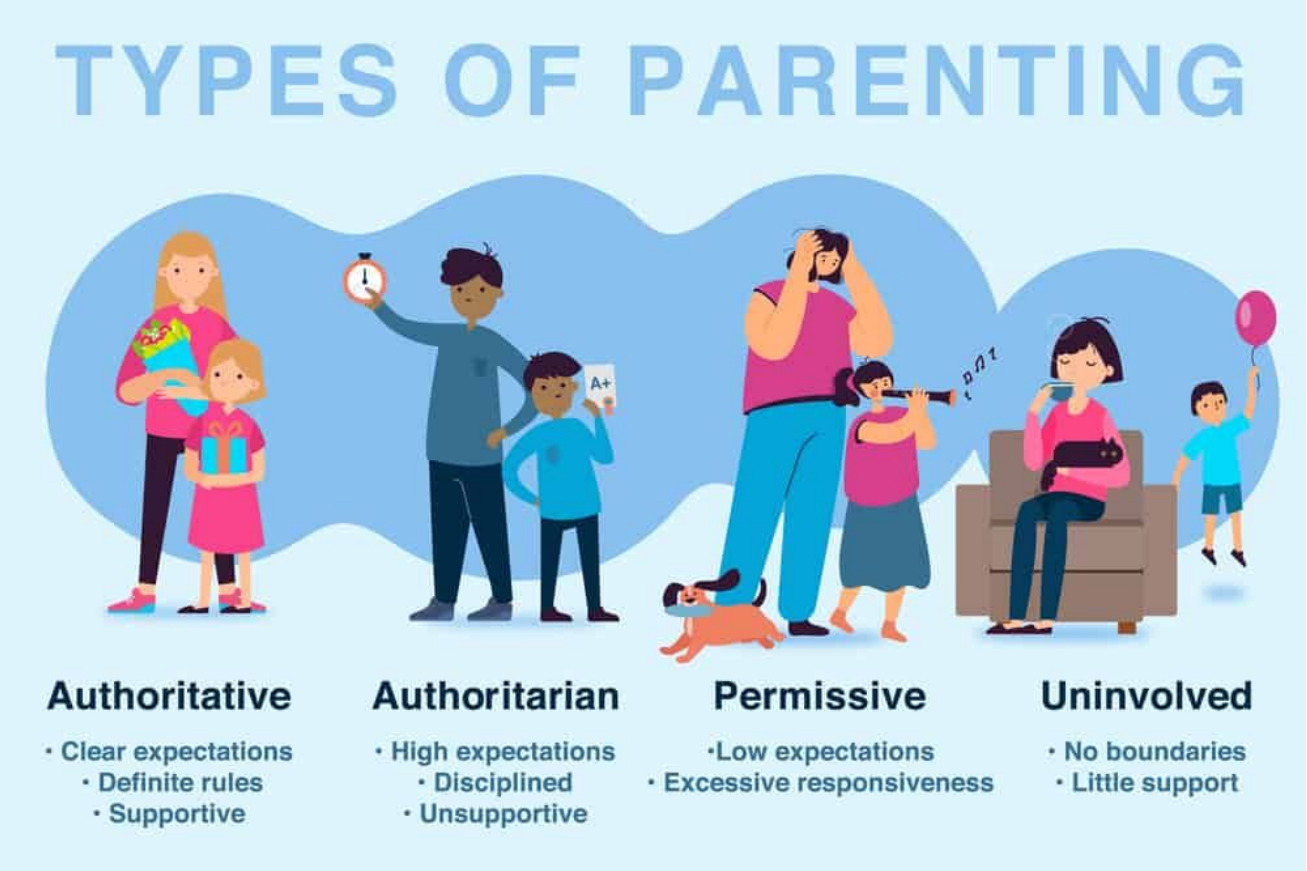
The Role of Family in A Child's Mental Health Journey



1. Parenting styles - *Authoritarian, Authoritative, Neglectful, Permissive*
2. Constant exposure to negative events - *Abuse, neglect, trauma, toxic interaction*
3. Family dysfunction - *Emotionally unavailable caregivers, unhealthy interactional patterns*

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1) Parenting Styles



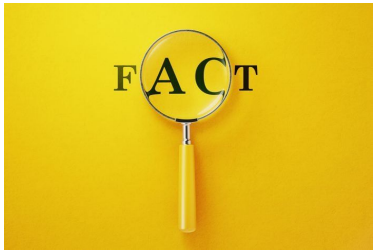
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1) Parenting Styles (Effects)

Parenting Style	**Effects on Child**
Authoritative	Happier, resilient, capable, successful
Authoritarian	Obedient, proficient, but rank lower in happiness, self-esteem, competence
Permissive	Low in happiness, lack self-regulation skills
Neglectful	Lack self-control, low self-esteem, less competent, low happiness

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2) Exposure to Negative Events



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

- Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years)
- Aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding
- Linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood.
- Negatively impacts education, job opportunities, and earning potential

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

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BEHAVIOR



Lack of physical activity



Smoking



Alcoholism



Drug use



Missed work

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



Severe obesity



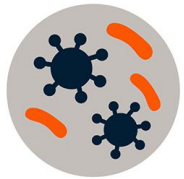
Diabetes



Depression



Suicide attempts



STDs



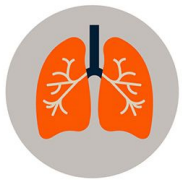
Heart disease



Cancer



Stroke



COPD



Broken bones

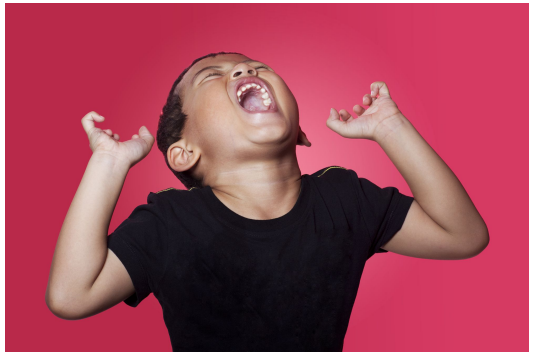
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Reactions to trauma can sometimes be **misdiagnosed** as symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, because kids dealing with adverse experiences may be impulsive — acting out with anger or other strong emotions.

*"It's something that's very common in trauma: **difficulty in regulating emotions and behavior,"** she explains. "That's why a lot of these kids get in trouble with the classroom."*

Hilit Kletter, Child Psychologist

Stanford University's School of Medicine



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3) Family Dysfunction : Characteristics

Conflict	Relationships between family members are tense, filled with poor communication (yelling, criticism, etc)
Lack of boundaries	Caregivers are controlling, manipulative, intimidating, often using threats
Misbehaviour	Addictions, abuse (e.g. substance)
Instability of household	Caregivers are erratic, irresponsible, undependable



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As A Parent, Am I **Perpetuating the Issue** or **Supporting My Child?**



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If you realized that you have been perpetuating the mental health issue:

1) Support
2) Redirect



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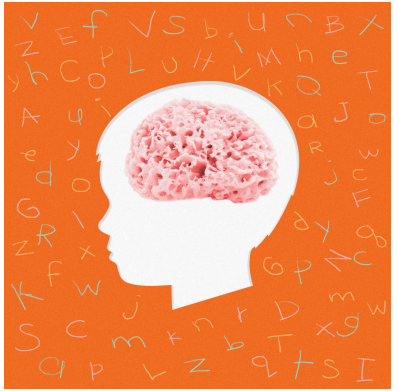
How Do I Support My Child?

1. Model Health Coping Behaviours
2. Open Communication
3. Monitor Your Child



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How Do I Support My Child?



1. **Model Health Coping Behaviours**

    a. How do ***you*** deal with emotions?
    b. Find healthy strategies to cope with emotions and teach/engage your child (e.g. deep breathing, drawing, taking a walk)
    c. Practice makes progress!

**Remember:*
Children are like sponges - they are always watching and absorbing everything that you do, behave, speak.

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How Do I Support My Child?

2. Open Communication

Instead of doing these:	Try these:
Judging, nagging or lecturing	Take a curious stance
Criticizing your child's opinions or feelings	Be open to engaging or starting conversations about anything and everything
Brushing their feelings aside (lack validation) "Oh don't worry about it" / "Cheer up"	Have empathy instead of sympathy

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How Do I Support My Child?



3. Monitor Your Child

- Changes in usual sleep and eating habits
- Changes in emotions (showing signs of being sad, clingy, withdrawn, or angry)
- Increase in crying or anger outbursts
- Anxious tics, coughs, or body movements
- Unable to sleep at bedtime
- Physical ailments, such as headaches or stomach aches
- Substance abuse
- Sudden withdrawal from favourite/usual activities or gatherings

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How Do I Redirect My Child?

1. **Eliminate options**
   a. See a doctor to check if there are any physical or health issues first

2. **Seek professional help**
   a. Counsellors, psychologists, etc.

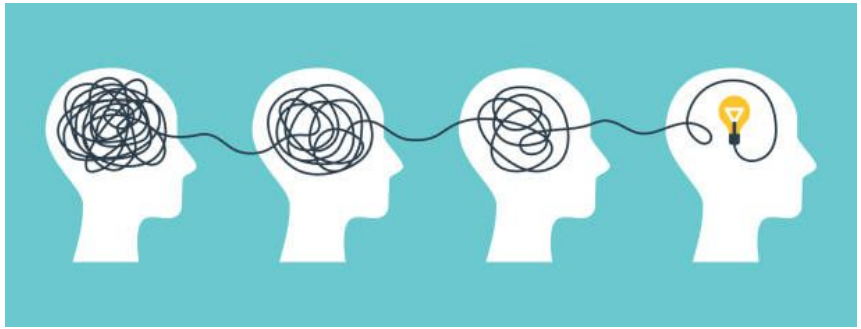


3. **Remind your child that help is always available**
   a. Provide emotional/psychological safety by availing yourself for any topic that your child may want to discuss
   b. Refrain from judging, criticizing, or lecturing your child

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What is Counselling?

- Psychotherapy or Counselling is a form of mental health treatment that helps an individual to strengthen their mental health.
- Therapy can have a profound positive impact on an individual's mental health - among many other reasons, it can increase positive feelings, help build resilience, and reduce stress.



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How Does Counselling Work?

- Differs with each therapist, modality, approach
- Generally - talk therapy: Client talks about concerns or issues in a confidential and safe environment
- Therapists are trained to guide clients through processing emotions and thoughts, overcome difficulties
- Can be used for general mental health concerns, mental conditions (depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc)



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But Does Psychotherapy Actually Help?

- Hundreds of research has shown that psychotherapy works!
- Empirically-supported and evidence-based
- Result of psychotherapy and medications are comparable (Chilvers et al. 2001; Rowland et al. 2001; Ward et al. 2000)
- E.g. In depression & anxiety patients, they continue to improve even after treatment concludes (Hollon, Stewart, & Strunk, 2006; Shedler, 2010)

And more!



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Who Do I Go To First?

Role	Who they are	Diagnose	Assess	Counsel	Prescribe medicine	Cost
Psychiatrist	Medical doctors					$$$$$
Psychologist (Clinical)	Mental health professional					$$$
Psychotherapist	Mental health professional					$-$$

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Useful Contact Numbers



- National Care Hotline - 1800-202-6868
- Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) – 1800 221 4444
- IMH Emergency – 6389-2222
- Police (suicide attempt, danger/risks) – 999

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The RANGE Team

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