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## Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Children

All children may experience very stressful events that affect how they think and feel. Most of the time, children recover quickly and well. However, sometimes children who experience severe stress, such as from an injury, from the death or threatened death of a close family member or friend, or from violence, will be affected long-term. The child could experience this trauma directly or could witness it happening to someone else. When children develop long term symptoms (longer than one month) from such stress, which are upsetting or interfere with their relationships and activities, they may be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### **Examples of PTSD symptoms include:**

- Reliving the event over and over in thought or in play
- Nightmares and sleep problems
- Becoming very upset when something causes memories of the event
- Lack of positive emotions
- Intense ongoing fear or sadness

- Irritability and angry outbursts
- Constantly looking for possible threats, being easily startled
- Acting helpless, hopeless or withdrawn
- Denying that the event happened or feeling numb.
- Avoiding places or people associated with the event.

Because children who have experienced traumatic stress may seem restless, fidgety, or have trouble paying attention and staying organized, the symptoms of traumatic stress can be confused with symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

### **Examples of events that could cause PTSD include:**

- Physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment
- Being a victim or witness to violence or crime
- Serious illness or death of a close family member or friend
- Natural or manmade disasters
- Severe car accidents

### **Treatment for PTSD**

The first step to treatment is to talk with a healthcare provider to arrange an

evaluation. For a PTSD diagnosis, a specific event must have triggered the symptoms. Because the event was distressing, children may not want to talk about the event, so a health provider who is highly skilled in talking with children and families may be needed. Once the diagnosis is made, the first step is to make the child feel safe by getting support from parents, friends, and school, and by minimizing the chance of another traumatic event to the extent possible. Psychotherapy in which the child can speak, draw, play, or write about the stressful event can be done with the child, the family, or a group. Behavior therapy, specifically cognitive-behavioral therapy, helps children learn to change thoughts and feelings by first changing behavior in order to reduce the fear or worry. Medication may also be used to decrease symptoms.

See more at:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ptsd.html>

**“In addition to getting the right treatment, leading a healthy lifestyle can play a role in managing symptoms of depression or anxiety.”**

## Sunpath Outcomes on Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey is helping Sunpath to improve services in all areas. This survey is conducted twice a year. Here it is the outcomes for the first six months of this year. We want to say thank you to all our consumers and their families to participate on this important process:

Community Support Team	94%
Outpatient Therapy	93%
Substance Abuse	99%

**Overall 98%**

“Thank you very much for your participation on the surveys”

## Anxiety and Depression in Children

Many children have fears and worries, and may feel sad and hopeless from time to time. Strong fears may appear at different times during development. For example, toddlers are often very distressed about being away from their parents, even if they are safe and cared for. Although fears and worries are typical in children, persistent or extreme forms of fear and sadness could be due to anxiety or depression. Because the symptoms primarily involve thoughts and feelings, they are called internalizing disorders.

### Anxiety

When children do not outgrow the fears and worries that are typical in young children, or when there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with school, home, or play activities, the child may be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Examples of different types of anxiety disorders include:

- Being very afraid when away from parents (separation anxiety)
- Having extreme fear about a specific thing or situation, such as dogs, insects, or going to the

doctor (phobias)

- Being very afraid of school and other places where there are people (social anxiety)
- Being very worried about the future and about bad things happening (general anxiety)
- Having repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected, intense fear that come with symptoms like heart pounding, having trouble breathing, or feeling dizzy, shaky, or sweaty (panic disorder).

Anxiety may present as fear or worry, but can also make children irritable and angry. Anxiety symptoms can also include trouble sleeping, as well as physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches. Some anxious children keep their worries to themselves and, thus, the symptoms can be missed.

### Depression

Occasionally being sad or feeling hopeless is a part of every child’s life. However, some children feel sad or uninterested in things that they used to enjoy, or feel helpless or hopeless in situations they are able to change. When children feel persistent sadness and hopelessness, they may

be diagnosed with depression. Examples of behaviors often seen in children with depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time
- Not wanting to do or enjoy doing fun things
- Showing changes in eating patterns – eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Showing changes in sleep patterns – sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal
- Showing changes in energy – being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time
- Having a hard time paying attention
- Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior

### Managing Symptoms: Staying Healthy:

Being healthy is important for all children and can be especially important for children with depression or anxiety. In addition to getting the right treatment, leading a healthy lifestyle can play a role in managing symptoms of depression or anxiety.

See more at:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html>

Mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders in childhood can cause long-term problems that may affect the health and well-being of children, families, and communities. Treating a child's mental health problems as soon as possible can help children reduce problems at home, in school, and in forming friendships. It can also help with healthy development into adulthood.

A public health approach to children's mental health includes promoting mental health for all children, providing preventive intervention to children at risk, and providing treatment for children with identified disorders. Psychological therapy is a key component to improving mental health. Depending on the type and severity of the problems, psychological therapy for children may be used in combination with medication.

### A brief overview of therapy

Psychological therapy is meant to treat a mental health condition or help a child manage their symptoms so that they can function well at home, in school, and in their community. When children are young, it is common for therapy to include the parent. Sometimes therapists work with the parents alone. Older children may meet with a therapist alone as well. Some types of therapy include working with the whole family or other important adults in the child's life (for example, a teacher). Parent-focused approaches typically mean that parents talk with the therapist about the child's behavior and feelings. Psychological therapy with children can include talking, playing, or other activities to help the child express feelings and thoughts. Therapists may also observe parents and children together and then make suggestions for finding different ways to react. Psychological therapy for children can be done one-on-one or in groups. Sometimes, a combination of therapies is the most effective for helping a child.

**What is behavior therapy?** Behavior therapy teaches children and their families how to strengthen positive child behaviors and eliminate or reduce unwanted or problem behaviors. One type is parent training in behavior management. The therapist works with parents to learn or improve skills to manage their child's behavior. Parents are encouraged to practice the skills with their child, either during the therapy session or at home. Teachers can also be trained in behavior management to help the child at their childcare center or school. With older children or adolescents, the therapist usually works directly with the child to teach them how to choose positive behaviors. Parents can be involved to support and strengthen the skills their child is learning.

**What is cognitive-behavior therapy?** Cognitive-behavior therapy focuses on changing the thoughts and emotions that can affect a child's behavior negatively. The therapist helps the child become aware of their thoughts and feelings. The therapist also helps the child evaluate if feelings or thoughts may be distorted or illogical, and then helps the child through the process of changing the thoughts as well as the emotional reactions and behaviors that go along with them. Cognitive-behavior therapy often works directly with the child, but can also include parents. For the most common childhood conditions, like ADHD, behavior disorders, anxiety, or depression, approaches using behavior therapy and cognitive-behavior therapy are more likely to reduce symptoms, but there is limited information about which type of therapy is best for treating each specific childhood mental disorder.

Cited From: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/parent-behavior-therapy.html>

## Treatment Team Meeting Outcomes

Every 3 months a Treatment Team Meeting is conducted between the staff, the consumer and the consumer support system to evaluate progress and work with the consumer on their necessities.

The Treatment Team Surveys for this period revealed the following percentages of satisfaction for the first and second quarter of this year:

Intensive in Home	100%
Community Support Team	100%
Outpatient Therapy	100%
Substance Abuse	100%

The Overall Satisfaction reported is **100%**.

"Thank you very much for your participation on the surveys"

## Stakeholders Satisfaction Surveys

The Stakeholders Satisfaction Survey is helping Sunpath to improve services in all areas. During the first period of this year our Stakeholders showed a **100%** of satisfaction.



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## About Sunpath, LLC.

Sunpath LLC is a nationally accredited by CARF and CABHA certified behavioral health agency that provides mental health and substance abuse services to individuals and families in Western North Carolina. We provide an efficient and effective array of services that are psycho-educational and supportive in nature. These services are intended to meet the Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Abuse needs of clients with significant functional deficits or who because of negative environmental, medical or biological factors, are at risk of developing or increasing the magnitude of such functional deficiencies.

Sunpath LLC focused on providing the highest caliber service through professionalism and building a dependable therapeutic rapport with consumer and their families.

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