

Pointers for Parents

Knowing When A Child's Behavior Is "Normal" Or Not

(NAPSA)—With health experts using shorthand diagnoses like “ADHD,” “PTSD” and “OCD,” it might be hard for parents to know if their child has a mental health disorder or is simply misbehaving.

But as the number of behavioral diagnoses skyrockets—ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder) alone is said to affect nearly 5 million kids, though some believe that number to be inflated—doctors say making accurate diagnoses is key.

“There’s a whole spectrum of behaviors that can be considered ‘normal,’” explains Harold S. Koplewicz, M.D., founder and director of the New York University Child Study Center (CSC). “A child who talks back might be exhibiting bad—but normal—behavior, while a child who runs away might have a behavior problem. The best thing a concerned parent can do is seek information from professionals and trusted sources.”

To help parents understand normal developmental phases, CSC revamped its award-winning Web site, AboutOurKids.org. It now offers hundreds of articles and tips from renowned CSC professionals on a wide range of issues—from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) to dyslexia and ADHD. There’s also an “A-Z Disorder Guide” and a “Find A Doctor” link.

Dealing With Diagnoses

So what do you do if your child is diagnosed with ADHD?

First, remember that ADHD is a medical condition that makes it more difficult to control behavior



Parents can find expert advice on their child's mental health.

and attention. The CSC suggests you work with your physician to develop a total ADHD treatment program that might include:

- Regular visits with a mental health professional.
- Parent education.
- Maintaining a regular schedule at home, in school, after school and on weekends.
- Building a support team that includes parents, teachers, instructors and coaches.
- Involvement in social skills groups.

And if you suspect your child has been wrongfully diagnosed?

Talk to your pediatrician immediately. In some cases, “symptoms” of ADHD can actually mask “normal” issues kids are having in school or with friends. Even physical ailments such as chronic inner ear infection can make a child seem to have certain ADHD symptoms.

“The important thing is to stay informed and to play an active role in your child’s care,” says Dr. Koplewicz. “And when in doubt, seek a second opinion.”

For more information and tips, visit www.AboutOurKids.org.