

## Children's Mental Health

May 2010

# Parenting Rules!

### National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week...

May 2nd through May 8th marks National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. It was established by the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health to raise awareness that emotional and mental health disorders in children are real **and** they are treatable.

According to *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General (1999)*, 10% of U.S. children suffer from a serious mental disturbance that interferes with their daily lives. However, only about 21% of these children get the mental health services that they need.

**Mental health is just as important to a child's development as physical health!**

Good mental health helps children to:

- ✓ think clearly
- ✓ develop socially
- ✓ learn new information and skills
- ✓ build self-esteem
- ✓ have a positive outlook
- ✓ develop good relationships



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## **What kids need...**

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Parents, teachers and other caregivers play a very important role in the mental health of children. Just as children need special care to grow physically strong, they also need the right care and environment to grow strong mentally.

Here are some things parents should provide to help children develop good mental health:

- **Unconditional love:** children need to know that no matter what they are loved and their parents and caregivers are on their side.
- **Praise and Encouragement:** by giving your kids lots of support and positive feedback you will help them to grow emotionally strong and self-confident.



- **Play-time:** by having lots of free play time children learn skills like problem solving, sharing, conflict resolution and relationship building.
- **After School Activities:** when you encourage your child's natural talents and interests it helps them to build a positive self-image.
- **Safe and Secure Environments:** children need to feel safe and loved in order to live a stress and anxiety free life.
- **Rules and Loving Discipline:** children need guidelines and discipline tempered with love to feel secure.

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## When to get help....

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Children, especially adolescents and teens, can be moody and unpredictable at times. Often time parents and caregivers will dismiss signs of mental health disorders as “just a phase” or “just being a teen”. If your child is showing signs of depression or a mental health disorder, it important for parents to take it very seriously and seek help for their child.

Things to watch for:

- decline in school performance or grades
- refusal to go to school
- hyperactive
- frequent nightmares or waking up crying
- constant complaints of “not feeling well” with no signs of illness
- chronic disobedience
- frequent temper tantrums or fits
- constant worry or anxiety
- persistent sadness and irritability
- no longer interested in favorite activities

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### Where to Get Help...

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The best place to start is your child's pediatrician or your family doctor. You can also contact one of the agencies below:

#### **Mental Health Association of Rhode Island**

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860  
401-726-2285 [www.mhari.org](http://www.mhari.org)

#### **Bradley Hospital**

1011 Veterans Memorial Parkway East Providence, RI 02915  
401-432-1000 [www.lifespan.org/bradley/](http://www.lifespan.org/bradley/)

#### **RI Department of Mental Health**

14 Harrington Road Cranston, RI 02920  
401-462-3291 [www.mhrh.state.ri.us](http://www.mhrh.state.ri.us)

#### **Parent Support Network**

1395 Atwood Avenue Johnston, RI 02919  
401-467-6855 [www.psnri.org](http://www.psnri.org)

#### **RI Parent Information Network**

1210 Pontiac Avenue Cranston, RI 02920  
401-270-0101 [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org)

### ABOUT PARENTING RULES! E-NEWS...

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The logo for the Rhode Island Family & Children's Trust Fund features a stylized sun or flower icon above the text "Rhode Island Family & Children's Trust Fund".  
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Please share this information with the families in your programs. Thank you!