**What are the challenges faced by children and their coping strategies.**

Most mental health issues of children are usually dismissed as being a part of “growing up” and often brushed off. A child’s early experience in life directly impacts and shapes their thinking and behavior patterns that may have adverse effects later on in life.

Children’s mental health is therefore an essential component of their overall well-being that influences all aspects including emotional, social and cognitive development.

Today, we see increasing rates of anxiety, depression and many other psychological disorders among children finding their roots to multiple factors including poor parenting, abuse, lack of basic needs required for proper development both physically and mentally, social isolation, academic pressure and the rife influence of digital media.

These issues escalate when we fail to address and

notice certain signs and symptoms. Parents and caretakers can pay close attention to signs such as prevailing sadness, changes in their social life such as being more distant and isolating oneself, having sudden outbursts or being very moody, showing patterns of uncontrollable behaviour, changes in their eating habits, sleep habits, poor concentration, doing poorly in school, avoiding going to school, complains of frequent stomach aches and headaches, loss of weight and drastic changes in mood and personality are some early signs that we can watch out for.

Parents being the first window for a child to experience the outside world play likely the most important role in a child’s overall development, most mental health issues surfacing during adulthood can traced back to childhood trauma. Research has shown that the mental health of children is connected to their parents' mental health, and children are more likely to have poor general health, mental, emotional, or developmental disabilities, adverse childhood experiences of their parents have poor mental health. Parenting styles exerts crucial influence on the child’s mental well-being through the chain mediating effects of self-esteem and psychological inflexibility. Children whose parents had low levels of sensitive parenting and greater use of harsh discipline, imposing rigid rules and regulations on them had lower levels of life satisfaction and negative coping mechanisms. parenting with a critical, dismissive tone can dampen children's self-esteem and lead to anxiety or depression. Needless to say children growing up in abusive households show high levels of mental disturbances.

Children who experience negative parenting may have difficulty forming and maintaining positive relationships with peers.

Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and homelessness is another risk factor that impacts a child’s mental well being.

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect and witnessing violence are reoccuring issues that have an effect on the child’s mental health leading to severe trauma and other disorders.

Some common psychological issues we can see in children include:

* **Anxiety disorders.** Anxiety disorders in children are outsized fears or worries that are hard to control. These worries disrupt the child’s day to day life making them unable to take part in play, school or social activities.
* **Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).** Compared with most children of the same age, children with ADHD have trouble with paying attention, acting on impulse, being too active, called hyperactivity, or some mix of these problems.
* **Autism spectrum disorder (ASD).** Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that appears in early childhood, often before age 3. Children with this disorder have trouble talking with and connecting with others.
* **Eating disorders.** Eating disorders are defined as an unhealthy focus on an ideal body type, disordered thinking about weight and weight loss, and unsafe eating and dieting habits. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder can result in not being able to act emotionally and socially. And they can cause life-threatening physical complications.
* **Depression and other mood disorders.**Depression is lasting feelings of sadness, low or irritable mood, and loss of interest in typical activities. These get in the way of a child being able to do well in school and interact with others. Bipolar disorder results in big mood swings between depression and extreme emotional or behavioral highs. These highs can cause risky or unsafe actions.

These challenges can be tackled by supporting the child struggling with mental health issues by

1. **Spending time together**: Engaging in activities such as eating meals together, taking walks, exploring nature, helping with homework, or picking up a shared hobby.
2. **Encouraging healthy habits**: Promoting healthy habits such as regular exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep, as they are important for a child's mental well-being.
3. **Open communication**: Keeping communication open and honest, and regularly asking your child how they're doing to help them get used to talking about their feelings.
4. **Model healthy coping skills**: Children learn from observing their parents, so it's important to model healthy coping skills and stress management techniques.
5. **Seek professional help**: If a child is struggling with mental health issues, it's important to seek professional help. This can include therapy, counseling, or other mental health services.
6. **Support through difficulties**: Pay attention to how your child is feeling or behaving and try to help them work through their difficulties.

It can be hard to detect mental health conditions in children because typical childhood growth is a process that involves change. However with a little more awareness and attentiveness towards a child’s changing behaviors as mentioned above we can effectively reduce the impact and prevalence of this crisis.