

Deciding If and When To Use Medication for Behavioral Health Challenges in Youth

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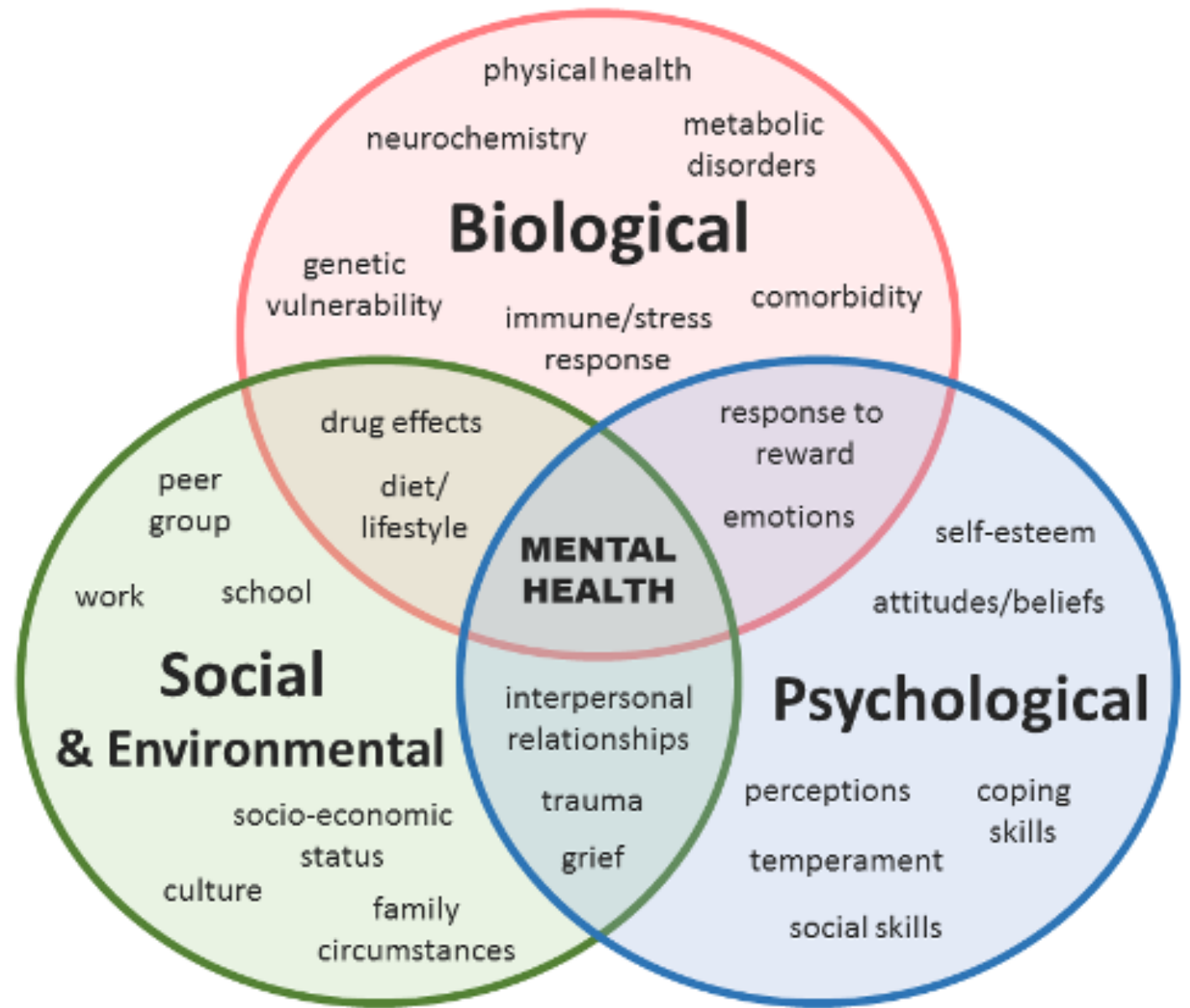


GOLISANO
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

MEDICINE *of* THE HIGHEST ORDER

Disclaimer

- Every child is different and every family is different
- Symptoms are complex and the approach to treat may vary and depend on the situation



When to consider medications

- The child/teen is not doing well
 - Behaviors
 - Self esteem
 - In school
 - At home
 - Safety
- Other strategies haven't worked well enough
 - School strategies
 - Home/ parenting strategies
 - Therapy



What steps to take

- Gather information- from other family members, from school, from your child
- Make an appointment with the child/teen's primary care doctor
 - Be prepared: Make notes of your concerns and observations, along with any questions you may have (later slide)
 - Gather your own family history (anyone in the family with mental health problems?)
- More information may be needed
 - Rating scales, medical tests, discussion with other providers
- PCP may recommend:
 - Therapy
 - Medications
 - Referral to Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Provider (Psychiatrist or Psychiatric NP)
 - Contacting school for extra support

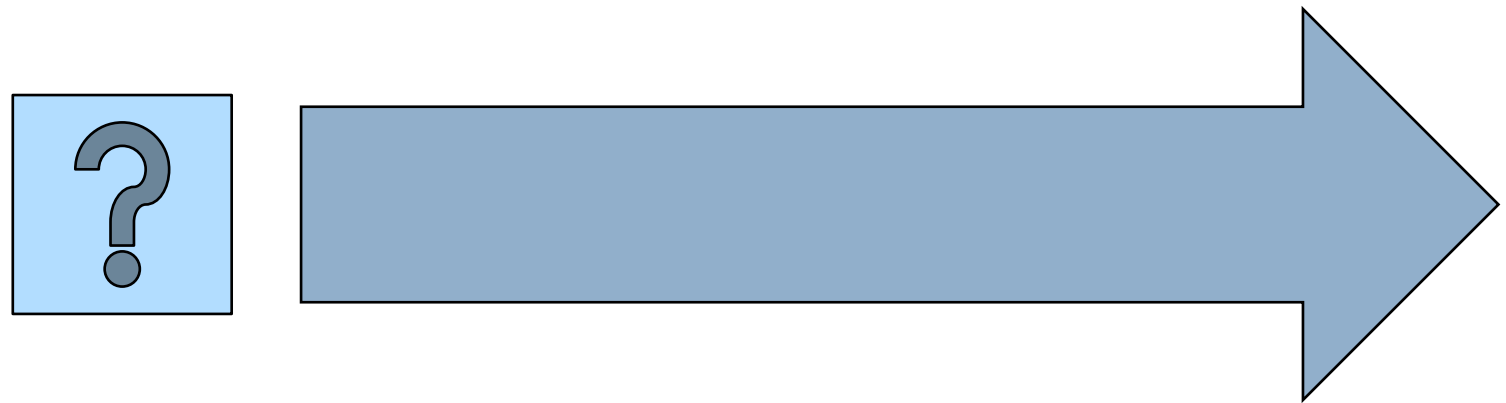
Medications may help to treat

- ADHD *
- Anxiety, OCD
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder *
- Psychosis *
- Severe Aggression

* Meds are often necessary

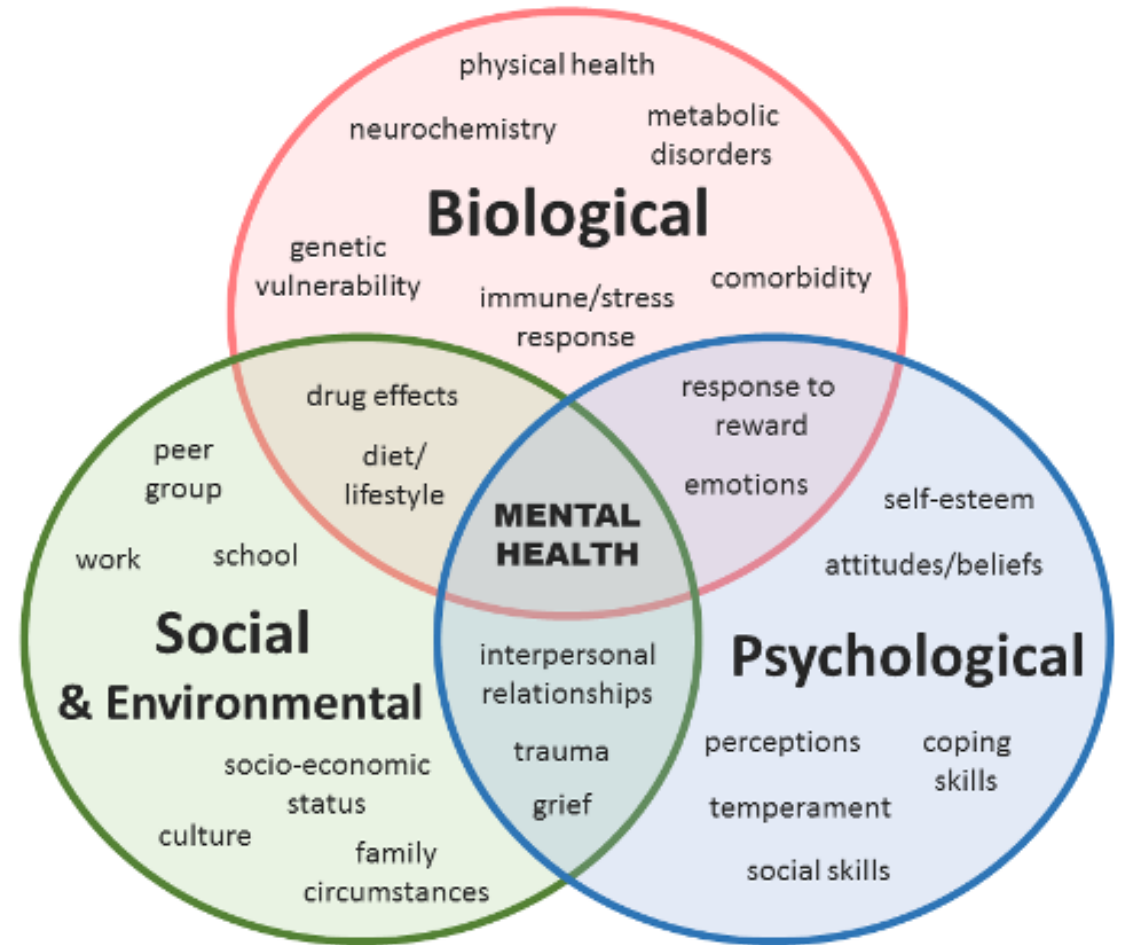
When to consider a referral to a Psychiatric provider

- severity
- response to treatment
- type/ number of behavioral health problems
- PCP comfort level or recommendations for referral



What is a Psychiatric evaluation?

- comprehensive evaluation, taking in all factors of a patient's life
- chart review
- meeting with child/ teen and parent/caregiver
- rating scales, any previous testing
- discussion with current providers, school, etc



What to expect at the first appointment (or two!)

- lots of questions
- may need more information (collateral with PCP, past providers, school, medical tests, etc)
- conversation about diagnosis and treatment recommendations, including whether medications would be helpful
 - Thinking about the systems that may impact youth: family, school, relationships
 - Medical issues
 - Health habits: sleep, eating, exercise
 - “Informed consent”- discussion of the risks, side effects, benefits and alternatives of a treatment
 - Often, therapy and medications are the recommended treatment (depending on the situation)
 - Sometimes, we recommend holding off on starting a medication until a good trial of therapy has been attempted
- opportunity to ask questions- involve your older child or teen in the discussion.

Medications have been recommended...

What questions to ask?

1. What is the name of the medication? Is it known by other names?
2. How will the medication help my child? When will it start to work?
3. What side effects commonly occur with this medication?
4. Is this medication addictive? Can it be abused?
5. What is the recommended dosage? How often will the medication be taken?

What questions to ask, continued

6. Are there any laboratory tests (e.g. heart tests, blood test, etc.) which need to be done before or while my child begins taking the medication?
7. How often will progress be checked and by whom? Will dose changes be necessary?
8. Are there any other medications or foods which my child should avoid while taking the medication?

What questions to ask, continued

9. What do I do if a problem develops (e.g. if my child becomes ill, doses are missed, or side effects develop)?
10. Does my child's school or school nurse need to be informed about this medication?
11. How long will my child need to take this medication? How will the decision be made to stop this medication?

What can I expect from medications?

- It depends on the medication
 - Some medications work within a week (stimulants for ADHD) and some take weeks
 - For some medications (like SSRIs, we tend to “start low and go slow”
- No way to predict how child will respond, may need to try different medications
 - Some medications will work well for some children and not others
 - No crystal ball (yet!)
- No magic pill- medications do not “cure”, but should help
- Dosing may be based on symptoms, age or size
 - And probably will need to be adjusted

If you decide to start a medication

- Lock it away/ out of reach
- Get into a routine, and include the child/teen in the routine
 - Set an alarm on your or your child's phone
 - Use a pill minder set (out of reach/locked away) to keep track
 - Depending on the age of the child: administer the medication and monitor them taking it
- Organize a system for refills (don't run out or call at the last minute!)
- Do not stop the medication without talking with the provider
- Make a follow up appointment with the provider



Closing Thoughts:

- Be informed
- Be an advocate
- Include the child/ teen in the conversation
- Medications are one tool in our tool box

