

(4/9/25) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

(1) What contributes to depressed mood among adolescents?

(2) About children in foster care

And, as always, you will find

(3) Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education

**This community of practice Practitioner is designed
for a screen bigger than an iPhone.**

For discussion and interchange:

>What contributes to depressed mood among adolescents?

From: *An Examination of Ecological Factors Predicting Depressed Mood Among Adolescents*

“...A variety of factors across ecological systems are significantly associated with adolescents’ mental health: individual risk, family functioning, the context of school and community, and macrosystem pressures such as poverty.

This approach takes a multilevel, ecological perspective to disentangle the complex interactions between individual, family, school, and community level factors impacting adolescent depressive symptoms. The results will inform holistic prevention efforts targeting adolescent depression at multiple levels....

To conduct meaningful preventive research that promotes the development of effective interventions, we must acknowledge the intersecting identities that distinctly position individuals within the societal hierarchy and use that knowledge to uncover what environmental characteristics put individuals either at greater or lesser risk of experiencing adverse outcomes. This requires understanding the risk and protective factors that may be most salient for underserved subgroups. Rather than focusing prevention solely on individual risks, a multi-cultural social justice approach includes contextual systems such as schools and communities as well as macrolevel influences such as poverty ...

Schools facilitate the development of prosocial behaviors related to mental health through involvement in extracurricular activities, engagement in school, and connection to teachers. School engagement offers protection against depression in adolescents by helping them build a healthy self-esteem...

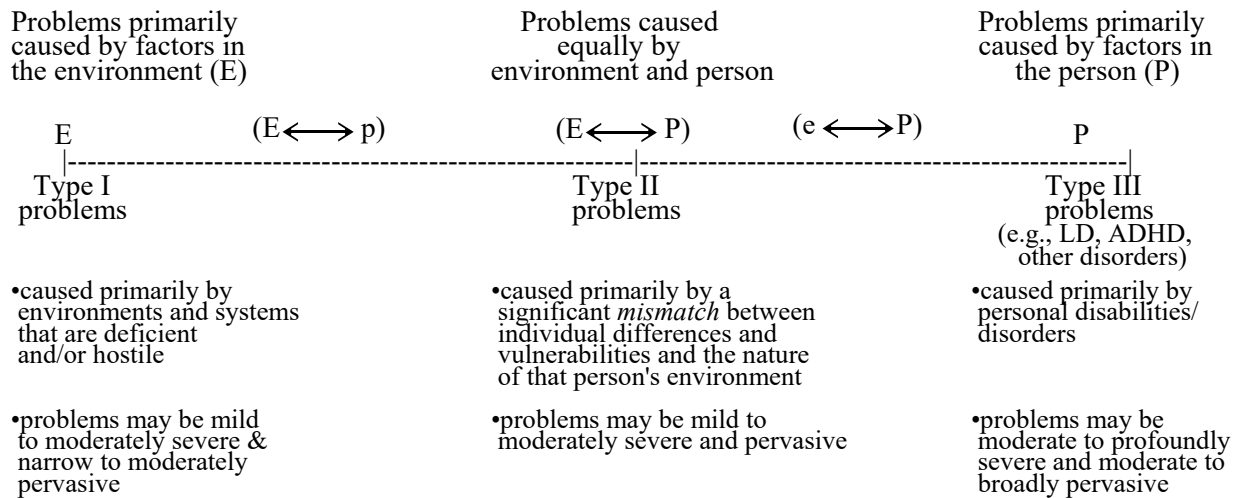
Adolescents who experience neighborhood violence are significantly more likely to exhibit internalizing symptoms like depression, and those who perceived their neighborhoods as unsafe places experience poorer mental health outcomes. Community disorganization (e.g., neighborhoods with high rates of adult crime, physical deterioration, and high population density) are significantly associated with increased risk of depressive symptoms...

Poverty has direct effects on adolescent mental health, through their awareness of family financial difficulties, and indirect effects on adolescent mental health, through parent behaviors such as inconsistent discipline, decreased parental monitoring, and increased parent-adolescent conflict ... Improving school climate and neighborhood safety through preventative interventions and local policies will reduce the pressure on parents to play a protective role.

In line with an ecological systems perspective, school prosocial rewards and perceived community safety are related to lower depressive symptoms, and perceived community disorganization is related to greater depressive symptoms.... Interventions to increase positive actions towards others or society as a whole have the potential to increase emotional well-being...”

Center Comments: Based on a developmentally-oriented, transactional view of the determinants of student behavior, we find it useful to differentiate the problems manifested by students in terms of a continuum (see below).

Applying a Transactional View of the Primary Cause of Problems



Problems caused first and foremost by the environment are placed at one end of the continuum and referred to as Type I problems. For example, for those growing up in impoverished and hostile environments, these conditions should be considered first in hypothesizing what initially caused an individual's emotional, behavioral, and learning problems. At the other end are problems caused primarily by factors within the person (disabilities, disorders); these are designated as Type III problems. The Type II group consists of persons who do not function well in situations where their individual differences and minor vulnerabilities are poorly accommodated or are responded to hostilely. The problems for individuals in this group are a relatively equal product of person characteristics and failure of the environment to accommodate that individual.

There are, of course, variations along the continuum that do not precisely fit a category. That is, at each point between the extreme ends, environment-person (nature and nurture) transactions are the cause, but the degree to which each contributes to the problem varies.

The above way of thinking about the causes of emotional behavior, and learning problems can counter tendencies to jump prematurely to the conclusion that a problem is caused by deficiencies or pathology within the individual. It can help combat practices that “blame the victim.” It highlights the notion that improving the way the environment accommodates individual differences often is the appropriate focus for intervention. (For specific examples of instigating factors for each type of problem, see Chapter 1 of *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom & Schoolwide*.)

For more on this perspective, see the following Center resources:

- >[*Social Determinants of Health, Mental Health, and Academic Achievements*](#)
- >[*Countering the Over-pathologizing of Students' Feelings & Behavior: A Growing Concern Related to MH in Schools*](#)
- >[*Barriers, Buffers, & Youth Development*](#)
- >[*Children and poverty*](#)
- >[*About Addressing Poverty: What's a School's Role?*](#)

For discussion and interchange:

>About children in foster care

From: *Separation and psychosocial challenges of parents with children in foster care*

“Parents of children placed in out-of-home care experience intense loss followed by prolonged grief that often goes unrecognized and unvalidated by the public. Child removal frequently exacerbates parents’ pre-existing mental health issues, fostering dependence on unhealthy coping strategies and intensifying feeling of isolation and loneliness due to a lack of social support....”

Child removal constitutes a profoundly traumatic experience for parents, highlighting parents’ experiences of loss, suffering, hopelessness, disenfranchised grief. Such experiences and consequent challenges associated with the removal could lead to an increased isolation, depression, loneliness, loss of identity, and a broken connection with their children....

The sense of loneliness in coping with the removal of a child is compounded by shame and stigma, especially for parents facing mental health and substance abuse challenges, with the presence of the child welfare system adding another layer of stigma and leaving them feeling judged, doubting their parenting abilities, and causing alienation....

The degree of connectedness between parents and their children affects parents emotionally as they strive to secure more visitation time under conditions conducive to quality bonding. Short-term contact during family time is perceived as insufficient for sustaining a parent-child bond and further exacerbates the feeling of identity loss, hopelessness, and discouragement for some parents....

Despite emotional distress and suffering, some parents find the motivation to stay strong, cope with hardships, and push through to do better for their children and themselves.... Others express the need and underscored the importance of emotional and motivational support provided by agency staff...

Those parents who have the opportunity to work with a parent advocate (a parent with lived child welfare system experience) within the agencies report that advocates provided emotional support by giving parents an opportunity to vent, empowering them, and offering motivation and encouragement in times of flagging hope. Parents highly value such support from a person who they could relate to and who “had been in their shoes.”...

Family time remains essential for maintaining the bond and connection between parents and children in foster care. For example, family time (in-person parent visitation between parents and their children in foster care) helps both parents and children manage the separation when children are in foster care. It fosters and preserves their attachment bond, which is crucial for the well-being of the child. Regular visits between the parent and child aid in alleviating some of the strain on the relationship, promote emotional child and parent well-being, and contribute to a smoother and more successful reunification process...

With adequate support to address trauma, overcome barriers, and empower parents, positive progress is possible. Continuous efforts to engage parents, nurture hope, and facilitate regular visits with their children can significantly enhance both parental and family outcomes....

Since the trauma of the removal can exacerbate challenges and lead to profound, long-lasting consequences, supporting parents in establishing or reconnecting with support networks after the child removal is vital. For instance, connecting parents to peers (i.e., parent advocates or parent partners), who are parents with lived child welfare system experience, would offer them emotional, advocacy, informational, and concrete support from someone who can relate to them, empower, and encourage them. Considering parents’ immense level of isolation and social stigma, engaging them into peer support groups would create opportunities for the collective sharing of experience and help parents receive social and emotional support....

Facilitating and promoting effective relationship building and co-parenting between foster parents and biological parents would allow parents to reclaim the sense of parental identity. This can be supported by implementing interventions aimed at fostering successful co-parenting relationships and improving communication....

Evidence shows that low-income families often reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods with limited resources, which increases their involvement with the child welfare system and the likelihood of out-of-home placements. These inequalities in placement rates are particularly pronounced among racial minorities....

Addressing these complex issues through transformative community-based and policy level changes are vital. Such efforts should aim to reduce systemic disparities, enhance access to resources in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and provide targeted support to families most affected by child welfare decisions....”

Of interest – Here’s what Generative AI offers when you search for “preventing children being placed in foster care”

“To prevent children from being placed in foster care, key strategies include providing comprehensive family support services like parenting education, mental health counseling, financial assistance, addressing underlying issues like substance abuse, building strong community networks, and collaborating with other agencies to address root causes of child maltreatment, ultimately aiming to keep families together in safe and stable environments.

Here’s a more detailed breakdown of strategies:

>Family Preservation and In-Home Services:

- Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA): This law prioritizes keeping families together by providing funding for in-home services that address the root causes of child welfare concerns.
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment: Providing access to these services for parents can help them overcome challenges that may lead to child neglect or abuse.
- In-Home Parenting Skills Training: Equipping parents with the skills they need to effectively parent can prevent future issues and keep children safe at home.

>Community Support:

- Resource Networks: Strengthening community support systems can help families access resources like food assistance, childcare, and housing, which can prevent children from entering foster care.
- Volunteers and Mentors: Providing volunteers or mentors who can support families can help alleviate stress and provide a positive influence.

>Addressing Systemic Issues:

- Early Intervention: Identifying families at risk early on and providing timely interventions can prevent situations from escalating to the point where foster care is necessary.
- Birth Match Systems: Some states use birth match systems to identify newborn children of parents with a history of child abuse or neglect, allowing for early intervention and support.
- Addressing Economic Conditions: Policies that address economic hardship, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), can help families become more financially stable and reduce stress, which can improve parenting capacity.

>Focus on Permanency:

- Prioritize Kinship Care: When children cannot safely remain with their parents, prioritize placing them with relatives or other kinship caregivers.
- Family Finding: Implementing best practices, such as family finding, can create opportunities for children to maintain family and cultural connections, which can minimize the trauma of family separation.

>Supporting Foster Families:

- Ongoing Support: Provide ongoing support services to foster families, such as case management, counseling, and support groups, to help them navigate the challenges of fostering.
- Concrete Resources: Offer concrete resources, such as rent/utility assistance, funds for materials, or childcare assistance, to decrease placement instability.
- Training and Trauma-Informed Care: Ensure that foster families receive adequate training and are equipped to provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive care.

Center Comments: Some families are reluctant to share their concerns, even with those who might be in a position to help them. They worry that talking about their living situation (e.g., violence in the home, unstable living location) will result in authorities taking away their children and placing them in foster care. Student support personnel in the schools these children attend can play an important role in providing family and student supports. Effective supports by a school can prevent

the need to remove children from their home and can be part of a strong network of intervention and advocacy that helps to reunite families when a child is put into the foster care system.

For more on this topic, see

- >[*Keeping Foster Children Connected to Their Biological Parents: The Impact of Foster Parent Training and Support*](#)
- >[*Assessing the Needs of Reunified Families from Foster Care: A Parent Perspective*](#)
- >[*Does Kinship vs. Foster Care Better Promote Connectedness?*](#)

And there is a lot more that can be accessed from the Center's Quick Find on
>[*Foster Care*](#)

How are these topics being discussed in your locale?

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>[**The Effect of Civic Engagement on Different Dimensions of Well-Being in Youth**](#)
- >>[**Universal Mental Health Screening in Schools: How Acceptable is this to Key Stakeholders?**](#)
- >>[**School Approaches to Youth Suicide Prevention**](#)
- >>[**Addressing Concerns About Suicide at Schools**](#)
- >>[**Bridging the Summer Gap: What District Leaders Say About Learning Beyond the School Year**](#)
- >>[**How project-based learning can enhance student engagement**](#)
- >>[**Teachers Believe That AI Is Here to Stay in Education. How It Should Be Taught Is Debatable**](#)
- >>[**About the Relationship of Physical Activity to Mental Health and the Role of Schools**](#)
- >>[**Tips for Beating Test Anxiety**](#)

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We were asked to share the following:

Join CSHA at The Power of Partnerships, April 28-29

The California School-Based Health Alliance's (CSHA) statewide School Health Conference in Anaheim April 28-29 is an opportunity for health practitioners, educators, and advocates to connect and learn how to best support students with increased access to health care at school. Participate in innovative and inspiring sessions on the latest trends and developments in school-based health and student well-being. You can save an additional \$200 per person if your organization becomes a member of CSHA! [**See details and register:**](#)

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A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to [Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts](#)

- 4/9 Strategies to address absenteeism
- 4/9 Addressing bullying
- 4/10 Facilitating community circles in classrooms
- 4/15 Gathering data to tell your story: evaluating your program
- 4/15 Strengthening collaborative partnerships
- 4/15 Future proofing schools against chronic absenteeism
- 4/16 A crisis plan for mental health problems
- 4/17 Youth engaged evaluation
- 4/22 Telling stories with data
- 4/22 Sharing your impact: communicating data effectively
- 4/22 Student led initiatives
- 4/29 Managing conflict
- 4/30 Problem solving in relationships
- 5/1 Community organizing
- 5/7 Racial Justice in Discipline
- 5/8 Creating conditions for healthy disagreement
- 5/14 Health, Well-being and Safety is Essential to Showing Up
- 8/6 Student Connectedness Fosters Attendance and Engagement
- 9/24 Family Engagement is the Foundation for Attendance and Learning

>[How Learning Happens](#) (Edutopia's series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

>[Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth](#) (webinar recording)

To Listserv Participants

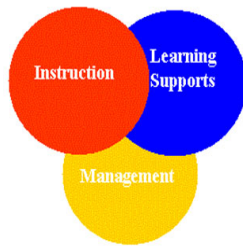
- *Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)*
- *Let us know what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)*

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Looking for information? (We usually can help.)

Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you! Contact: ltaylor@ucla.edu



Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.
National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports

Thinking about improving student/learning supports?

We have many resources to help in moving forward.

For example, see our recent guides that provide a roadmap for moving in new directions:

- (1) ***Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions***
- (2) ***Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process***
- (3) ***Building on MTSS to Enhance How Schools Address Barriers to Learning***

These works provide prototypes for new directions and first steps for moving forward on a monthly schedule. The first steps outlined involve

- (a) mapping existing student support activities and operational infrastructure,
- (b) analyzing what has been mapped,
- (c) identifying priorities for and clarifying the benefits of system changes,
- (d) developing recommendations for system changes,
- (e) building a critical mass of support

Links to resources are provided to aid in carrying out each task.

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)