



MENTAL HEALTH MEMO

APRIL 2025



Holley Elementary School

Community Resource

The OCFS H.E.A.R.S. Telephone Line

Help, Empower, Advocate, Reassure and Support

The H.E.A.R.S. family line assists families by providing resources and referrals to a variety of services such as food, clothing, housing, childcare, parenting education and more. Representatives are available to help Monday through Friday 8:30am-4:30pm. If you know a family that could use support, please ask them to call the OCFS H.E.A.R.S. family line at 888-554-3277

Recognizing Stress in Children

National Stress Awareness Month takes place in April. It was started by the Health Resource Network (HRN) in 1992 to raise awareness of the negative stress can have both mentally and physically. Children often express stress through different behaviors depending on their age. To help a child who is exhibiting stress, caregivers can encourage rest, fun, and positive thinking.

Children between 4 and 6 years old may show stress in the following ways:

- Clinging to adults
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Irritability
- Reduced concentration
- Being more hyperactive or inactive
- Stop playing or talking
- Returning to behaviors they had when they were younger



Elementary Mental Health Team:

Kristina Tese: Counselor

Holly Curtis: Psychologist

Michelle Palmer: Social Worker

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Children between ages of 7 and 12 years old may show stress in the following ways:

- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Irritability
- Aggression
- Restlessness
- Feeling of guilt or self-blame
- Poor concentration and memory
- Becoming withdrawn
- Increased fearfulness
- Repetitive play or frequently talking about stressful events

Source: Medical News Today

Connecting with nature can have positive effects on mental health. Studies have shown that spending time in nature can lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, reduce nervous system arousal, enhance immune system function, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve mood. Feeling connected to nature can produce similar benefits to well-being, regardless of how much time one spends outdoors. Both green spaces and blue spaces (aquatic environments) produce well-being benefits. (Yale University). One way to connect with nature is to visit a local park. Here are a few in Orleans County that have both green and blue spaces:

Lakeside Beach Park: 13691 Roosevelt Hwy, Waterport, NY 14571

Oak Orchard Marine Park: Archbald Rd, Waterport, NY 14571

Holley Canal Falls: 1 Holley Falls Park Rd, Holley, NY 14470

Erie Canal Park: 110 N. Platt St., Albion, NY 14411



What is Autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, and behavior. Autism spectrum disorder begins in early childhood. Often children show symptoms of autism within the first year. A small number of children appear to develop normally in the first year, and then go through a period of regression between 18 and 24 months of age when they develop autism symptoms.

Autism manifests differently in each individual, and the signs may vary in severity. Some common signs to look out for include:

- **Social Interaction Challenges:** Children with autism often struggle with social cues and may find it challenging to make eye contact, engage in reciprocal conversation, or understand social norms.
- **Communication Difficulties:** Delayed speech development, difficulty expressing needs and emotions, repetitive language patterns, and echolalia (repeating words or phrases) are common communication challenges in children with autism.
- **Repetitive Behaviors and Interests:** Engaging in repetitive movements (e.g., hand flapping, rocking), fixating on specific topics or objects, and adhering to rigid routines are typical behaviors seen in autism.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Many children with autism experience sensory sensitivities, such as being hypersensitive or hyposensitive to certain stimuli like sounds, lights, textures, or smells.

While there is no cure for autism spectrum disorder, intensive, early treatment can make a big difference in the lives of many children. If you are concerned with your child's development, please consult with your pediatrician.

Make Your Own Bird Feeders

Gather the supplies: pipe cleaners, toilet paper rolls, string, bird seed, peanut butter (shortening if you have a peanut allergy), and Cheerios).

To make the Cheerio Feeders: Bend one end of pipe cleaner (so the Cheerios don't fall off), and then thread the Cheerios on. To finish, make a loop at the top to hang it on the tree.

To make the Toilet Paper Roll feeder: Use a hole punch to make two holes at the top of your toilet paper roll. (This is where you will be attaching the pipe cleaner.) Cover the toilet paper roll with peanut butter, and then roll it in bird seed until it is completely covered. Attach a pipe cleaner, and you're done!