



MORE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DIAGNOSED WITH ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION



Februar 20.20218

Jette Goller Kloth, Founder, Chief Psychologist and Chairman of the Board of Acindria ApS

The article is about an increase of anxiety and depression among children and young people

The number of children and adolescents diagnosed with anxiety or depression has tripled over the past ten years. This is shown in a new report from the National Board of Health in Denmark. What can the reasons for this be and how do you ensure the best treatment? Private practitioner psychologist and CEO of Acindria ApS Jette Goller Kloth Nieland gives her thoughts on this matter. She has treated children and adolescents for several years.

2,354 children and adolescents were diagnosed with anxiety or depression ten years ago, and now ten years later, the figure is up to 7,189. It is apparent from a report conducted by the National Board of Health, Denmark. However, the figures do not include children and adolescents, who are being treated by private practice psychiatrists.

"There are usually differences in which children develop anxiety and/or depression. However, as the figures in the report show, there is a tendency for the developing group to grow wider. In other words, more ordinary children and adolescents who have no congenital vulnerability or experienced a trauma are at risk of developing depression or anxiety. From this point of view, it would be useful both from a social and family point of view to look at what can lead to such a significant increase as well as, what we at various levels may have to do to stop this development," says Jette Goller Kloth Nieland.

Everyday has become more complex for children and adolescents

Among one of the reasons for the increasing number of diagnoses, Jette Goller Kloth Nieland points out that, in general, we have become better at detecting and paying more attention to danger signals that may indicate anxiety or depression. However, according to her, it is not the main reason. She experiences that many children and adolescents in the past ten years increasingly experience a complexity in everyday life that can affect their mental health.

"For example, children and adolescents who are not having enough adult support to relate to and take responsibility for severe relationships in the family, at school and in their spare time are at risk. In the family it may be because the parents are mentally and/or physically absent due to increased stress. An increased divorce rate, in which children and young people must relate to life, as part of a broken family with different values of mother and father, may also be involved. At the same time, the increased digitization and the many social media are a factor that can create a complex everyday life with very little peace in mind of the individual child and the individual youth. Everyday school life can also cause insecurity for some students. Elevated student numbers in the classes, and teachers who are increasingly developing stress because of their working conditions, in which they need to take care of more social conditions around the children in addition to teaching. It all falls back on the children and creates insecurity and a risk of vulnerability to developing anxiety and/or depression," says Jette Goller Kloth Nieland.

Biological factors also play a part

According to Jette Goller Kloth Nieland, it is not only the way our society is structured, which is worth looking into when trying to explain the increased number of diagnoses. For several years, she has done research around how to understand the development of different brain diseases, among others depression and how it can be a consequence of our way of living. Based on her experience, she believes that it may be beneficial to establish a psychosocial as well as a biological focus and look at how our lifestyles and biological factors can affect our mental health. Is a child for example growing up in a

stressful family while experiencing inadequate communication with caregivers, the child may be at greater risk of developing a mental disorder. When exposed to a high stress level, our metabolism (energy production) is affected. We switch from a glucose to a fat metabolism. Over time it seems to lead to the development of depression. According to Jette Goller Kloth Nieland, several types of stress, as well as lifestyle and nutrition, seem to get metabolism to change. If a person for a long time burns fat proteins instead of glucose, it seems to have consequences such as the development of depression.

Be aware of changed behavior

Anxiety and depression often appear in the form of an altered behavior in the child or the adolescent. Parents should be aware that if one's son or daughter begins to isolate, do not show profits to be with others or suddenly do not want to go to school.

"Particular attention should be paid to external signals if the child exhibits a complete lack of response or the opposite - very violent reactions to unimportant things. If parents or others experience danger signals, it is important to talk with the child. Children do not have the same opportunity as adults to say, what they are experiencing. They may need help to explain what's happening," says Jette Goller Kloth Nieland, and highlights what is important in the treatment of children and adolescents with anxiety or depression:

"It is first and foremost crucial to investigate whether there is an immediate obvious cause for the development of anxiety or depression. It is also important to look at possible heredity factors as well as for somatic reasons. A medical examination may be important in many situations before the psychological treatment starts. Through involvement of the parents, it may also be important to investigate whether the child experiences a major responsibility in dealing with tough questions or challenging situations. In some situations, medical treatment may prove necessary, especially where genetically-related diseases are a factor such as OCD, ADHD, but also severe depression," says Jette Goller Kloth Nieland.

There are various psychological treatment methods, that can be useful in the treatment of anxiety and depression. In relation to anxiety in children and adolescents, an Australian developed program called Cool Kids has proved useful. Here, cognitive work is done with the child's experiences, and new ways to relate to reduce fear are trained. Draw therapy can be a useful way of clarifying, what is at stake for the child or the young in relation to depression. For both anxiety and depression, externalizing (separating) the problem from the child or the young can be a useful method that can make it easier for both the child and the young person to relate to what is difficult.

Jette Goller Kloth Nieland has been trained as a psychologist for 24 years. For a 5-year period she has worked concentrating on the development of children and adolescents at Kontakten, the Center for Children and Young People, The Municipality of Aalborg and The Children's department at Aalborg University Hospital, where she has been responsible for children and adolescents with oncology and for children and adolescent's

psychosomatic diseases. She has also worked for 10 years at Falck with crises (children and adults). Since 1999, she has worked as a private practice psychologist, and in 2007 she established the company Acindria ApS, Business Psychological Advice and Clinical Practice.

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