Disorders of Infancy

Disorders of Infancy, Childhood, and Adolescence

To speak directly to the pathology, a list of disorders is usually diagnosed first in childhood and adolescence follows. While this is a comprehensive list, it is brief. Each of these mental disorders can easily fill a book on their own merit. These disorders are the best information the field of psychology offers today. Their meaning is not absolute. Individuals come in a multitude of forms, colors, and backgrounds—all of which one needs to take into consideration at the time of diagnosis. A diagnosis follows some patients throughout their lives while other patients change and grow.

Adult Disorders Becoming Prevalent in Children and Adolescents

Historically speaking, these disorders—primarily diagnosed in adults—have had some incidence in children and adolescents over the years. The modern day concern is the rise of these sets of symptoms occurring in younger children. Because infants, children, and adolescents are growing and developing through critical stages prior to entry into adulthood, there is great concern and ambiguity in their diagnosis and treatment. You can pose some of the following questions to challenge the cultural trend:

- Are these symptoms the result of a culture imposing itself on the children?
- Do the children come into this world with the predisposition?

The most important issue is to keep the children safe while at the same time ensuring that they complete their transition to adulthood in the healthiest state one can afford them. Medications need careful administration to allow the growth process of young patients to continue unhindered. For example, psychotropic medications for adult depression run the risk of increasing depressive symptoms and suicidality in children and adolescents. Another significant risk is the use of antipsychotic medications that cause tardive dyskinesia with long-term use including facial tics, drooling, and a shuffled gate; however, the astute professional can ward off these effects as new medications, natural remedies, and lifestyle changes assist the patient in managing his or her symptoms. Therapeutic intervention goes a long way in reducing the need for some medical therapies as patients learn coping skills relative to the symptoms of their illness or disorder. Psycho-educational and group therapy gain positive impact on the patient as well. However, the uniqueness of each patient; his or her culture, gender, and age; stage of development; and family and social supports are crucial to understanding his or her prognosis.