U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Risk *and* Protective Factors *for* Mental, Emotional, *and* Behavioral Disorders Across *the* Life Cycle

INFANCY & EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Difficult temperament
- Insecure attachment
- Hostile to peers, socially inhibited
- Irritability
- Fearfulness
- Difficult temperament
- Head injury
- Motor, language, and cognitive impairments
- Early aggressive behavior
- Sexual abuse

- Parental drug/alcohol use
- Cold and unresponsive mother behavior
- Marital conflict
- Negative events
- Cold and unresponsive mother behavior
- Parental drug/alcohol use
- Family dysfunction
- Disturbed family environment
- Parental loss

- Poor academic performance in early grades
- Specific traumatic experiences
- Negative events
- Lack of control or mastery experiences
- Urban setting
- Poverty

- Self-regulation
- Secure attachment
- Mastery of communication and language skills
- Ability to make friends and get along with others

- Reliable support and discipline from caregivers
- Responsiveness
- Protection from harm and fear
- Opportunities to resolve conflict
- Adequate socioeconomic resources for the family

- Support for early learning
- Access to supplemental services such as feeding, and screening for vision and hearing
- Stable, secure attachment to childcare provider
- Low ratio of caregivers to children
- Regulatory systems that support high quality of care

Disorders

depression | anxiety | substance abuse | schizophrenia | conduct disorders

Type of Factor

risk factor | protective factor

Sources of Risk/Protective Factors

individual | family | school/community

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

- Negative self-image
- Apathy
- Anxiety
- Dysthymia
- Insecure attachment
- Poor social skills: impulsive, aggressive, passive, and withdrawn
- Poor social problem-solving skills
- Shyness
- Poor impulse control
- Sensation-seeking
- Lack of behavioral self-control
- Impulsivity
- Early persistent behavior problems
- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Antisocial behavior
- Head injury
- Self-reported psychotic symptoms

- Parental depression
- Poor parenting, rejection, lack of parental warmth
- Child abuse/maltreatment
- Loss
- Marital conflict or divorce
- Family dysfunction
- Parents with anxiety disorder or anxious childrearing practices
- Parental overcontrol and intrusiveness

(family risk factors continued)

- Parents model, prompt, and reinforce threat appraisals and avoidant behaviors
- Marital conflict; poor marital adjustments
- Negative life events
- Permissive parenting
- Parent-child conflict
- Low parental warmth
- Parental hostility
- Harsh discipline
- Child abuse/maltreatment
- Substance use among parents or siblings
- Parental favorable attitudes toward alcohol and/or drug use
- Inadequate supervision and monitoring
- Low parental aspirations for child
- Lack of or inconsistent discipline
- Family dysfunction

- Peer rejection
- Stressful life events
- Poor grades/achievements
- Poverty
- Stressful community events such as violence
- Witnessing community violence
- Social trauma
- Negative events
- Lack of control or mastery experiences

(school/community risk factors continued)

- School failure
- Low commitment to school
- Peer rejection
- Deviant peer group
- Peer attitudes toward drugs
- Alienation from peers
- Law and norms favorable toward alcohol and drug use
- Availability and access to alcohol
- Urban setting
- Poverty

- Mastery of academic skills (math, reading, writing)
- Following rules for behavior at home, school, and public places
- Ability to make friends
- Good peer relationships

- Consistent discipline
- Language-based rather than physically-based discipline
- Extended family support

- Healthy peer groups
- School engagement
- Positive teacher expectations
- Effective classroom management
- Positive partnering between school and family
- School policies and practices to reduce bullying
- High academic standards

Source: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2009). *Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: Progress and possibilities*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Risk and Protective Factors for Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Across the Life Cycle *(continued)*

ADOLESCENCE

- Female gender
- Early puberty
- Difficult temperament: inflexibility, low positive mood, withdrawal, poor concentration
- Low self-esteem, perceived incompetence, negative explanatory and inferential style
- Anxiety
- Low-level depressive symptoms and dysthymia
- Insecure attachment
- Poor social skills: communication and problem-solving skills
- Extreme need for approval and social support
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Emotional problems in childhood
- Conduct disorder
- Favorable attitudes toward drugs
- Rebelliousness
- Early substance use
- Antisocial behavior
- Head injury
- Marijuana use
- Childhood exposure to lead or mercury (neurotoxins)

- Parental depression
- Parent-child conflict
- Poor parenting
- Negative family environment (may include substance abuse in parents)
- Child abuse/maltreatment
- Single-parent family (for girls only)
- Divorce

(family risk factors continued)

- Marital conflict
- Family conflict
- Parent with anxiety
- Parental/marital conflict
- Family conflict (interactions between parents and children and among children)
- Parental drug/alcohol use
- Parental unemployment
- Substance use among parents
- Lack of adult supervision
- Poor attachment with parents
- Family dysfunction
- Family member with schizophrenia
- Poor parental supervision
- Parental depression
- Sexual abuse

- Peer rejection
- Stressful events
- Poor academic achievement
- Poverty
- Community-level stressful or traumatic events
- School-level stressful or traumatic events
- Community violence
- School violence
- Poverty
- Traumatic event
- School failure
- Low commitment to school
- Not college bound
- Aggression toward peers
- Associating with drug-using peers
- Societal/community norms about alcohol and drug use

(school/community risk factors continued)

- Urban setting
- Poverty
- Associating with deviant peers
- Loss of close relationship or friends

- Positive physical development
- Academic achievement/intellectual development
- High self-esteem
- Emotional self-regulation
- Good coping skills and problem-solving skills
- Engagement and connections in two or more of the following contexts: school, with peers, in athletics, employment, religion, culture

- Family provides structure, limits, rules, monitoring, and predictability
- Supportive relationships with family members
- Clear expectations for behavior and values

- Presence of mentors and support for development of skills and interests
- Opportunities for engagement within school and community
- Positive norms
- Clear expectations for behavior
- Physical and psychological safety

EARLY ADULTHOOD

- Early-onset depression and anxiety
- Need for extensive social support
- Childhood history of untreated anxiety disorders
- Childhood history of poor physical health
- Childhood history of sleep and eating problems
- Poor physical health
- Lack of commitment to conventional adult roles
- Antisocial behavior
- Head Injury

- Parental depression
- Spousal conflict
- Single parenthood
- Leaving home
- Family dysfunction

- Decrease in social support accompanying entry into a new social context
- Negative life events
- Attending college
- Substance-using peers
- Social adversity

- Identity exploration in love, work, and world view
- Subjective sense of adult status
- Subjective sense of self-sufficiency, making independent decisions, becoming financially independent
- Future orientation
- Achievement motivation

- Balance of autonomy and relatedness to family
- Behavioral and emotional autonomy

- Opportunities for exploration in work and school
- Connectedness to adults outside of family

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- family
- school/community