

# An Integrative Approach to *Mental Health Disorders in Children*

By Dr. Lakisha Brandon

*“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”*

The World Health Organization, 1948

A healthy child does not exist when we neglect to recognize and treat underlying mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, ADD/ADHD, behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorders, and Tourette’s. Without early diagnosis and treatment, there can be problems that are experienced by their parents, within their classroom setting, or that will extend into their adulthood.

Childhood mental health disorders affect many children and families. Boys and girls of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and regions of the United States experience mental health disorders. Based on the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine report (Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities, 2009), it is estimated that 13 to 20 percent of children living in the United States experience a mental disorder in a given year. That’s as many as one out of five children. The report also estimates that \$247 billion is spent each year on childhood mental disorders (CDC 2014). In short, children’s mental health disorders are an important public health issue in the United States.

When left untreated, children and teens with a mental health disorder could develop dependency towards harmful lifestyle situations: alcohol and drug use, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, etc. What we need to do as parents and practitioners is to seek a healthy way of intervening in our children’s lives.

## AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

An integrative approach to managing various mental health disorders is one that not only addresses the “root cause,” but will

also help to restore functional and physiological health in the individual. Here are a couple of approaches that could be integrated along with a standard mental health intervention:

- **DIET.** Several studies have correlated that blood sugar imbalances, inflammatory foods, and foods containing artificial flavorings, sweeteners, preservatives and gluten all play a role in mental health. Helping your child learn how to eat healthy is the foundation required for a healthy body and a healthy mind.
- **SUPPLEMENTS.** Supporting the body with nutritional supplementation can help address various nutritional deficiencies caused by dietary choices and the quality of the food supply. Various nutrients such as DHA/EPA, tyrosine, minerals, b vitamins and probiotics may be recommended to you by a naturopathic doctor who would be able to help guide you on which of these would be appropriate for your child.
- **HERBAL TREATMENTS.** In addition to nutritional supplementation, a naturopathic doctor would also be able to recommend various herbal medicines like Bacopa, Passionflower or Kava, that will help support cognition, relieve anxiety, and support any underlying condition.
- **METABOLIC AND HORMONAL BALANCE.** A naturopathic doctor would also investigate any potential underlying thyroid imbalances, diabetic or insulin resistance conditions, chronic antibiotic usage, hormonal imbalances, anemia, adrenal insufficiency and gastrointestinal conditions that could cause or exacerbate a mental health condition. For example, an undiagnosed thyroid condition can cause anxiety or depression. Recent studies show that gastrointestinal dysbiosis (usually caused by diet and antibiotic use) can contribute to various mood disorders.



At Carolina Partners in Mental Health-Care we have a diverse and experienced group of practitioners educated in a multitude of areas, including mental health, counseling, nutrition, naturopathic health, and general wellness. Interested in an integrative approach? Give us a call at (919) 792-3960 to schedule a free 15-minute health consultation with our naturopathic doctor. **h&h**

*Lakisha Brandon, ND, joined Carolina Partners in 2014. She earned her Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine and completed her internship with an emphasis on mental health at the National University of Health Sciences. Her work has included educating medical students on the use of medical herbs and providing dietary, nutritional, and herbal medicine support for the Salvation Army Clinic in Chicago. She works with all ages at the Carolina Partners Wellness Center, providing health, nutrition, and wellness counseling, homeopathic consultations, herbal medicine, and nutritional supplement prescribing.*

**For more information or to schedule a free health consultation, contact:**

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