

Symptoms vary for children with anxiety and depression

Signs include struggling with school and friends, irritability

By Emily Zantow
Special to The Freeman

Self-harm and suicidal thoughts are among the biggest concerns paired with the emergence of depression and anxiety in kids, Lake said.

“Potential danger to self and others is a gigantic, immediate emergency — cutting, self-injurious behavior, risk-taking, drug and alcohol use and sometimes reckless behavior in regards to interpersonal relationships: dating and sexuality,” he said.

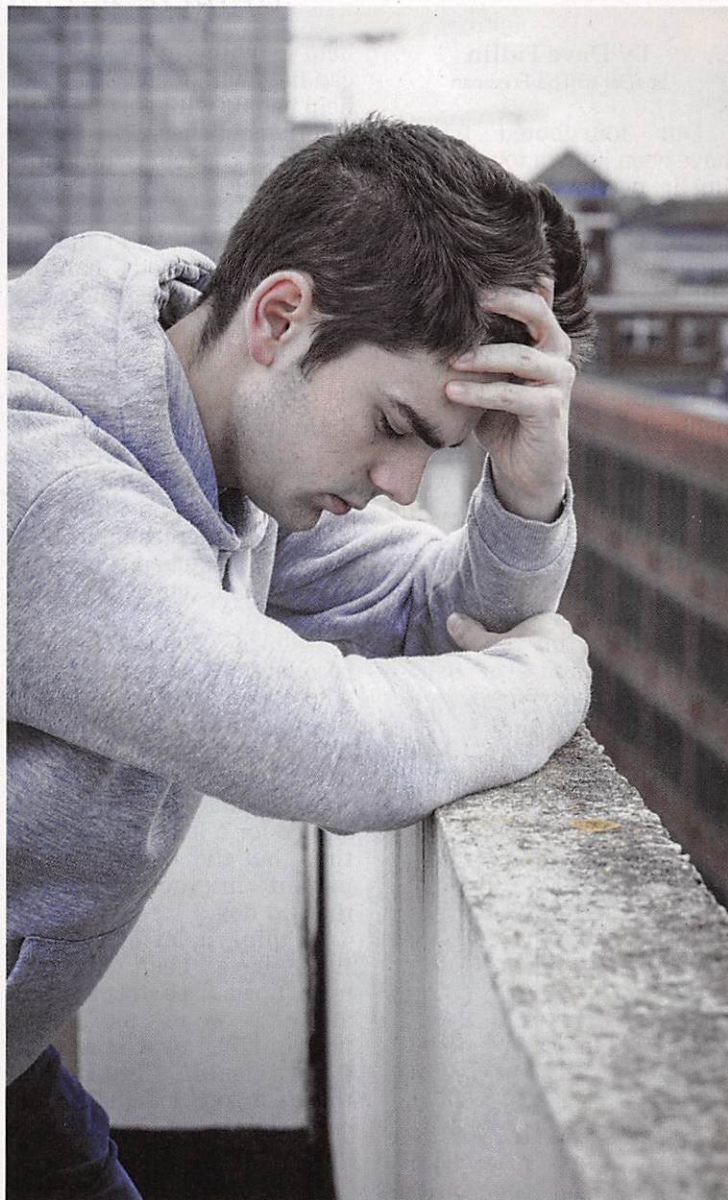
Sometimes, the child’s symptoms may be ambiguous. “A lot of times as kids come in, what’s on the front burner as presenting symptoms are not really the cause of the problem. There’s a huge interplay between depression and anxiety and what comes first — the chicken or the egg or in some cases, both are going on simultaneously,” Lake said.

Additionally, Dr. Lake says the younger the child is, the more complex their mental

Although there are a wide range of symptoms for anxiety and depression in children, psychiatrist Dr. Peter M. Lake, medical director of the Adolescent Center for OCD and Anxiety at Rogers Memorial Hospital, suggests keeping an eye out for “functional impairments” in their general well-being, social and academic interactions.

Lake

“Whether it’s depression or anxiety, if a child is struggling with friends, struggling with their schoolwork and seeming pretty irritable and upset or quiet and sad at home, it’s a big warning sign that you need to seek help and intervention (for the child),” said Lake.



health issue can be due to their cognitive inability to talk about their feelings.

Social media and technology can also present challenges to kids these days.

“The potential for bullying, teasing, or you thinking you have seven great friends and can’t wait to go to school in the morning then all of a sudden you’re done, can happen in one click in this day and age,” he said.

To treat anxiety and depression in children, Aurora Behavioral Health Center psychotherapist Dr. Lynne Guinther has some tips.

“A first step is to contact the child’s pediatrician or

someone who has had a relationship with the child and they can rule out any other medical issues and then



Guinther

often can make a referral. Other people that can be helpful are guidance counselors at school or coming to see a behavioral health provider like myself,” Guinther said.

Both Aurora and Rogers offer a variety of in-patient and outpatient behavioral health programs in various locations across Wisconsin known for their clinical effectiveness.

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How animals are used for therapy

Dogs, other species known to help humans overcome range of mental, emotional ailments

By **Dave Fidlin**
Special to The Freeman

Our four-footed friends have been known to positively impact persons from all walks of life — from young children learning to read, all the way up to geriatric patients struggling with memory loss.

The practice of animal therapy is ages old, but more recently has grown in popularity as a bona fide way of helping people overcome such issues as stress, anxiety and depression, all the while increasing self-esteem and improving social skills.

Dogs are most commonly linked to animal therapy, though a range of other animals — including cats, horses, guinea pigs and even fish —



Submitted photo

Riley, a dog trained through Pets Helping People, met with a group of youngsters as part of PHP's outreach efforts.

have been credited with helping persons overcome mental and emotional ailments in ways human counterparts might not be able to accomplish.

Amy Dodge is executive director of Pets Helping People, a Milwaukee-based, volunteer-driven organization founded nearly two decades ago that specializes in matching dogs with persons in need of a healing touch.

"They represent a calming presence," Dodge said of animals specially trained for therapy assistance. "They can

help us with our skills. They can help with focus. They can help people with getting their emotions in check."

Mary Domes, who runs Dogs of Endearment in the Kenosha area, said the unconditional love well-behaved, properly trained canines exhibit has a penetrable way of grabbing hold of the human heart.

Dogs of Endearment, which also is nearing its 20th anniversary, sends its cadre of affiliated canines to a range of different venues. Domes said she can reflect on numerous instances where human lives have been changed because of the love and compassion a dog exhibited.

One of Domes' favorite recollections is an instance where a dog sparked renewed vigor into an elderly patient living in hospice within a nursing home. Domes said the patient had not spoken or smiled for a lengthy period of time, but did both after the patient interacted with a therapy dog.

"I think a lot of people's lives have been changed from dogs used for therapy, although we're not always necessarily aware of it," Domes said. "But when there's a good match, the dog can't wait to get to (the venue of the therapy patient)."

Domes and Dodge agree animals need to undergo a series of training exercises to truly qualify as one adept at offering therapy to a human patient.

At Pets Helping People, Dodge said there is one predominant prerequisite: The therapy animal needs to be at least a year old and in the owner's possession for six months.

Character traits are also an important part of the consideration process.

Dogs, for instance, cannot exhibit aggression, but must be able to withstand receiving some from the human in their midst. Animals also need to be well-disciplined and able to adapt to a variety of different settings.



Submitted photo

Therapy dog Miles enjoying attention and spreading cheer.

While different breeds of dogs have long been known to exhibit different types of temperaments, Domes said no breed is completely banned from her organization. Conversely, no breed is given preferential treatment.

"It doesn't matter if it's a pure bred or a mixed breed," Domes said. "What's most important — what it's really all about — is the combination of dog temperament and the personality of the human."

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