

How Are Your Kids Feeling? Now's the Time to Check Out Those Moods

May is Mental Health Month. What better time than now, suggests Lois Moore, chief administrator of the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center, to check out the seriousness of your children's mood swings.

Children's mental health problems are real, common and treatable. But untreated mental health problems can disrupt children's functioning at home, school and in the community, Moore says.

Without treatment, children with mental health issues increase their risk of school failure and they exhibit more suicidal tendencies. They have more contact with the criminal justice system and are more dependent on social services.

The following signs may indicate the need for professional help:

- Decline in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Constant worry or anxiety
- Repeated refusal to go to school or to take part in normal activities
- Hyperactivity or fidgeting
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Depression, sadness or irritability

Early identification, diagnosis and treatment can help children reach their full potential.

If you would like to confidentially ask questions or discuss a situation, please call 713-741-3957, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Tuesdays or Thursdays during the month of May. Mental health staff from the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center answer your questions and provide referral information. ★



The child artist who created this drawing suffers from depression and suicidal tendencies, loves art and wants to be a biochemist.

~ UT Harris County Psychiatric Center

What Do Children Need for Good Mental Health?

- **Unconditional Love** – Your child should always feel he or she is important. If necessary, criticize the behavior, not the child. Children have a great need to feel they are important to their parents/caregivers.
- **A Nurturing Environment** – Humor can be positive. Laugh with your children, not at them. Be sure they are aware you are not making fun of them. Praise and encourage them. Avoid sarcasm. Help them set realistic, attainable goals.
- **Time to Play/Play for Fun** – Play helps children be creative, develop problem-solving skills and self-control, and learn how to get along with others. Good, hardy play, which includes running and yelling, is not only fun, but helps children to be physically and mentally healthy.
- **Safe and Secure Environment** – If possible, enroll your child in an after-school activity rather than keep her home alone after school. Always listen to your child's fears – find out what is frightening him. Be loving, patient and reassuring, not critical. Make time each day to listen to your children and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. Share emotions and feelings.
- **Appropriate Guidance and Discipline** – Be firm, but kind and realistic with your expectations. The goal is not to control the child, but to help him or her learn self-control. Children need to learn that certain behaviors are unacceptable and that they are responsible for the consequences for their actions. Set a good example. ★

35th Anniversary Dinner Proceeds Fund Scholarships for All HSC Schools

Continued from page 1



35th Anniversary Party honorees, Nancy and James T. Willerson, M.D.

underwriters H-E-B and Memorial Hermann Healthcare System and to the people of Houston, "the most generous city I've ever been in."

"Your support for The University of Texas Health Science Center now has it poised for greatness," he said. "Your kindness to Nancy and me will never be forgotten. Every one of you is part of our family and always will be."

A highlight of the dinner was the introduction of special surprise guest Vince Young, former Texas Longhorns quarterback and 2006 NFL Rookie of the Year. Young presented an autographed football to Dr. Willerson, who is known as an avid UT athletics fan.

Dr. Willerson was a thrice-lettered varsity swimmer and a member of the Texas Cowboys before graduating Phi



Bob and Elyse Lanier, left, and Courtney and Christopher Sarofim, right, did a fantastic fundraising job as co-chairs of the event.



Members of the Texas Longhorn Marching Band bring their brand of music to the party.

Beta Kappa from UT Austin.

Representing the UT System at the dinner were Regent Robert Estrada, Regent Scott Caven, Regent Judith Craven, M.D., Former Chairman of the Board of Regents Charles Miller, and Vice Chancellor for External Relations Randa Safady, Ph.D. Co-emcees were UT alumni Tom Roupe and Rand Holstead, a member of the UT Health Science Center's Leaders of Tomorrow.

The event was organized by the Office of Institutional Advancement. ★

HealthLeader Health Tip

Safe Mowing Helps Prevent Injuries

Don't be one of the 74,000 people injured each year while cutting the grass.

- Check the yard before you begin, removing rocks, sticks, toys, etc. These can become projectiles, injuring you or bystanders.
- Keep young children in the house, and restrict the chore to teens over 15.
- Wear closed-toe shoes with soles that grip, and consider wearing goggles and long pants.
- Do not mow wet grass.

- Push mowers across slopes to prevent the chance that feet might slip under the blades (go up and down with riding mowers).
- Allow a hot engine to cool before refueling.
- Never smoke or drink alcohol while mowing.
- Disconnect spark plug/s while carrying out maintenance.

With electric mowers, cut areas nearest the electrical outlet first, then move farther out to minimize chances of cutting the cord and being electrocuted.

Correction

The name of one of the people who received a 2006 International Programs Award was misspelled in the April issue of *The Leader*. Andrew Springer, Dr.PH., a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Public Health, received the award for a collaborative study with Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas Medical School on obesity in elementary school children in Latin America. ★



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DEADLINES

Submit information to be considered for publication in *The Leader* by the 15th of the month one month prior to the desired time of publication. Requests for feature articles require a longer lead time and will receive strategic consideration. Send electronic information in Word format (*no PDFs or posters*) and digital photos as unedited, high-resolution images at 300 dpi or better. E-mail to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu. Include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address. Mail hard copy to *The Leader*, c/o Pamela Lewis, Office of Institutional Advancement, University Center Tower, 1200, or fax to 713-500-3037. For information regarding *The Leader*, call Pamela Lewis, 713-500-3040.

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