



Spotting Early Signs of Children's Mental Health Issues

Description

Lindsey Stevens describes her son, Asher, as a lively and intelligent fifth grader who has shown a deep passion for musical theatre. However, she noticed early signs of distress during his infancy. She recalled that comforting him was challenging, as conventional methods did not seem effective.

As Asher developed into a toddler, his difficulties became increasingly evident. Everyday experiences often overwhelmed him, leading to behaviours such as screaming or covering his face, and he required considerable personal space. Stevens observed that while adults can articulate feelings of anxiety, Asher, who was still acquiring language skills, struggled to express what he felt.

When Asher was three years old, his paediatrician referred him to The Children's Center Utah. This institution offers mental health services geared towards children from infancy to six years of age. Asher attended a therapeutic preschool multiple times a week to address his anxiety and participated in family therapy to enhance his parents' understanding of his needs.

Through this early intervention, the family learned to connect with Asher more effectively. He gradually accepted physical affection and improved his language skills, enabling him to communicate his feelings better and providing his parents with cues to observe.

Experts emphasise the importance of early mental health support for young children. Malinda Freitag, senior clinical director at The Children's Center Utah, notes that mental health significantly influences development, even in infants and toddlers. In Utah, one in five children under the age of eight faces emotional or behavioural challenges, which can manifest in stress, anxiety, or trauma, affecting mood and daily activities.

Stevens highlights that this foundational support has profoundly impacted Asher's life, as he now copes with transitions more effectively and has greater self-awareness. As part of expanding access to mental health resources, The Children's Center Utah plans to inaugurate another location in Lehi this July.

Vocabulary List:

1. **anxiety** //æŋ'zaiəti// (noun): a strong worried feeling about future events
2. **paediatrician** //,pi:diə'triʃən// (noun): a doctor who treats babies and children
3. **therapeutic** //,θerə'pjʊ:tɪk// (adjective): helping to heal or improve health
4. **intervention** //,ɪntər'veɪʃən// (noun): help or action to improve a difficult situation
5. **overwhelmed** //,oʊvər'welmd// (verb): to feel too much stress or strong feeling
6. **manifest** //'mænə,fɛst// (verb): to show or make something clear



Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. What age group does The Children's Center Utah provide services for?
Option: Infancy to three years
Option: Infancy to six years
Option: Three years to eight years
Option: Six years to twelve years
2. What form of therapy did Asher participate in to help his condition?
Option: Group therapy
Option: Art therapy
Option: Family therapy
Option: Occupational therapy
3. Who is Malinda Freitag?
Option: A paediatrician
Option: A clinical psychologist
Option: Senior clinical director at The Children's Center Utah
Option: Asher's therapist
4. What notable struggle did Asher face as a toddler?
Option: Difficulty with physical affection
Option: Expressing his feelings
Option: Making friends
Option: Understanding instructions
5. What is one in five children in Utah under the age of eight facing?
Option: Physical disabilities
Option: Emotional or behavioural challenges
Option: Learning disabilities
Option: Speech delays
6. When does The Children's Center Utah plan to open a new location?
Option: This January



- Option: Next July
- Option: This July
- Option: Next June

True-False

- 7. Asher is described as a quiet and withdrawn child.
- 8. Asher's parents were unable to comfort him during his infancy.
- 9. Asher attended a therapeutic preschool multiple times a week.
- 10. Experts believe that early mental health support is unimportant for young children.
- 11. Asher's language skills improved as he received early intervention.
- 12. The Children's Center Utah serves children older than six years of age.

Gap-Fill

- 13. Asher is a lively and intelligent fifth grader who has shown a deep passion for musical theatre, despite experiencing distress during his _____.
- 14. The Children's Center Utah provides mental health services for children from _____ to six years of age.
- 15. Asher required considerable personal space and often exhibited behaviours such as _____ or covering his face.
- 16. Experts state that mental health significantly influences development, even in _____ and toddlers.
- 17. Asher has developed greater self-awareness and copes with _____ more effectively.



18. One in five children under the age of eight in Utah faces emotional or _____ challenges.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Infancy to six years 2. Family therapy 3. Senior clinical director at The Children's Center Utah 4. Expressing his feelings 5. Emotional or behavioural challenges 6. This July

True-False: 7. False 8. True 9. True 10. False 11. True 12. False

Gap-Fill: 13. infancy 15. screaming 16. infants 17. transitions 18. behavioural

CATEGORY

1. Health - LEVEL6

POST TAG

1. children
2. early signs
3. ESL learning
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