



DEVELOPMENTAL
COORDINATION
DISORDER
AUSTRALIA INC.

Mental Health and DCD

Information for Parents & Adults with DCD

It is natural to experience a range of emotions as we grow. This includes sadness and worry. However, when negative emotions become persistent or result in concerning behaviours, it is important to seek help. Addressing mental health issues early on reduces the impact that they can have on our life.

Increased mental health risk in DCD

During childhood and adolescence, experiences play a big part in developing positive mental health. Even though life is full of challenges for everyone, some face more challenges than others. DCD is a physical disability that impacts on coordination, and the challenges experienced as part of that disability can have a huge impact on mental health and wellbeing. The frustration of not being able to perform activities as well as peers, lack of acceptance and exclusion, and limited opportunities and support are just some of the factors that impact on mental health. Decreased physical activity levels are another contributing factor that often flows on as a result of DCD. Because of these factors, children, youth and adults with DCD are at increased risk of mental health problems, especially anxiety and depression.

Impact of poor mental health

Mental health issues can disrupt sleep, impact on appetite and energy levels, and cognitive processes. They can also affect motivation and reduce the likelihood of an individual engaging in healthy habits, engaging socially or taking care of oneself.

Signs of poor mental health

If you are the parent of a child with DCD or impacted by DCD yourself, it is important to keep an eye on changes in mood, emotions and behaviour.

Examples of these behaviours may include; increased sadness, easily upset, physical symptoms (e.g., sore tummy, headaches, feeling unwell), excessive worrying, loss of interest in an activity usually enjoyed, withdrawal from social situations, increased irritability, agitation, easily annoyed, motivation difficulties, and low energy levels.

If these changes are severe or go on for a few weeks without improving, it is important to reach out for help.

Sources of help

- **Speak to your GP about your concerns.** Depending on the situation, the GP might provide ongoing care or refer to a mental health professional.
- Contact your child's **school counselor or psychologist** if one is available.
- Contact **Headspace, Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation** for advice and support: www.headspace.org.au
- Advice can also be sought through the **Beyond Blue Support Service**– 1300 224 636

Parent mental health

While parents tend to focus on their child's physical and emotional needs, it is equally important to look after your own wellbeing too. If you are physically and mentally well, there is increased likelihood your child will be too.

URGENT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

If you or someone you care for requires **urgent** medical support for mental health matters, support is available at:

- Mental Health Emergency Response Line – 1800 676 822
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Crisis Care – 1800 199 008
- Police – 13 14 44
- Ambulance – 000