

## Taking the Wheel: Steering our Kids to Better Mental Health

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Over the last year, many of us parents/ caregivers have felt we were in a perpetual traffic jam during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meaning, we felt stuck in our circumstances. Traffic jams are extremely inconvenient to not only our tight busy schedules, but they can also trigger anxiety and frustration. While now some of us feel the traffic jam of this past year is beginning to clear up, things are beginning to move again, and we feel we can take back control of the wheel, many of our little passengers have suffered the “Jam of 2020”. Let us look at how we can take back the wheel and steer our little passengers into healthy mental health practices.

The stigma that circles around parents feeling if they need support and guidance with their children is a sign of weakness or a sign you are doing something wrong, is not a new concept amid Covid-19 pandemic. Let me be clear, being proactive and seeking support is anything but a sign of weakness. Seeking support involves courage and vulnerability, and being a champion for your child’s mental wellbeing. You have heard the saying “it takes a village” right. Let us not forget, we have all been in this traffic jam together, and together we can overcome! Mental health/illness perceptions matter as they influence how we do or do not seek mental health support. Brené Brown Ph.D., LMSW, conducted extensive research on shame, guilt, vulnerability, and courage. She noted, “When we find the courage to share our experiences and the compassion to hear others tell their stories, we force shame out of hiding, and end the silence.” Remember there is no shame in this game; we are all in this together.

The Center for Disease Control reported that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a major effect on all our lives. Previous research shows that one in seven children and teens have a treatable mental health disorder, including depression, anxiety, or ADHD. The Covid-19 pandemic for some has exacerbated these conditions and for some brought these underlying conditions to the surface. Other research shows that of these one in seven, only half of these young people received treatment. Untreated mental health disorders can have a debilitating impact on children’s growth as well as their transition into adulthood. Early intervention may prevent long-term mental health consequences from this COVID-19 pandemic.

So how do we navigate out of this traffic jam? First, you can speak with your health care provider and they can recommend options available to you. You also have the option to reach out directly to us at Psycamore, LLC. We can meet with you, discuss your concerns, and recommend treatment options best suited for you or your child. I hope that these findings encourage us all to be more open about talking about mental health disorders and seeking the treatment we need, especially for our children and adolescents. For more information visit us at [www.psycamore.com](http://www.psycamore.com), or call us at 1877PSYCH4U.