

# Mental Health and 22q11 DS Across the Lifespan

Cheryl Cytrynbaum, MS, CGC

Andrea Shugar, MS, CGC

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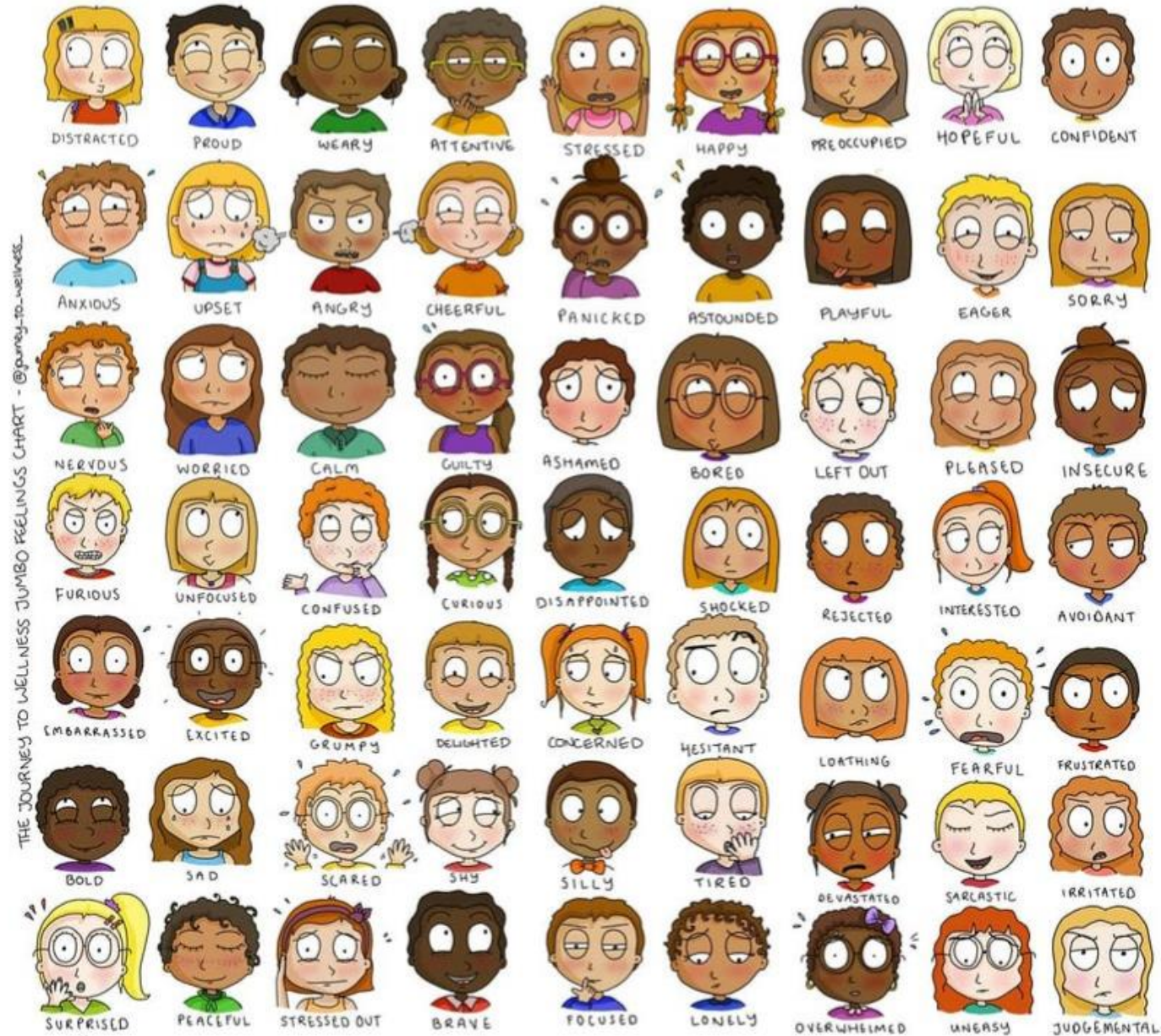
# What is mental health?

"Mental health is a state of well-being - emotional, psychological and social"

Good mental health includes:

- A sense of purpose
- Strong relationships
- Feeling connected to others
- Having a good sense of self
- Coping with stress
- Enjoying life

# What is "normal" ?

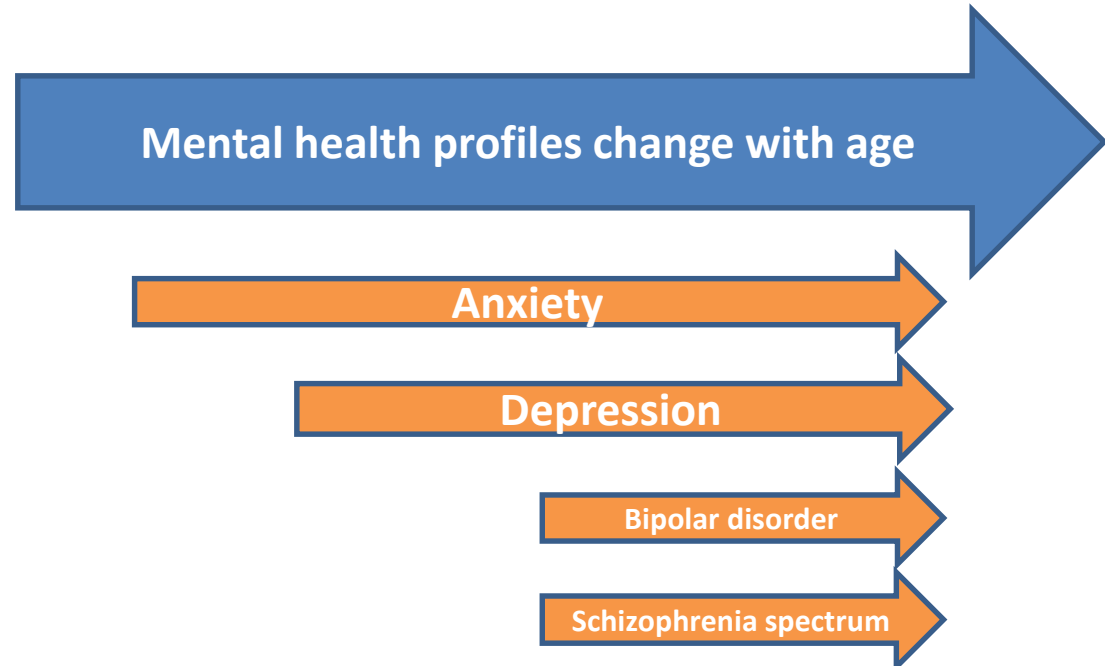


"As many as one in five Canadian children and youth will experience some sort of mental health problem during their growing up years."



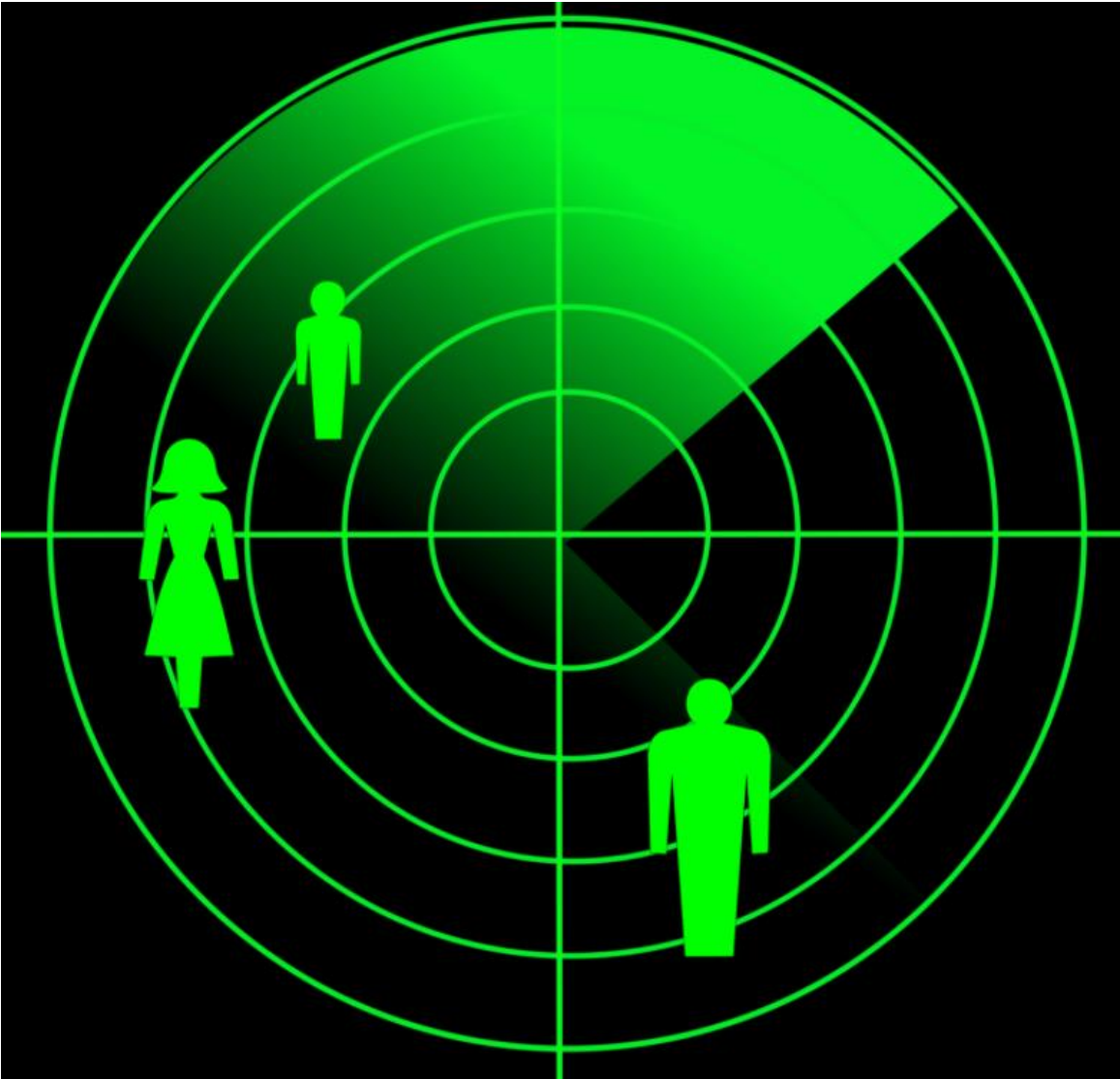
# 22q11 DS and Mental Health

- 22q11 DS confers a "biological risk" for a mental health disorder
- There is a 25-30% lifetime risk to develop a **serious** mental health disorder in individuals with 22q11 DS
- Flipside: 70-75% will NOT develop a serious mental health disorder



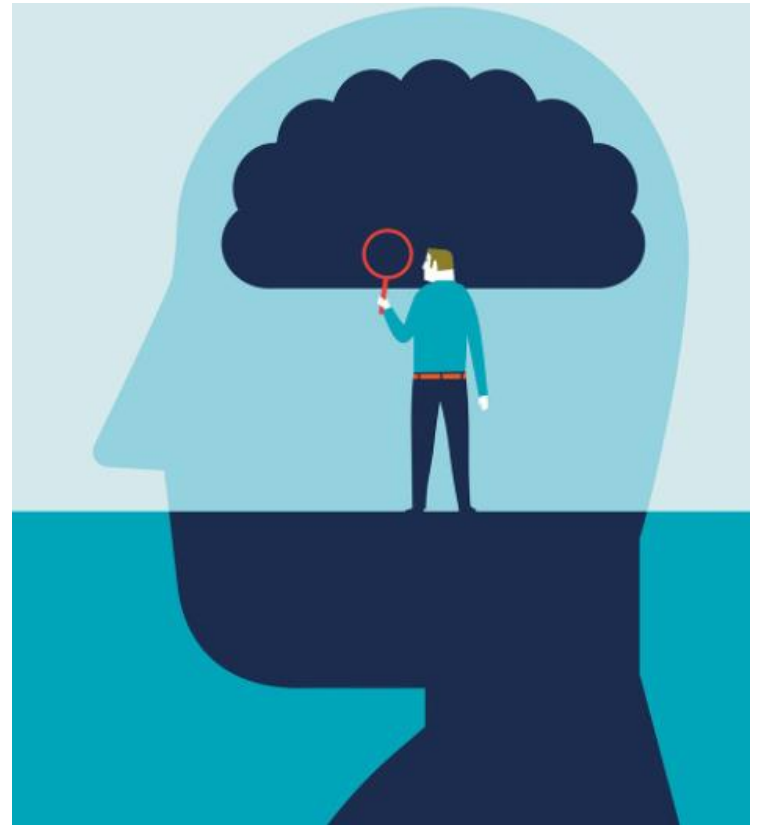


# Fine-Tuning our Mental Health Radar



# What can it look like in children, teens and young adults?

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia Spectrum



# Anxiety





# What can anxiety look like in children?



## Sleep problems

Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep



## Angry outbursts

Difficulty managing emotions



**Struggling to pay attention and focus**

## Complaints of illness

Stomach aches and headaches



## Overplanning

For situations and events



## Feeling worried

About situations or events;  
Seeking reassurance



## Avoidance

Avoiding activities or events  
(including school)



## Defiance

Other challenging behaviors

# What can depression look like?



# What can bipolar disorder look like?

## Bipolar Disorder in Teens and Young Adults: Know the Signs

Bipolar disorder is a mental disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, marked by episodes of mania and depression.



### Common Signs & Symptoms of Mania

- Showing intense happiness or silliness for a long time
- Having a very short temper or seeming extremely irritable
- Talking very fast or having racing thoughts
- Having an inflated sense of ability, knowledge, and power
- Doing reckless things that show poor judgment

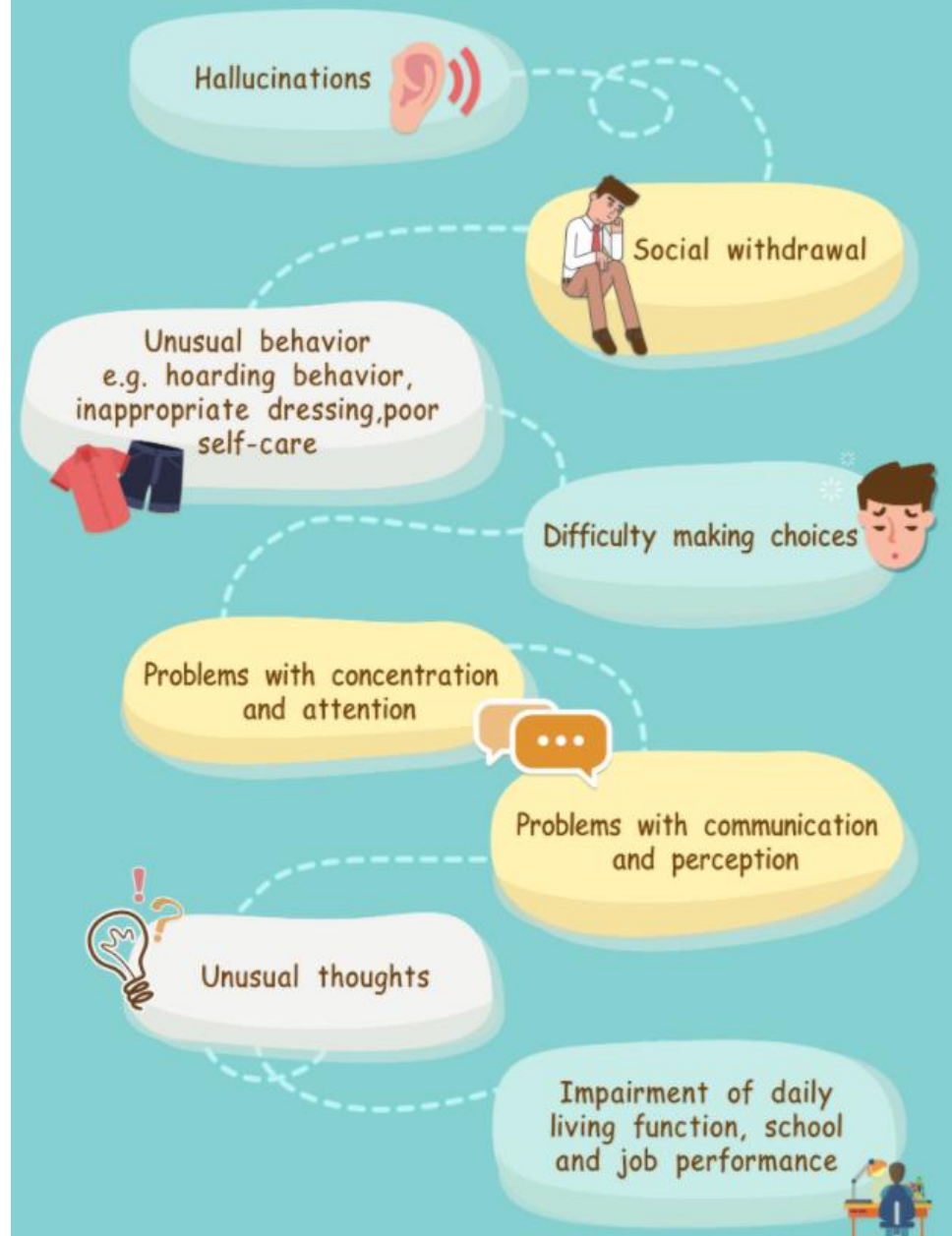


### Common Signs & Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling very sad or hopeless
- Feeling lonely or isolating themselves from others
- Eating too much or too little
- Having little energy and no interest in usual activities
- Sleeping too much

# Early warning signs of psychosis

What can schizophrenia spectrum look like?



# How to recognize a red flag

A prolonged **CHANGE** in mood, personality, behaviour or sense of well-being

- Persistent sadness — two or more weeks
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions
- Hurting oneself or talking about hurting oneself
- Talking about death or suicide
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Changes in eating habits
- Loss of weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Avoiding or missing school
- A decline in cognitive/academic performance





Do not panic.  
Do not assume the worst.



- Symptom  $\neq$  Diagnosis
- Overlapping symptoms in many psychiatric conditions
- Symptoms can be present in people who are mentally well (are able to cope)
- When in doubt - seek advice / medical attention
- For older / adult children, have a plan in place before there is a crisis
- Early intervention yields the best success

# How to nurture your child's mental health

- Help children build strong, caring relationships
- Help children develop self-esteem (love and acceptance; praise)
- Listen and respect their feelings
- Create a safe, positive home environment
- Teach them to solve problems – relax when upset

# Tips for talking about anxiety

Children may not recognize what they are experiencing is anxiety

1. Encourage your child to talk about worries and fears (describe situation you have seen, talk about your own anxieties; show acceptance of worries/anxious feelings)
2. Validate their feelings
3. Help your child recognize anxiety – physical feelings, thoughts and actions

# Resources for preschool and school-aged kids

- CMHO Family Care Centre (Children's Mental Health Ontario)  
<https://cmho.org/familycarecentre/>
- Parenting survival guide – Ann Douglas  
<https://cmho.org/parenting-survival-guide-home/>
- Child Mind Institute- Guides for Parents  
<https://childmind.org/topics-a-z/guides/>
- SickKids – AboutKidsHealth  
<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/mentalhealth>
- Anxiety Canada  
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- Worry Wise  
<http://worrywisekids.org/>

# Resources for teens and young adults

- Mind Your Mind

<https://mindyourmind.ca/>

- Kids Help Phone

[www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens)

- Teen Mental Health Dot Org

<https://teenmentalhealth.org/>

- Foundry

<https://foundrybc.ca/>

- Family Navigation Project (GTA only)

<https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=family-navigation-project>

- National Alliance on Mental Health

<https://www.nami.org/home>

- Dalglish Adult Clinic Fact Sheets

<https://22q.ca/aboutus/our-pamphlets/#transition-factsheets>



# Tips for caregivers

- Watch out for signs and symptoms that represent a change from your young adults's usual behaviour. These may suggest a treatable psychiatric illness (e.g. changes in emotions, thinking, physical state and/or behaviour/functioning).
- Note when and how things seemed to have changed.
- Find out the facts about psychiatric conditions and management from medical professionals, ideally those who are familiar with 22q. Relatives, friends, the Internet and the media may not be the most reliable sources of medical knowledge.
- Seek medical help early. Accurate diagnosis and early treatment lead to the best outcomes.
- Schedule regular follow-up appointments with your doctors (or health-care providers) to monitor the symptoms and any suggested management and treatments.

# Tips for young adults

- Find out the facts about common mental health conditions for people with 22q from your doctor.
- If you notice changes in your sleep, energy level, mood or how you are thinking about people, tell your parents, teachers or doctor.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs. Marijuana use (especially in teen years) can increase the risk for developing schizophrenia (a type of mental health disorder) and is bad for your heart.
- Healthy eating and regular physical exercise are helpful to your brain and your heart.

# Mental health checklist for 22q11 youth and young adults

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## Mental health checklist

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Do any of these sentences describe you?

- I feel very anxious or find myself worrying a lot.
- I feel sad most days.
- I have a more difficult time concentrating now.
- I don't feel I can trust people like I used to.
- I don't enjoy things anymore.
- I am sleeping much less or much more than before.
- I hear people talking even when no one else is around.
- I don't want to get up in the morning anymore.
- I feel hopeless.
- I am more cranky than I used to be.

If you answered yes to any of the above, you may want to talk to your doctor, a member of your health-care team, or someone you feel comfortable with.