



Dr. Poonam Khanna With MINDS that MATTER in Overland Park

by **candi smith** | photography by **adrienne maples**

Childhood depression doesn't always rear its ugly head with a roar. Sometimes it starts out subtly with your child sleeping all the time or not enough. Maybe they are withdrawing from others, or they are losing interest in hobbies they used to enjoy. Your child's appetite has decreased, and their grades are suffering. These symptoms may be a silent cry for help.

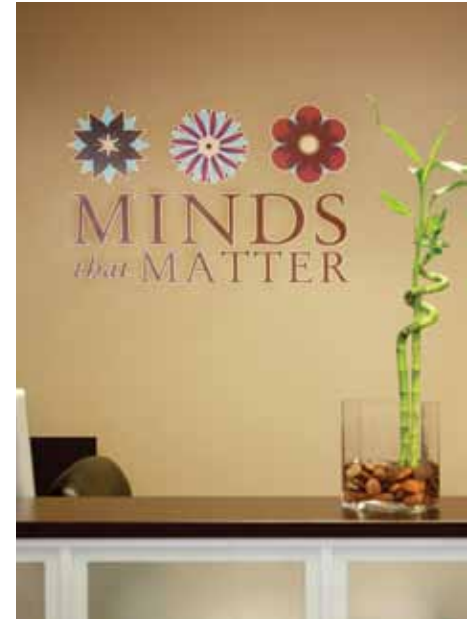
Fortunately, help is close by. Dr. Poonam Khanna, board-certified in both adult and child and adolescent psychiatry for almost a decade, opened Minds that Matter in December 2011. It's located at 143rd and Metcalf in Overland Park. Prior to opening her practice, Dr. Khanna was a Clinical Assistant Professor and Faculty Child Psychiatrist at KU Med Center where she supervised, trained and educated fellows, residents and medical students while also seeing her own private patients. She continues to teach as volunteer faculty at KU Med and as a Clinical Assistant Professor at KCUMB.

Dr. Khanna, whose father is a neurosurgeon and mother is a child-psychologist, knew from an early age that she was curious about the brain and how it affects everything about us. Once she did her child psychiatry rotation during medical school, she knew she had found her perfect fit.

In her practice, Dr. Khanna deals with a multitude of disorders. She explained, "I spend a lot of time with my patients. When I see someone in my office, I look at the genetic, developmental, physical, cognitive, behavioral, educational, emotional, familial and social aspects of a child's life. Any or all of these may contribute to the difficulties experienced within an individual and within a family. I do a great deal of education with patients and families because I want them to be well-informed. Unfortunately, there is plenty of misinformation out there that can influence people and jeopardize their safety and well-being."

Since Dr. Khanna is a medical doctor, she can prescribe medications if they are warranted. However, she emphasized, "Depending on the nature and intensity of the problem, therapy may be the first appropriate treatment route. If the symptoms don't improve, or only partially improve, medication may be the next step. There are also circumstances when medications are the first-line treatment. Medications can be very beneficial because they allow people to not only feel better but also manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviors in a more productive manner. Many times, if I do recommend medication treatment, I also encourage therapy. These modalities work well together and can be building blocks to a more successful and enjoyable life."

She offered this advice, "Do you wonder if your child is just going through a normal developmental stage that will work itself out? Is this just a little bump in the road or will things continue to get worse? If you keep coming back to the same issues, it's time to seek help and get an evaluation. I consider 'outside the normal' as thoughts, feelings or behaviors that cause problems in various



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aspects of a person's life. These include the personal, home, academic, social and work arenas."

Dr. Khanna calmly explained, "We live in such a fast-paced world, and this places even greater demands on parents and children. Many kids are just stressed out and overwhelmed because they are high-achievers, but they don't feel like they are meeting either internal or external expectations. This anxiety begins to take a toll on different areas of their functioning whether it's at home, school, with friends or in extracurricular activities. This can also lead to mood difficulties and self-esteem issues. There is such a thing as healthy anxiety that allows us to prepare and perform better in certain circumstances. However, when an eight-year-old has anxiety that is causing them to suffer, it's time to seek appropriate interventions. No matter what the age, when feelings and behaviors are negatively impacting our lives, it's time to get help. Early intervention is often the key to success!"

She smiled as she shared the best part of her job, "It's when I see kids getting relief from

their symptoms, and they are able to really enjoy their lives. The other day, a 13-year-old patient of mine said, 'I can't wait to get to school now because my grades are so much better!' He had been an honor roll student but was getting progressively overwhelmed and behind at school. Now, things are starting to improve for him, and it feels good to see this patient return to his old self. My goal is to help children have a successful life. That's why early detection, intervention, prevention and stability are so critical in helping children. I consider Minds That Matter an advocate for children and their families. It's worth it to get peace of mind instead of looking back and wishing you had sought help earlier. I believe a healthy mind leads to peace of mind." ■

You can make an appointment with Dr. Khanna at 913-912-7054, or check out the Minds that Matter web site at mtmkc.com for a virtual tour of the inviting office, information on how to make an appointment and other details.