

Mental Health Resource Disclaimer

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. This resource is provided for informational and educational purposes only. It is intended to offer general information and should never be taken as professional advice on mental health. As information on mental health is complex and is a developing area, we do not warrant that the information provided is correct. You and your students should not rely on the material included within this resource and we do not accept any responsibility if you or your students do. As mental health is complex, you should undertake proper and relevant training before teaching on mental health. These resources are intended to support you once you have received such training. It is up to you to contact a suitably qualified health professional if you are concerned about your mental health and it is up to you to advise your students to contact a suitably qualified health professional if they are concerned about their mental health. When using this resource, you are responsible for the safety of those involved with using this resource, including staff and students. It is up to you to follow your school or organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures should your use of this resource raise anything covered by the policies or procedures.

Supporting Children's Mental Health

Information for Parents and Carers

What Is Mental Health?

Being healthy means that our body and our mind are in good condition and that we feel well.

It is important that we help children to make healthy choices so that their bodies work as well as possible. Doing all we can to help keep children's bodies healthy can help them to feel happy too.

Mental health is all about how we are feeling and the thoughts we are having. It can affect how we behave and the choices we make.

Just like with their bodies, it is important that we do things to help children's minds to be healthy, stay in good condition and feel well. Having a healthy mind can help children feel good on the inside and can help them to do well in lots of different situations.

Sometimes, just like our body, our mind doesn't feel well. We might feel very worried, frightened or extremely sad. We might have thoughts which feel uncomfortable and which make us behave in a way that hurts ourselves or others.

Positive mental health is not about being happy all of the time. It is about feeling well, being able to enjoy life and knowing what to do if we have troubling thoughts and feelings.

How Can I Help My Child to Develop Positive Mental Health?

There is a lot we can do to help keep children's minds healthy and help them to cope when they have uncomfortable feelings.

We can help children by encouraging them to:

- talk about how they are feeling;
- be physically active each day;
- eat healthily;
- drink enough water;
- ask for help if something is troubling them;
- feel safe;
- have time each day when they can be calm and quiet;
- spend time each day doing something they love;
- spend time outside;
- be creative;
- spend time with people who make them smile;
- get enough sleep;
- limit their time watching TV and on social media, the Internet or other electronic devices;
- only view, use or play age-appropriate material;
- help others;
- remember they are special just the way they are!

What Are Some of the Signs That Children Might Be Struggling with Their Mental Health?

Sometimes, children find it hard to cope with and manage uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and emotions; this can affect their mental health.

Some of the signs that a child might be struggling with their mental health could include:

- constant anxiety which interferes with daily life;
- loss of interest with engaging in life;
- feeling sad and irritable for a long time;
- sudden and dramatic changes of mood;
- extreme distress and anger;
- persistent changes in sleeping patterns;
- feeling worthless;
- becoming quiet and withdrawn including regular self-isolation;
- ongoing and extreme appetite changes.

Children don't choose to have difficulties with their mental health, just like they don't choose to have difficulties with their physical health. Just like with any physical health issues, it is important for anyone struggling with the thoughts and feelings they are having to get help to feel better, and for those around them to support them the best they can.

How Can I Support My Child If They Are Struggling with Their Mental Health?

Sometimes children hide how they are really feeling. This can be because they don't know how to express their feelings and can mean that they feel increasingly hopeless and unable to ask for help.

It is important that we share with children the message that it is OK to experience times of difficulty with mental health, that it is nothing to be ashamed about and of the necessity of getting help to feel better.

If a child you know is struggling with their mental health, there are people who can help.

- Talk to someone you trust at school.
- Talk to your doctor.
- Call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.
- Visit www.youngminds.org.uk.
- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger.