

Talking about mental health

How to talk to your child about
their mental health



It's important that a child feels able to openly talk about their emotions and things they are finding difficult. It can sometimes feel really hard to start a conversation about your child's mental health, but there are some things that may help:

Do your research

Having an understanding of what mental health and wellbeing is will help you feel confident to start the conversation and answer questions they may have.

Create a safe space for them to open up

This should be somewhere they feel comfortable and you are unlikely to be distracted.

Listen

Let them know that this time is for them to talk, and you are there for them.

Be open

Some people find it difficult to talk about mental health and wellbeing. Being open and gently encouraging conversation helps mental health to become an everyday topic that people are more comfortable to talk about.

Be honest

Your child may have questions about mental health and wellbeing, and you may not have all of the answers. Being honest about not knowing and exploring some of their questions together can help further your understanding as a family.



Give them your time

Your child may need some time to decide what to say and how to say it. Remind them that they can talk to you when they feel ready, and in whatever way suits them best. This might be face-to-face, via text, or by drawing or writing things down.

Reassure them

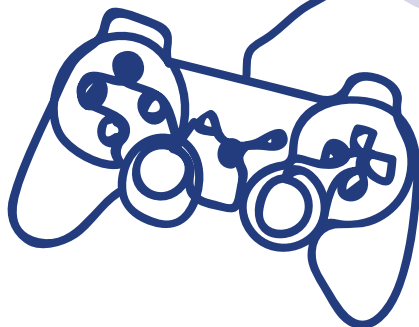
Let them know that you're always there to listen and support them. You could try following up your conversation with reassuring comments such as "I love you, and nothing can ever change that".

Spend time together and have fun

Doing something fun and creative together such as crafts, baking, or walking gives you a space where there's no pressure to talk, but the opportunity is there if your child feels ready.

Ask open questions

Ask how their day has been, or what they enjoy, so that they can express themselves and share as much as they want to.



For further support

If you have concerns about your child's mental health, don't panic. There is information, advice and support to help support your child and the rest of your family:

Information is available from lots of sources

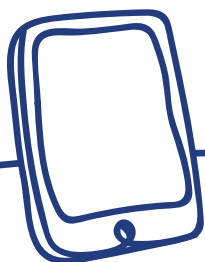
Including the Parent's Lounge from YoungMinds (youngminds.org.uk), and Mind's new online space specifically for supporting children and young people, and their parents and carers (mind.org.uk/youngpeople).

Get support

If you feel your child needs further support, you can speak to your GP. Their knowledge and insight will help you as a parent to decide the best way to speak to, and support, your child.

Get advice

If you're unsure about what to do next, getting some advice from a trusted source can be helpful and reassuring. Speak to others who know your child, such as teachers at school, or your local young people's service. They will have information about what other sources of support and guidance there are in your area.



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