

# YOUNG MINDS

The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing



**WHY DO  
YOUNG MINDS  
MATTER?**

## ABOUT THIS LEAFLET

This leaflet explains why children's and young people's minds and emotional or mental health is so important, what causes emotional distress or illness, how you can tell if a child or young person is in distress and different ways to help.

## WHY DO YOUNG MINDS MATTER?

The health of our minds determines how we feel. Children and young people's minds are developing at a rapid rate as they grow and change. These natural developmental stages affect their behaviour and emotions, and the way they experience the world.

## GOOD MENTAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, MEANS THEY CAN:

**HAVE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY  
LEARN AND PLAY APPROPRIATELY  
FOR THEIR AGE AND UNDERSTANDING  
DEVELOP A SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG  
LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES  
AND HAVE THE CONFIDENCE  
TO TRY THINGS OUT  
COPE WITH SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS  
WHEN THINGS ARE DIFFICULT  
HAVE A SENSE OF  
THEIR OWN IDENTITY  
AND SELF-WORTH**



## WHY IS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SO IMPORTANT?

With good mental health, children and young people do better in every way. They are happier in their families, find it easier to learn, do better at school, and enjoy friendships and new experiences.

Mental health is developed and patterns are set for the future during childhood and teenage years. So a child with good mental health is much more likely to have good mental health as an adult, be able to take on adult responsibilities and fulfil their potential.

To have good mental health, children need love, security and understanding from those who look after them. Therefore they rely heavily on the adults around them – at home, at school and in their community. The environment they grow up in will have a big impact on their future mental health.

## WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

It is not easy for children and young people to grow up in today's complex society. They can face pressures from family, friends, peer group, school, technology, the media and changing values. Most children cope well enough as long as they have the support of those around them.

But some children experience difficulties and challenges which can have a big impact on them as they grow up. These include:

- Illness or disability in the family
- Divorce or separation of parents
- Difficult family relationships
- Parents with alcohol or drug problems
- Financial or housing problems in the family
- Bereavement
- Friendship problems or bullying
- Problems with learning or difficulties at school

Some parents may lack support when they need it, and find themselves unable to look after their children as they would want to. Others may not be able to cope well enough to keep their children healthy and safe, and neglect or abuse may result.

Some children and young people may have a genetic disposition towards psychological difficulties or mental illness. When they face challenges in life these can 'trigger' the difficulties and lead to serious problems.



**“** It is often difficult to identify a child or young person in difficulty as they can find it hard to explain their feelings – even to themselves. It is often through their behaviour that they send us the signals that they are feeling troubled. **”**

Without the right support problems may arise which can have a significant effect on a young person's future and can potentially lead to serious difficulties.

These types of behaviour include:

- Becoming very withdrawn or sad
- Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias
- Obsessive or addictive behaviour
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems
- Problems focusing or concentrating
- Aggressive or disruptive behaviour
- Self-harming
- Wetting or soiling
- School refusing or difficult behaviour in school
- Problems with friendships or bullying
- Risk-taking behaviour
- Drug or alcohol use

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT,  
IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON  
IS SHOWING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS,  
TO TRY AND LOOK AT WHAT MIGHT  
BE BEHIND THE BEHAVIOUR  
AND HOW THE CHILD CAN BE HELPED TO  
OVERCOME THEIR PROBLEMS**

## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

When young people are emotionally troubled parents may need to seek professional help.

When problems of this kind persist – to the point where children become very distressed, confused or out of control; and where family and friends feel that they can't manage or get through any more – then it is time to think about seeking professional help. You can be put in touch with the most appropriate support through your GP, social worker, teacher or health visitor, and sometimes parents or young people can refer themselves to a service.

Whether it is a specific problem or something more general, there are people who specialise in helping and understanding troubled children and young people, and their families. For example, at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), specially trained professionals are available, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, family therapists, social workers, doctors, nurses, counsellors and occupational therapists. If a child under 16 approaches the service it is usual for the parents or carers to be contacted should further help be required. There are also other services that young people can refer themselves to e.g. youth counselling centres. Voluntary organisations and helplines can provide information and support, and suggest ways of getting help.

The **YoungMinds Parents' Helpline** is a free and confidential service that can talk through children, teenagers or young adults problems with you and provide information about support and services in your area as well as explain the roles of different professionals and how they can help. Children's or young people's services can be confusing and the Helpline will help you understand how and where to get further support.

YoungMinds website, **[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**, provides a wide range of information, advice and free resources to help you.

The organisations overleaf can provide you with further information about children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

## FAMILY LIVES

**Helpline** .....0808 800 2222

**Website**..... [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

Family Lives is a national family support charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life.

## ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

**Website**..... [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)

Provides a range of leaflets and factsheets about children and young people's mental health.

## RETHINK

**Helpline** .....0300 5000 927 (Mon-Fri 10 - 2pm)

**Email** .....[advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)

**Website**..... [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

Provides mental health information and support for families, friends and relatives.

## YOUNGMINDS PARENT HELPLINE

**Helpline** .....0808 802 5544 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm)

**Email** .....[parents@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:parents@youngminds.org.uk)

**Website**..... [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)



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