

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support



A Guide for Parents/Carers

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What is Mental Health and Wellbeing?

In the same way that we all have physical health, we all have mental health and we need to look after it. Mental health and wellbeing is about how we think and feel. It is being able to enjoy life and cope well with life's challenges.

Mental health and wellbeing can be affected by various life events e.g. work stress or relationship break-up, as well as mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety. It is normal to have feelings of happiness when something good happens or feelings of anger or sadness if something bad happens, or to be scared or anxious if something is worrying you. Part of keeping good mental health is being aware of the differences between normal emotions and feelings that you may need extra support with, for example; major life events or mental illness.

Without good mental health, it is difficult to look after our physical health. What affects one will affect the other. We need to feel motivated to look after ourselves and do things like exercise or watch how much we drink, for example. It is important to remember that everyone has the ability to take steps to look after and improve their mental wellbeing.

TEN WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1
TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS
 | 2
KEEP ACTIVE
 | 3
EAT WELL
 | 4
DRINK SENSIBLY
 | 5
KEEP IN TOUCH
 |
| 6
ASK FOR HELP
 | 7
TAKE A BREAK
 | 8
DO SOMETHING YOU'RE GOOD AT
 | 9
ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE
 | 10
CARE FOR OTHERS
 |

Mental Health and Wellbeing at Secondary School

As parents and carers, it can be hard to know whether your child's feelings and behaviour are normal or becoming a problem. This is especially during adolescence when young people can feel a great deal of pressure and increasingly want to loosen their family ties.

Young people's need for independence is partly due to changes in brain development. This makes reading and understanding others more difficult than when they were younger. This can leave parents feeling that young people are in a world of their own, when actually they can be struggling to understand themselves and others!

A rollercoaster of changing emotions and feelings that come and go is completely normal at this age. Feelings and moods that become a problem are those which last a long time, become overwhelming, and stop your child from doing what they want to in their lives.



We know that having strong relationships lies at the heart of good mental health. As parents and carers we also have our own stresses such as money, job security and juggling family demands. These can put pressure on our capacity to respond sensitively to our children. Talking can be a helpful way for young people to manage their wellbeing as it helps them to make sense of and manage difficult experiences and feelings.

It's Good to Talk

The teenage years are both exciting and challenging for parents and children. Children start to see a future independent of their parents, while parents have to find new ways of protecting a young person, who may choose to turn to peers, rather than parents for support. This period can be a confusing and testing time, which can be hard for parents.

Most young people navigate their way through adolescence. However, for a small number of children, problems can become persistent and can threaten the connection between parent and child. Talking early on, before problems become too ingrained, almost always helps. Sometimes we stop talking because we don't know what to say.

Top Tips for Talking

★ Give your full attention, be curious and take it seriously. We all know it is not nice to be half listened to. Being actively interested in your child can be a powerful way to help them feel listened to and understood. Try to resist the urge to downplay or dismiss what your child is telling you.

★ Emphasise that you are always available to talk. It may be that your child does not want to talk, can't find the words at the moment or is trying to assert their independence. But don't be misled by your teenager's need for separation. They need you just as much as ever.



★ Take time to reflect. Research shows that thinking about what is going on in your child's mind and being aware of your own thoughts and feelings promotes secure attachment, good social skills and the ability to 'read' others.

★ Provide empathy. When children feel truly understood they start to be able to manage their emotions and this has a big impact

on their wellbeing. Using empathy is also a great way to defuse tension.



Be aware of your own stress and negative feelings. They can really get in the way of feeling close to your child. Reflecting on the causes of stress can prevent it from spilling into your relationships at home.



Think about timing. Ask yourself 'Is this the right time to talk?' Choose a time when you can focus on your child and ignore distractions.



What should I do if I am worried? You can find some advice and guidance listed on the back of this leaflet. In particular; MindEd for Families provides comprehensive information on a range of mental health problems. If problems persist, become overwhelming or you feel your child is displaying particular symptoms, we strongly recommend that you visit your G.P.

Helplines and Services Available

YoungMinds

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>
- Tips, advice and where to get support for your child's mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Parents Helpline

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/>
- The Parents Helpline is available to offer advice to parents and carers worried about a child or young person under 25.
- 0808 802 5544

Mind

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/parenting-with-a-mental-health-problem/support/>
- Explains difficulties you may face as a parent with a mental health problem, support available and suggestions on how to help yourself and your children.

Every Mind Matters

- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- Offer a wide range of support and guidance on looking after your own and other's mental health.

Wellacre's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

- <https://www.wellacre.org/our-academy/wellacre-academy-policies/>
- A wide range of information, sources of support and possible referrals which support Mental Health and Wellbeing for our school community.