



MENTAL HEALTH



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. Being mentally healthy means that we feel good about ourselves, make and keep positive relationships with others and can feel and manage the full range of emotions. These can range from happiness, excitement and curiosity through to less comfortable feelings such as anger, fear or sadness. Good mental health allows us to cope with life's ups and downs, to feel in control of our lives and to ask for help from others when we need support.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, fear or unease. It is often experienced as a combination of thoughts, feelings and physical sensations in our body.

All children and young people feel worried sometimes. This is a normal, human reaction to things that feel stressful. For example, before an exam a young person may feel more worried than usual. But they will soon feel calmer after the stressful event has passed. Anxiety becomes a problem when a child or young person feels stuck in it. When this happens, it can become an overwhelming experience. It can also affect their daily life and limit the things they feel able to do.



you are
NOT ALONE
in this

YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Signs of depression or anxiety in children can sometimes look like normal behaviour, particularly in teenagers who might keep their feelings to themselves. So, knowing how to talk to your child about their mental health is important.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN CAN INCLUDE:

- ongoing low mood or lack of motivation
- not enjoying things they used to like doing
- becoming withdrawn and spending less time with friends and family
- experiencing low self-esteem or feeling like they are 'worthless'
- feeling tearful or upset regularly
- changes in eating or sleeping habits.

SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN CAN INCLUDE:

- becoming socially withdrawn and avoiding spending time with friends or family
- feeling nervous or 'on edge' a lot of the time
- having panic attacks
- feeling tearful, upset or angry
- having trouble sleeping
- changes in eating habits.

Helping an anxious child involves validating their feelings, teaching calming techniques, and fostering routines to build security.

HELPING A CHILD WITH ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION

Sometimes, parents feel like their child's mental health problem is their fault. Or they want to know exactly why their child is struggling. This is understandable, but the most important thing is to reassure your child and not judge them for how they're feeling.



You can help a child who's struggling by:

- letting them know you're there for them and you're on their side
- talking to them over text or on the phone if they don't feel able to talk in person
- being patient and staying calm and approachable, even if their behaviour upsets you
- recognising that their feelings are valid and letting them know it's OK for them to be honest about what they're feeling
- thinking of healthy ways to cope. You could try things like yoga, breathing exercises or mindfulness together
- encouraging them to talk to their GP, someone at their school or Childline. Especially if they're finding it hard to talk at home.
- taking care of yourself and getting support if you need to. Try not to blame yourself for what's happening, and stay hopeful about your child's recovery

GETTING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD

Speak to their GP

Supporting a child with a mental health problem like depression or anxiety can be hard, and it's important for a young person to speak to their GP about professional help if they're struggling. This should be the first step you take if you're worried a child may have a mental health problem. Sometimes, a GP will prescribe medication to help a child or young person with depression or anxiety symptoms.

Your child may want to speak to their GP on their own, or they may want you to be there with them. You should support their decision. Sometimes, young people find it easier to talk about their feelings with someone they don't know.

Get help from your child's school

It can also help to speak to someone at your child's school, like their teacher. Your school should be able to provide someone who your child can speak to regularly about their mental health, such as a school counsellor. Ask your child if there's a teacher at their school they feel comfortable talking to.

