

Signs Your Child May Be Struggling with Mental Health

Talking to your kids about anxiety and depression is important to help them work through their feelings and prevent emotions from snowballing. Discussions are best when done in a place where they feel safe and comfortable.

Consider these tips as you prepare to talk to your kids about mental health:

- Make this a conversation rather than a lecture. This will make your child more likely to share their thoughts and feelings with you.
- Be mindful of the tone you use when discussing mental health. Being matter-of-fact and neutral when discussing mental health can help reduce the stigma or feelings of fear related to sharing.
- Even if you feel differently about your child's struggles than they do, make sure to validate and normalize how they are feeling. When children feel dismissed or that their problems are "not a big deal," they are often less likely to confide in others.
- Try to resist the urge to "fix the problem" for your child. Giving advice too quickly often shuts down the conversation, especially when children just want to be heard.

Remember that discussing mental health is not a one-time conversation. Be sure that you are checking in with your child regularly, even when nothing is wrong. Try to ask open-ended questions to open up a conversation and make sharing more natural. Give children the opportunity to ask questions, and pay attention to the reactions they have to what you share or ask.



For example, rather than asking, “Did you have a good day at school today?” which leaves two options - yes or no - try something like, “Tell me what school was like for you today.” Asking them what an experience was like for them doesn’t limit the conversation and allows kids to share more about their day.

Be sure to model positive sharing about emotions and challenges that you face because children learn from those around them. If you are comfortable and open about sharing how you feel, they are more likely to become more comfortable with sharing themselves.

If you suspect your child is anxious or depressed, seeking help early is important! Talk with your child’s pediatrician or primary care doctor and they can refer you to a mental health provider in your community. Schools are also a good resource for counseling support and referrals, so look into the resources available to you.

Pressures that kids face today are enormous. Things that contribute to stress in kids may include anxiety with returning to school, academic concerns, social pressures, social media and the general uncertainty. Parents should be on the lookout for any significant changes in their child’s mood or behavior.



Signs of Anxiety or Depression in Kids May Include:

- Persistent sadness, anger or fear
- Changes in eating habits or sleep
- Withdrawal from or avoiding interactions with others
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Drastic changes in mood or behavior
- No longer enjoying activities they previously enjoyed
- Avoiding or missing school
- Talking about hurting themselves or suicide

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If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the following resources are available 24/7.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

(800) 273-8255

Crisis Text Line:

Text HOME to 741741

If in a life-threatening emergency, dial 911.