

Mental Health

It can be tough growing up. We know that children and young people these days are exposed to many pressures. They live in a fast and competitive world.

Many thousands of children and young people go through periods of mental ill health. When this happens to them, it can be impossible for them to make and keep friends, manage at school and feel good about themselves. And it can be bewildering for their parents and siblings. Many other children may not be diagnosed as having mental health problems but lack confidence and feel unhappy much of the time.

Facts about children and mental health:

- One in 10 children and young people aged 5-16 has a diagnosable mental health disorder.
- Children and young people who live in poverty or poor housing are more likely to have mental health problems.
- Children whose parents have mental health problems often need special help themselves to cope and enjoy their childhood.
- It is thought that in the UK, 1 in 15 young people has self-harmed (often seen as an indicator of mental health issues).

Should I do anything if I'm worried about my child's mental health?

Yes. Mental health problems are very common in children and young people and usually something can be done to support and help them.

Who should I talk to?

First talk to your child. Talk to other people who are important in your child's life:

- Teachers.
- Child carers.
- Family members.

Each school has a **Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** who will be a good person to talk to. They could involve an **Educational Psychologist** if there are difficulties in school.

An Educational Psychologist is an expert in behaviour problems.

Your local **doctor** is a good person to go and talk to. They should know about local services that could help.

What should I ask about?

Have they noticed that your child:

- Has changed their behaviour.
- Has less energy.
- Changed how they play with other children.
- Has changed how they eat, sleep or go to the toilet.

How do I talk to my child?

- Talk to your child when you are feeling calm.
- Don't try to talk when they are very busy.
- Be patient.
- Take your time to make decisions.
- Don't be always telling them off.

You could use words like:

I have noticed ...

You seem to be a bit angry when I ask you to do things...

You don't seem to want to go to football any more...

I'm just wondering, is anything troubling you?

Listen and ask more questions to try to understand and try to stay calm when listening.

Other things to look out for:

- Is your child getting enough sleep?
- Are they eating a healthy diet?
- Are they being bullied at school?
- What are they doing online? – do you know which websites they are visiting/ who they are talking to online?
- Are they taking drugs or alcohol?

The following websites will provide you with further information and advice:

<http://minded.e-lfh.org.uk/families/index.html>

<http://minded.e-lfh.org.uk/families/course/en/assets/fd517b5c1d2eb865f62558614c4e021a06a8e6ef.pdf>

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/partnersincarecampaign/checklistforparents.aspx>

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/parents_guide

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/children-and-young-people/>

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/mental_health.htm

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