

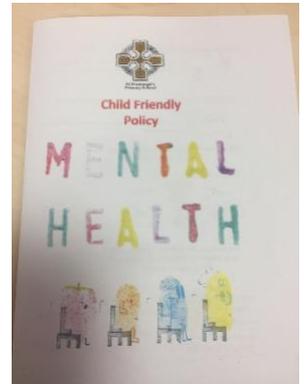


Top tips for how you can support your child's mental health



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In our recent questionnaire many of you expressed that you would like further information on how you could support your child's mental health. Below are some suggestions for this and some pointers about where you might get further help.



Day to day

Our everyday habits are important to our mental health, just as they are to our physical health. Encourage your child to develop strategies for maintaining good mental health as listed in our child friendly mental health leaflet for children.

You missed this leaflet? Copies are available in school and on the school website

Talk openly about mental health

Just as you might encourage your child to eat fruit and veg to keep their bodies healthy talk openly about, for example, staying connected with others or being physically active in order to take care of our minds.

Model good habits

Children often learn from copying what they see around them. If you are taking care of your own mental health, it's easier for them to see what good habits look like.

Think about phone usage – both theirs and yours

We don't fully understand the impact of social media on our mental health but using phones and laptops can impact on our sleep, which is important to our mental health. We're also more likely to listen to one another if we're not distracted by technology.



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Notice any changes in your child's behaviour

Young people tell us how they're feeling in many ways, not always verbally. Learning what is normal for your child makes it easier to notice when things change, and if this might be a sign that they're struggling.

When times get tough

Sometimes you might worry about your child's mental health. While you might need to speak to a member of school staff or your GP for advice, here are a few things you can do if you're worried.



- **Let your child know that you're concerned.** Explain why you feel that way, for example if you've noticed they haven't been interested in activities they usually enjoy.
- **Use activities that you do together to have conversations about how they are doing.** Talking whilst doing something together, side-by-side, such as cooking, can help them share their feelings more easily than a face-to-face conversation.
- **Let them know that struggling sometimes is normal and nothing to be ashamed of.** Tell them about the mental health spectrum and that we all, including you, go up and down the scale throughout our lives. Reassure them that talking about difficult feelings with the people we trust is a brave thing to do.
- **Listen and empathise.** Often the first step to feeling better is feeling connected and knowing that someone is alongside you. Empathy helps young people (and adults) connect. Empathy involves acknowledging what your child is feeling, trying to understand things from their point of view and avoiding judgement. Empathy is usually more helpful than giving advice or trying to 'fix' their problem.

If you're still worried

Talk to a The Learning Mentor, Angela Barradell, to your child's class teacher or your GP who can point you towards sources of help.



Don't forget to take care of your own mental health

In our busy lives it is all too easy to forget about our own mental health, but we can only care for our children from a position of strength. If you are feeling the pressure it might be a good idea to get some help from a friend/relative. Sometimes you may need help from a professional or GP. Below are some websites that could be useful.

- Depression Alliance on line support www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression
- Anxiety online support www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- Obsessions and compulsions online support www.ocduk.org/ocd
- Call the Samaritans night or day 116123

