

Children's Mental Health

As adults, parents and caregivers, we have the opportunity to provide optimal support to the children in our lives, increasing their chances of maintaining good mental health. One crucial skill we can teach children from an early age is the ability to reflect on and prioritise their own mental well-being. Encouraging and guiding them in this process is essential.

It is important to familiarise ourselves with strategies that can assist children in maintaining good mental health. This includes understanding how to engage in conversations with them about their mental well-being and being able to identify signs that they may be facing difficulties.

Additionally, it is crucial for us to prioritise our own self-care to safeguard our mental health while caring for our children and others. We can explore various self-care tips to maintain our well-being. Furthermore, we should also be aware of the available support networks that can assist us, our children, or our entire family should the need arise.

The Importance of Connections

When we have healthy connections – to family, friends and others – this can support our mental health and our sense of wellbeing. And when our need for rewarding social connections is not met, we can sometimes feel isolated and lonely – which can have a negative impact on our mental health.

Research tells us that as many as three children in every primary school class has a mental health problem. This is an issue which is growing and remember, these are only the reported number of diagnosed cases as not every child has a diagnosis and many struggle in silence for fear of being seen “differently” to their peers. At a young age, difference matters and so many struggle to conform to what they think is the norm, or the way they should be. If there is a problem within the home, or the young person is subjected to bullying, it is likely they will keep quiet and not reach out for support.

70% of children and young people who experience a mental health problem have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age. And this could be to do with being afraid to speak out, to express or understand their feelings and also not to appear “different” to those around them. Children's mental health like adults should be given the same importance as their physical health.

In schools, children and young people are taught about a healthy lifestyle that includes; good nutrition, exercise, social contact etc. all vital to our physical wellbeing. It is equally as important for them to be taught also about “difference”, about speaking out, expressing their feelings and of course being kind - not just to others, but to themselves. Thankfully, this is now being recognised more widely within schools. There is however, stigma around mental health which is why weeks like this encourage youngsters to speak out, to be heard and to talk about their feelings.

Things that can help children and young people's mental wellbeing include:

- Being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- Having time and the freedom to play, indoors and outdoors
- Being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- Going to a school that looks after the wellbeing of all its pupils
- Taking part in local activities for young people.

Other factors are also important, including:

- Feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe
- Being interested in life and having opportunities to enjoy themselves
- Being hopeful and optimistic
- Being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed
- Accepting who they are and recognising what they are good at
- Having a sense of belonging in their family, school and community
- Feeling they have some control over their own life

There is help available to our children and young people and this includes:

- Help and support from professionals
- Schools
- Parents
- GP advice
- Being able to talk through their thoughts and feelings in a safe and confidential setting
- Child focused organisations
- Clubs and groups

Given the increase in mental health issues in children, we as adults need to be able to help them express themselves without fear of judgement or criticism. Join in the awareness week and help to give children and young people a voice.

How can Care first help?

If you feel you may need some emotional or practical support, you can contact Care first on the Freephone number. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Whilst our BACP accredited Counsellors are available 24/7 to provide support with emotional issues, our expertly trained Information Specialists are available 8am-8pm Monday-Friday to provide advice on any practical issues that may be causing you a stress or worry and help you feel more in control of a situation.

All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

Organisations and supportive information that can help:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/about-the-week>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.headstogether.org.uk/partners/charity-partners/>

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being>

More information

If you would like to view the Webinar on **'Children's Mental Health'**, it is being delivered live on **Friday 23rd June 2023 at 12:00pm-12:30pm**, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4829609654416140894>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.