



Report
to **PARENTS**

How to Talk About Mental Health With Children

Families have a powerful role in supporting their children's mental and emotional health at home and at school. Learn signs that your child might be struggling and strategies to talk about mental health with your child.

Signs to Look For

Look for these warning signs that your child might need support:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn;
- Harming or planning to harm themselves;
- Getting into fights;
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to lose weight;
- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities;
- Having difficulty controlling behavior;
- Using drugs or alcohol;
- Having severe mood swings; or
- Exhibiting a drop in grades.

Starting Conversations

Try leading with these questions and actively listening to your child's responses:

- Can you tell me more about what is happening? How are you feeling?
- Have you had feelings like this in the past?
- Sometimes you need to talk to an adult about your feelings. I'm here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?

When talking about mental health problems with your child:



- Communicate in a straightforward manner;
- Speak at a level that is appropriate to a child or adolescent's age and development level;
- Discuss the topic when your child feels safe and comfortable;
- Watch for reactions during the discussion and slow down or back up if your child becomes confused or looks upset; and
- Listen openly and let your child tell you about their feelings and worries.

School Connectedness

When families are engaged in their children's school activities and initiatives, children get better grades, choose healthier behaviors, and have better social skills.

Here are three ways to support your child's mental health and emotional well-being in school and at home:

1. Get involved in health decisions at school.
2. Communicate with your school, letting them know how they can help support your child.
3. Try strategies at home like asking about your child's feelings, focusing on their strengths, and modeling positive coping skills to manage stress, like going for a walk.