

How to talk to your Children about mental health

Take some time this summer to connect with your children – get to know them, and don't be afraid to talk about the important things, like their mental health. By approaching the topic of mental health with empathy, understanding, and openness, parents can create a supportive environment where their children feel comfortable seeking help. Check out these tips and talking points to help connect with your child this summer:

What to do

- Express concern and listen first
- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Reassure and validate their feelings
- Normalize mental health conversations
- Help them identify triggers or cause of stress
- Encourage them to relax – go for a walk together, do breathing exercises, listen to music, or practice grounding exercises
- Respect privacy
- Follow up
- Encourage them to seek help (Text SUMMER to 741741 to connect with a live counselor)

What not to do

- Take over the conversation
- Force confrontation
- Share your own personal story about a similar feeling or situation
- Normalize mental health conversations
- Pressure students to share where they might not feel comfortable
- Get frustrated or angry with the student who is going through a difficult moment
- Use stigmatizing language
- Generalize what the student is going through
- Expect or force sudden or immediate change in their behavior
- Suggest solutions if you're not well-informed about their situation

How to get started

- Open up the conversation by asking open-ended questions – you could ask, “What does mental health mean to you?” or “How do you cope with stress?”
- Instead of saying “Stop overthinking” or “Be present” try saying “I can tell you're having a hard time” or “I'm here to help you get through this”
- Instead of saying “Calm down” or “It's all in your head” try validating their feelings by saying “I'm here for you” or “I'm here to listen if you want to talk” or “I'll stay with you if you'd like”