

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR Children ABOUT Mental Health

Check out these tips and talking points to help connect with your child throughout the school year.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- ✗ Take over the conversation.
- ✗ Force confrontation.
- ✗ Share your own personal story about a similar feeling or situation.
- ✗ 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.

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 **SCHOOL** to **741741** to connect with a live counselor).

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."