

Suggestions for supporting your child with their mental Health

Parents often ask us how they can help support their child's mental health at home, so we've put together a few ideas suggested by psychologists.



- Encourage talking about emotions and mental health at home. This doesn't need to be 'touchy feely' if that makes you uncomfortable. Simply sharing your day and how things made you feel is a great start. For example, 'I felt really cross and upset earlier today because I got a parking ticket and I thought I was parked legally is a good start!
- Show children it's important to take care of your physical and mental health. Model good habits to them (for example, "I can feel myself getting a bit wound up about that parking ticket again, so I'm going to have a walk/bath (or both!) to calm myself down"). Acknowledge that, although you know it's not that big a deal, it has had an impact on you, but that you are working on that
- Show them that everyone is human and makes mistakes. By doing so you can model effective ways to deal with difficult situations (e.g. calming down, saying you are sorry, explaining that you recognise you made a mistake and what you'll do to make sure it doesn't happen again). They will learn from you that it's okay to make mistakes and healthy ways to deal with it.
- Take a genuine interest in the activities and things they love (not what you would like them to love) and at home try to create an environment where they know they are safe to be themselves – whoever they are. Accept them as they are and don't try to force them to be something they are not.
- We all live busy lives, but try to make time and space for your child and give them your full attention. Turn off your phone and really listen to them, a little bit of undivided attention and active listening can make a great difference. Tell them that you recognise their strengths and show them you notice when they do the right thing. Sometimes a car journey or walking side-by-side rather than face-to-face comes across as more natural and relaxed than over the top praise which children tend to see through.
- Don't overcrowd your child: sometimes they need to just be (no activities, no conversation, no hassle, just lying on the bed/sofa daydreaming, listening to music etc). We can work too hard at parenting and make our children feel smothered.
- Show them you love them. You don't have to go over the top and be soppy, a throwaway 'love you' is simple and effective.