



All About Mental Health

Information for Elementary Parents

Mental health refers to one's social, emotional, and psychological well-being. Just as you look after your child's physical health, it's important to look after their mental health as well.

Support your child's mental health

Make sure your child gets enough sleep.

The amount of sleep a child gets impacts their mood and attitude. Make sure your child gets 9–11 hours of sleep a night.

Encourage physical activity. Physical activity improves both physical and mental health. Look for fun ways to integrate physical activity into your child's daily routine.

Have calming routines. A warm bath, reading a book, or listening to calming music are some good ways to help your child wind down and relax.

Teach gratitude. Help your child recognize things in their everyday life to be thankful for.

Help others. Helping others has been shown to improve mental health. Donate books and toys or shovel snow for a neighbor. Give your child ample opportunity to develop a giving spirit.

Eat healthy. Food fuels the body's health, including the brain. Research shows that nutrients found in foods like vegetables, fruits, fish, and nuts can improve brain function and mental health.

Communication is key

Regularly talking with your child is the best way to check in on their mental health.

Timing is important. Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Look for times when your child is most likely to be open to conversation, such as right after school or before going to bed.

Recognize the importance of nonverbal communication. Children can't always articulate what they need you to know. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to body language, moods, eating and sleeping patterns, physical appearance, and school performance. These can be good indicators of how your child is doing.

Offer support. When your child is feeling down or upset, a hug or a few words of encouragement may be all they need. However, if you have concerns or are seeing the following, calmly and gently talk to your child about how they are feeling, and about how you can help.

- ▶ lack of energy
- ▶ prolonged sadness
- ▶ loss of interest in activities or hobbies
- ▶ outbursts, anger, and/or irritability
- ▶ difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- ▶ frequent complaints of illness
- ▶ changes in academic performance
- ▶ extreme clinginess
- ▶ changes in eating habits
- ▶ not wanting to go to school

If you need help, talk to your pediatrician for advice or referrals.

For simple ways to support your child's mental health, watch this quick video.

