

# TECHNOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Research shows a link between technology use and declining mental health in young people. While elementary-aged children may not yet use social media, they often play games online and use the internet.

**As a parent, you need to do everything you can to make sure that your child uses technology safely and responsibly.**

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Limit the amount of time your child spends online, monitor their online activities, and encourage your child to engage in a variety of “offline” activities.
- ▶ Use parental controls, but know that supervision and monitoring are the best ways to protect your child.
- ▶ Keep your family computer in a common area of your home (kitchen or family room). Children should not have internet access in their bedroom or in areas that may be difficult to supervise.
- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate to share online. Remind your child that people online may not be who they say they are, and to never share personal information.
- ▶ Monitor your child’s online game playing. Some games contain explicit violence, mature language, and/or sexual content that can be harmful to a child’s mental health.

# SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Here are some simple things you can do each day to help maintain and improve your child’s mental health.

## HAVE CALMING ROUTINES

Routines help children feel calm and secure. For example, have dependable mealtimes and a regular morning and nighttime routine.

## 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.

## TALK ABOUT AND VALIDATE EMOTIONS

Some children believe that negative emotions are unacceptable, so they hold them in until they erupt. Explain that it’s normal to have a range of feelings, and encourage your child to notice and acknowledge them.

Encourage your child to label their emotions by asking them to describe how they feel when they are struggling with complicated feelings. Show your child that you understand how they’re feeling and that you want to help, even if whatever your child is upset about seems like a small thing to you.

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# UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

## INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



## INFORMATION AND TIPS FOR PARENTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

# UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health refers to one's social, emotional, and psychological well-being. In children, this is often measured by how they learn, behave, and deal with emotions. Although their mental health can be impacted by many things, there are ways you can help your child protect and maintain it.

In a perfect world, children would feel calm, happy, and carefree all the time. Of course, this isn't possible. Even young children face situations that make them sad or cause them to feel anxious or scared.

While adversity is a part of life, there are things you can do to help your child handle difficult situations—and maintain and improve their mental health.

## WHY MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT

Before you can help your child learn to cope with complex emotions, it's important to understand what mental health is—and why it's important to help them care for their mental health, even in these early years.

### MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS DAY-TO-DAY LIVING

When your child is calm, happy, and confident, they get more enjoyment out of life. On the other hand, if they often feel sad, fearful, angry, or anxious, daily life can be a struggle—for them and for you.

### MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS LEARNING

A tremendous amount of learning takes place in the elementary grades, and to get the most out of their time at school, children need to be in a good place mentally.

### MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS RELATIONSHIPS

Your child's relationships with family members, friends, and classmates are all impacted by how they feel. If they're unhappy, upset, or feeling down, forming and maintaining relationships is more difficult.

For more information on mental health, watch this short video.



VIDEO

## MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

There is a strong connection between the mind and body. If your child doesn't feel good physically, their mental health will suffer—and vice versa.

### THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Here are just two ways your child's mind and body can influence each other:

#### ▶ FATIGUE

When your child feels good mentally, they have more energy and motivation. When they're feeling down or stressed, they're more likely to feel fatigued and listless, or even act out.

#### ▶ THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Studies show that there is a link between mental health and the immune system. Good mental health means fewer illnesses.

### CARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL HEALTH

▶ **PRIORITIZE SLEEP.** Elementary child should get 9–11 hours of sleep a night.

▶ **ENCOURAGE A HEALTHY DIET.** If your child is a picky eater and you're concerned about nutrition, discuss your concerns with your child's pediatrician.

▶ **REGULAR EXERCISE** is key to a healthy body and a healthy mind. Exercise is a natural mood-booster and it helps ensure that the body's systems function at their best. Encourage active play, especially outdoors.

## DEALING WITH ANGER

Outbursts, meltdowns, and tantrums are common in children who are stressed. When your child is angry, remind yourself that they are communicating with you through their behavior—and that they need your understanding, patience, and support. Here is what you can do.

### DON'T MATCH ANGER WITH ANGER

When your child is upset, the situation can escalate—fast. Remain calm, take several deep breaths, speak to your child in a quiet voice, and remember that they are still learning how to regulate their emotions.

### STAND YOUR GROUND

Dealing with a stressed and angry child is exhausting, and it's tempting to give in. But when you give in to the demands that your child makes out of anger, you are teaching them that a tantrum is an effective way to get what they want.

### HELP DEVELOP PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Whether it's using their words to explain why they're upset, trying a calming technique, or taking a self-imposed "time out," work with your child to develop healthy coping skills.

## HAVE CALMING ROUTINES

Having calming, predictable routines can go a long way in helping your child feel less stressed. Here's what you can do.

### HAVE A CONSISTENT BEDTIME ROUTINE

Set a regular bedtime and stick to it. Create a calming pre-bedtime routine that includes activities like reading a book, taking a warm bath, or listening to soft music.

### HAVE REGULAR FAMILY TIME

Set aside dedicated time for family activities. Engage in activities that promote bonding and create positive memories, like a family game night, movie night, or nightly family walks.

### SCHEDULE REGULAR MEALS

Try to have meals as a family as often as possible. Put all phones away and spend the time talking about your day and reconnecting.

### TALK ABOUT CHANGES IN ADVANCE

Tell your child in advance if there will be a change to their routine, such as a doctor's appointment or trip away from home. Knowing what to expect and discussing your child's concerns makes changes less stressful.

# HANDLING STRESS

## INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



## INFORMATION AND TIPS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS

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Teaching kindness is a good way to help your child deal with anger. Watch this video to learn more.



VIDEO

# HANDLING STRESS

While there are many mental health issues that can make young people feel less than their best, one of the most common is stress.

Children don't face the same kind of pressures that teens and adults do, but they can and do experience stress—and they need you to help them learn how to cope with it.

Everyone experiences stress from time to time—it's a normal part of life. However, if your child is experiencing a high level of stress or doesn't know how to manage stress effectively, it can interfere with their (and your) day-to-day life. This pamphlet will provide you with information, tips, and advice on helping your child handle stress.

## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the body's reaction to change, demands, and/or difficult situations. These reactions can be both physical and mental.

### IS YOUR CHILD STRESSED?

How do you know if your child is experiencing normal levels of stress or something more serious? Answer the following questions to see if your child might be dealing with more than everyday stress.

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Does your child often seem irritable?               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they have problems at school?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they seem easily frustrated or angry?            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they get a lot of headaches and/or stomachaches? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they have nightmares or trouble sleeping?        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they eat too much or too little?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▶ Do they have frequent outbursts and tantrums?       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### HOW MANY DID YOU CHECK "YES?" \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the above questions may be an indicator of stress. If you answered "yes" to more than a couple, stress may be a problem for your child. Keep reading for more information and ways you can help your child reduce and manage stress.

## HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH STRESS

Here are some ways you can help your child manage stress.

### COMMUNICATE

Your child may have a hard time talking about their feelings, or about what's causing them stress. Make yourself available to talk, but keep the pressure low. A good time to chat is during another activity, such as preparing dinner or getting ready for bed.

### PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

For immediate stress relief, show your child how to breathe in deeply, count to four, and then slowly exhale. Have them repeat this as many times as necessary until they feel calmer.

### HAVE FUN

Laughter and play are natural ways for children to relieve stress. Watch a funny show, play a game as a family, dance, or spend time outside. You may find that these activities help you relieve stress too.

### VALIDATE EMOTIONS

Some children believe that negative emotions are unacceptable, so they hold them in until they erupt. Explain that it's normal to have a range of feelings, and encourage your child to acknowledge and verbalize them.

### MODEL HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

When you show your child healthy ways to cope with your own stress, it helps them understand that it's a normal part of life, and that stress is something that can be managed.

# HELPING YOUR CHILD MANAGE ANXIETY

While it's impossible for your child to avoid anxiety completely, you can give them tools to help them manage it.

## TALK THROUGH IT

When your child is anxious, talk about how they might deal with these feelings and develop a plan. For example, if your child is scared of getting a shot at the doctor's office, talk about what they can do to make it easier (such as closing their eyes and holding your hand).

## DEAL WITH TRIGGERS

The best way for a child to learn to cope with whatever triggers their anxiety is to be exposed to it a little bit at a time. As children learn to function and cope despite these triggers, their anxiety level will decrease over time.

## SHOW CONFIDENCE IN YOUR CHILD

When your child is faced with something that scares them, let them know that they will be okay. Reassure your child that it's normal to be scared, and that they will get through it.

## MODEL HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

When you show your child healthy ways that you cope with your own triggers, it helps them understand that having anxiety is normal—and that it can be lived with and managed.

# CALMING TECHNIQUES

Using calming techniques is another effective way to help your child cope with anxiety.

## PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Taking deep, measured breaths is the easiest way for your child to feel calmer. Show them how to breathe in, count to four, and then slowly exhale.

## USE SOOTHING ITEMS

Whether it's a favorite stuffed animal, a weighted blanket, or a smooth "worry stone," a comfort item can help calm and soothe your child when they're in distress.

## PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE

Sometimes children just need to take a break in a place where they can safely cope with their emotions. Help your child identify a safe place in or around your home and stock it with a few favorite comfort items.

## TUNE IN TO SURROUNDINGS

To help recenter your child during an outburst or meltdown, encourage them to use their senses to tune in to what's around them. Have them close their eyes and name what they can smell, touch, and hear.

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# MANAGING ANXIETY

## INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



## INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO HELP CHILDREN DEAL WITH ANXIETY

For more on supporting your  
child's mental health, watch  
this short video.



VIDEO

# MANAGING ANXIETY

Anxiety doesn't just affect teens and adults. Children can experience anxiety, too. While the causes of anxiety may be different for children than it is for those who are older, the effects on their mental health are the same.

To grow and thrive, children need your help learning how to recognize anxiety, cope with it, and identify triggers.

It is normal for children to have fears and worries. While these fears and worries are usually mild and manageable, they can be severe enough to interfere with a child's daily life.

This pamphlet will provide you with information, tips, and advice on helping your child cope with and overcome anxiety.

## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a natural reaction to events that are frightening or stressful. For most people, anxiety is a normal part of life and the feelings associated with it go away when the event is over, or when the problem is resolved. But for some, anxiety can be persistent and affect their everyday life.

### SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety in children can be triggered by a variety of events and situations, but children who suffer from persistent anxiety often show the following symptoms:

- ▶ excessive worrying and/or constant negative thoughts
- ▶ difficulty concentrating
- ▶ difficulty sleeping, including bad dreams
- ▶ change in diet (eating more or less than usual)
- ▶ irritability that manifests in tantrums and outbursts
- ▶ unusual attachment to parents or other caregivers
- ▶ frequent headaches and/or stomachaches
- ▶ change in bathroom habits
- ▶ frequent crying

If your child shows more than just a few of these symptoms on a regular basis, anxiety could be an issue for them. Keep reading to learn more and to find out how you can help your child overcome anxiety and improve their mental health.

## TYPES OF ANXIETY

There are many different types of anxiety. Here are some that are most common in children.

### GENERALIZED ANXIETY

Generalized anxiety is the excessive worry about everyday situations, such as going to school or participating in activities with others. It can also include an irrational fear of events that can't be controlled, such as natural disasters.

### SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety is the fear of being separated from a loved one, usually a parent or frequent caregiver. Children with separation anxiety tend to avoid situations, such as playdates, where they would be away from their parent or caregiver.

### OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

People with OCD have constant, disruptive thoughts that are only relieved by doing the same action, ritual, or routine over and over again. This can include counting, hand and body movements, or performing the same task repeatedly.

### PHOBIAS

A phobia is an intense fear of specific objects or situations. While it is common for children to develop phobias, they usually grow out of them later in adolescence.

If your child is exhibiting persistent anxiety or is dealing with any of the above, talk to your pediatrician or to the school counselor or school psychologist.

# GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Grounding techniques are simple things your child can do to refocus their attention whenever they're feeling anxious, stressed, or distracted. Grounding techniques can bring them back to the present and help them feel calmer and more focused.

## MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Doing something physical is a great way for children to ground themselves and feel calmer. In addition to walking, they can try stretching, running, or doing a yoga pose. The key is for them to focus on the way their muscles and other body parts feel as they move.

## THE 5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE

With this technique, children tune in to their senses and focus on what is happening around them. Have your child list 5 things they can see, 4 they can touch, 3 they can hear, 2 they can smell, and 1 they can taste.

## BELLY BREATHING

Have your child inhale and exhale slowly, and say or think the words *in* and *out* as they breathe.

## STOMP-STOMP-BLOW

Have your child stomp one foot, then the other foot, and then exhale forcefully. As they do this, tell them to imagine that they are blowing away their bad feelings. They can repeat this pattern as often as needed.

There are a number of simple things you can do each day to help maintain and improve your child's overall mental health.

## COMMUNICATE OPENLY

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

## 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.

## EXERCISE

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

## LEARN TO RECOGNIZE NONVERBAL CUES

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

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# CALMING DOWN

## INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



## INFORMATION AND TIPS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRONG EMOTIONS

# CALMING DOWN

It's not unusual for children to have a difficult time coping with "big" feelings such as stress, anxiety, fear, and anger. Because children aren't able to cope with these feelings as well as adults, they often manifest themselves as outbursts, tantrums, and other extreme responses.

Calming and grounding techniques can help children re-center and relax—and deal with these tough emotions more effectively.

There are a number of age-appropriate calming and grounding techniques that can help children understand and regulate their emotions. Here are some tips for incorporating these techniques into your family's daily life.

## VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONS

The first step to helping your child manage their emotions is to acknowledge and validate them. Here's what you can do.

### BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

Pay full attention when your child is expressing their feelings. Make eye contact and use body language to show that you're engaged. Repeat back what you heard to ensure understanding.

### BE ACCEPTING OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Some children believe that negative emotions are unacceptable, so they let these emotions build up inside until they erupt and are hard to control. Explain that it's normal to have a range of both happy and sad feelings, and encourage your child to notice and acknowledge them when they arise.

### LABEL EMOTIONS

Encourage your child to label their emotions—both positive and negative. For example, "My friend is moving away and that makes me really sad," or "It makes me really angry when my sister takes my toys." When you notice that your child is struggling, ask them to describe what they are feeling in their own words.

### DON'T MINIMIZE EMOTIONS

Show your child that you understand how they're feeling and that you want to help, even if whatever your child is upset about seems like a small thing to you.

## CALMING TECHNIQUES

When emotions become hard for your child to control (and they will), try these calming techniques.

### PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Taking deep breaths is the easiest way for your child to feel calmer. Show them how to breathe in, count to four, and then slowly exhale. Have your child place their hand on their stomach and feel how it expands and deflates with each breath.

### USE SOOTHING ITEMS

Whether it's a favorite stuffed animal, a weighted blanket, or a smooth "worry stone," a comfort item can help calm and soothe your child when they're in distress.

### PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE

Sometimes children just need to take a break in a place where they can safely cope with their emotions. Help your child identify a safe place in or around your home and stock it with a few favorite comfort items.

### TUNE IN TO SURROUNDINGS

To help re-center your child during an outburst or meltdown, encourage them to use their senses to tune in to what's around them. Have them close their eyes and name what they can smell, touch, and hear.

If your child is stressed, calming down might be difficult. Watch this video to learn more.



VIDEO



## COPING WITH BULLYING

Bullying is aggressive behavior that's harmful, intentional, and repeated. When a child is the target of a bully, their self-esteem can suffer. On the flip side, children who bully others often do it because they struggle with their own self-esteem. Here is what you can do to help your child cope with bullying.

### IF YOUR CHILD IS A TARGET...

- ▶ Believe your child, listen to them, support them, and empower them.
- ▶ Have your child explain what happened, who was involved, and how, when, and where the bullying occurred.
- ▶ Be supportive and discuss the best way to handle the situation.
- ▶ Communicate your concerns to teachers, school officials, and anyone else you think should be involved.

### IF YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY...

- ▶ Take it seriously and don't make excuses for your child. Encourage them to accept responsibility and work to repair any harm they have caused.
- ▶ Get to the root cause. When children bully others, there are often underlying issues. If you and your child can identify these issues, you can make a plan to address them.
- ▶ Listen to your child's explanations, but emphasize that there are always other options—no matter what the provocation.

## MAKING FRIENDS

Developing and maintaining healthy friendships is crucial to helping your child build a healthy self-image.

### TIPS TO SHARE WITH YOUR CHILD

- ▶ Look for other students who like the same things you do.
- ▶ Go out of your way to be friendly to everyone. Smile and start conversations by giving a compliment or asking a question.
- ▶ Be a good friend. Listen when your friend wants to talk and always be ready to help.
- ▶ Be loyal. Friends stick together and stick up for each other, even when it's hard.

### TIPS FOR YOU

- ▶ Provide a loving, stable home environment, and regularly talk to your child about how things are going at school and with friends.
- ▶ If your child is rejected or teased, listen, be supportive, and talk about how to best deal with the situation.
- ▶ Find something for your child to join. It's easier for children to make friends when they are part of a group or involved in an activity.

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# IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM

INFORMATION FOR  
ELEMENTARY PARENTS



INFORMATION AND  
ADVICE TO HELP BUILD  
YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

# IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is the perception of one's worth. Students who have good self-esteem feel liked and accepted. They have the confidence to try new things, and they are better able to cope with setbacks.

Helping your child build their self-esteem is key to protecting their mental health and helping them thrive.

In addition to contributing to good mental health, having good self-esteem also helps students succeed both in and out of the classroom.

In this pamphlet, you will learn some tips for improving your child's self-esteem—and for overcoming some of the barriers to helping your child develop a positive self-image.

## WAYS TO BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Helping your child build their self-esteem doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day to support your child that will help them build their self-esteem and confidence. Here's how you can help develop your child's self-esteem.

### ENCOURAGE NEW EXPERIENCES

Whether it's trying a new sport or learning how to use a camera, allowing your child to try different things and conquer new challenges will help boost their self-esteem.

### DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

Give your child age-appropriate household tasks, such as taking out the trash, helping put away laundry, taking care of a pet, or making their bed each day. Make sure that tasks are completed and praise your child for their effort. Conquering even simple tasks can lead to big gains in self-confidence.

For more on teaching responsibility, watch this short video.



VIDEO

### ENCOURAGE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Becoming good at something, whether it's playing a sport, drawing, singing, or cooking, is a great way for your child to improve their self-esteem. Help your child identify interests and talents and provide opportunities to pursue them.

### PRAISE WISELY

Praise is the most meaningful when it has been earned. Boost your child's self-esteem by praising them for good effort, hard work, and good behavior.

### DON'T DWELL ON MISTAKES

How you respond to mistakes your child makes sets the tone for how your child will respond to them. Instead of focusing on what they have done wrong, remind them that mistakes are a part of life—and that they often present opportunities for growth.

### SET GOALS

Goals give children direction, focus, and purpose. Encourage your child to set both short- and long-term goals. When children accomplish their goals—no matter how big or small—they feel stronger and more capable.

### LET YOUR CHILD FAIL

As a parent, one of the greatest challenges is allowing your child to fail. However, experiencing failure teaches your child that it's not the end of the world—and that failure often provides information they can use to do better the next time.

### LOVE YOUR CHILD UNCONDITIONALLY

As your child grows, there will be high and low grades on tests, games won and lost, and good and bad decisions made. Make sure your child knows that you love them—when they succeed, and especially when they don't.

# CARING FOR YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

In order to help your child manage and care for their mental health, you need to care for your mental health, too.

## PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Self-care doesn't have to be complicated, but it is crucial for maintaining your mental health. Find what helps you feel calm and centered, and integrate it into your daily life.

## GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

When you feel your stress or anxiety level rising—whether from day-to-day demands or during an interaction with your child—stop, take a breath, and go to a quiet space for a few minutes. Return only after you feel calm and in control. It's okay to take a mental health break.

## BEWARE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Everyone puts their best selves on social media, and this can make it seem like other families are more perfect or “together” than yours. Just remember that you're only seeing select snippets of peoples' lives online.

## ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Besides being good for your body, exercise releases chemicals that decrease stress and anxiety. Try to fit in at least 30 minutes of exercise three or more times per week.

## ASK FOR HELP

Whether it's a spouse, partner, friend, family member, or mental health professional, reach out for help when you need it.

# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

If your child is struggling, there are resources available to help them (and you).

## WORK WITH YOUR SCHOOL

If your child is struggling, remember that the teachers and support personnel at your child's school are available to help. If they are unable to assist with a particular problem, they can provide referrals and suggestions.

## TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S PEDIATRICIAN

Your pediatrician knows your child and is interested in their mental health as well as their physical health. Talk to your pediatrician and ask for their advice.

## OTHER RESOURCES

- ▶ On Our Sleeves ([www.onoursleeves.org](http://www.onoursleeves.org)) offers free, expert-based children's mental health information and resources to parents.
- ▶ National Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 to chat online with someone who can help.
- ▶ Activeminds.org can help you connect with a mental health professional in your area who specializes in working with children.

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# SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

## INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



## INFORMATION AND TIPS TO HELP PARENTS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

# SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

**Just as you look after your child's physical health, it's also important to look after and support your child's mental health.**

**This pamphlet will present a number of simple things you can do to help your child maintain and improve their mental health and well-being each day.**

Supporting your child's mental health doesn't require doing anything extraordinary. It's actually the little things you do each day—such as making sure your child eats well, goes to school, has plenty of opportunities for play, and gets enough sleep—that make the most difference.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

**Here are ten ways you can help your child protect, improve, and maintain their mental health and well-being.**

### LOVE YOUR CHILD UNCONDITIONALLY

In order for your child to feel secure and accepted, they need to know that your love doesn't depend on good behavior or accomplishments. Regularly tell your child that you love them—this is especially important when things are hard and your child is not at their best.

### NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE

Encourage your child to try new activities and master new skills. Give them opportunities to show you how capable they are, and help them learn from the mistakes they make.

### LIMIT TIME ON ELECTRONICS

While some TV shows and video games can be educational and beneficial, children need physical activity and play in order for them to thrive and grow.

### TEACH CALMING TECHNIQUES

It's helpful for children to know how to calm themselves when they are upset, angry, or worried.

For some calming techniques you can try with your child, watch this short video.



VIDEO

### LET THEM PLAY

In addition to being fun, play can be a great stress reliever. Play is also important because it teaches your child self-control, creativity, and problem-solving skills—all of which will help them protect and maintain their mental health as they grow.

### DON'T MINIMIZE EMOTIONS

What may seem like a small problem to you can be a very big deal to your child. Encourage your child to label their emotions, let them know you understand how they're feeling, and then work together to come up with solutions to problems.

### TALK TO YOUR CHILD

Make time each day to sit and talk to your child. Ask open-ended questions, and listen without interruption. Developing these connections will make your child more comfortable coming to you with problems, now and in the years to come.

### MAKE HOME A SAFE PLACE

Your home should be a place where your child feels loved, safe, and secure. Home should also be a place where your child knows that consequences for mistakes or misbehavior will be appropriate, consistent, and fair.

### DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

Even when you do everything right, your child's mental health can still be an issue. In these instances, reach out for help. Talk to your child's pediatrician for advice and referrals.