

‘Mental health: let’s talk the talk’

Parents’ guide

Aimed at parents
and carers of
children and
young people



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Introduction

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health...

Being a parent is not always an easy task, however it can be so rewarding to see your child thrive and grow. To ensure that your child has the best opportunities it is vital for you both to understand mental wellbeing and the impacts of mental health stigma.

Most people have good mental health most of the time, but the number of children who experience a mental health problem is growing.

If you haven't spoken about mental health in your family, you're not alone.

Here are the stats about 'nonversation':



Three children in every classroom experience mental health issues

55%

A poll of more than 1,100 parents found that 55 per cent had not spoken about stress, anxiety or depression to their children

45%

45 per cent of parents felt they did not need to have the conversation because mental health "was not an issue"

20%

Of those, 20 per cent said they did not know how to address the issue

What is mental health?

Mental health is the emotional strength that enables us to enjoy life and endure things like pain, disappointment and sadness. It influences the way we think and how we see ourselves, as well as the way that we interpret others and everyday life.

Mental health can have a huge impact on our ability to learn, communicate and enjoy relationships.



Here are some ideas about what good mental health enables us to do:

- **develop mentally, emotionally and spiritually**
- **have healthy relationships with other people**
- **be happy spending time on our own**
- **be aware of other people's feelings**
- **play and learn effectively**
- **develop a clear sense of right and wrong**
- **resolve problems and learn from them**

(Taken from Bright Future, Mental Health Foundation)

Mental health problems can be thought of as being on a spectrum, ranging from poor general mental wellbeing (how you are feeling and how you cope with day to day life), right through to severe mental health problems (such as bi-polar disorder or schizophrenia) – and anything in between.

Mental health problems can present themselves differently, as does the way we cope with them. Some people overcome situations quickly while others can be affected for a long time.

Mental health stigma and discrimination contributes to why people are held back from getting better. It can prevent us from talking to people about how we are feeling. There is no shame in talking about mental health problems; mental health is everyone's business.

The fact-ory



FICTION:

Children and young people don't have mental health problems.

FACT:

One in ten young people (aged 5-16 years old) will experience a diagnosable mental health problem. That's approximately three in every classroom. *(Young Minds)*

FICTION:

Young people don't experience mental health problems until they are older.

FACT:

Although less common in younger children, mental health problems can develop at any age. Many mental health problems in adulthood occur as a result of problems during childhood. *(Rethink Mental Illness)*

FICTION:

Most children and young people do get the right help and support for mental health issues at an early stage.

FACT:

Most children and young people (70 per cent) don't get the right help and support at an early stage. *(Taken from Mental Health Foundation)*

FICTION:

These days, very few people with a mental health problem experience stigma and discrimination.

FACT:


In fact, nowadays, most people with a mental health problem (nine out of ten) experience stigma and discrimination. *(Time to Change)*

FICTION:

All people with mental health problems are unpredictable and violent.

FACT:

People with mental health problems are significantly more likely to be victims of violence than they are to be violent. *(Time to Change)*



Talking tips

Mental health shouldn't be a taboo topic.

Often our mental wellbeing is affected by a 'trigger' situation or event (e.g. bullying, educational difficulties, death of someone close to us etc.)

However, sometimes there is no clear reason why we experience poor mental health. You play a critical role in knowing when your child might need help. Regular, short chats with your child about how they are feeling can really help you to pick up any signs of changes to their emotional wellbeing and give them help and support at the earliest possible stage.

Take the opportunity to talk. You don't have to set aside time to specifically talk about mental health. Small and informal chats in the car or while making dinner are often the best way of engaging your child in discussion.

Talking helps. Many young people experiencing mental health issues can help themselves and are often very keen to do so. Simply chatting to someone they trust can make a lot of difference.

Don't push. If your child doesn't want to open up, let the subject go, then repeat the process at another time. Showing that you're available and open to conversation means they will be more likely to come to you, should they need to.

Be patient. There are times that your child won't feel like talking

It's OK. If your child expresses their feelings, reassure them that it is okay to feel the way they do. What may not seem a big deal to you may be having a real impact on your child

Ask simple questions. "How was your day?" or "how did it go?" are great ways of encouraging your child to open up about their feelings.

Healthy body, healthy mind

Physical activity

All children, regardless of their physical abilities, can become active. Being physically active can have a big impact on your child's emotional wellbeing. Physical activity encourages children to connect with each other, learn about trust and cooperation. These are all ways to build a child's self esteem and improve their emotional wellbeing.



Diet

Good food, good mood. A healthy balanced diet can help your child to think clearer and have more energy.



Sleep

Making sure your child gets enough sleep is important to help them think clearer the next day and enjoy their activities.



Friendships

Your child's emotional wellbeing will also benefit from having time to relax and have fun. Friendships play a big role in emotional health and wellbeing and, as your child grows up, they become more and more important. Listen to any concerns that they have about these. You could even try role play to enable your child to practice skills such as sharing and compromising, which is an important part of maintaining friendships.

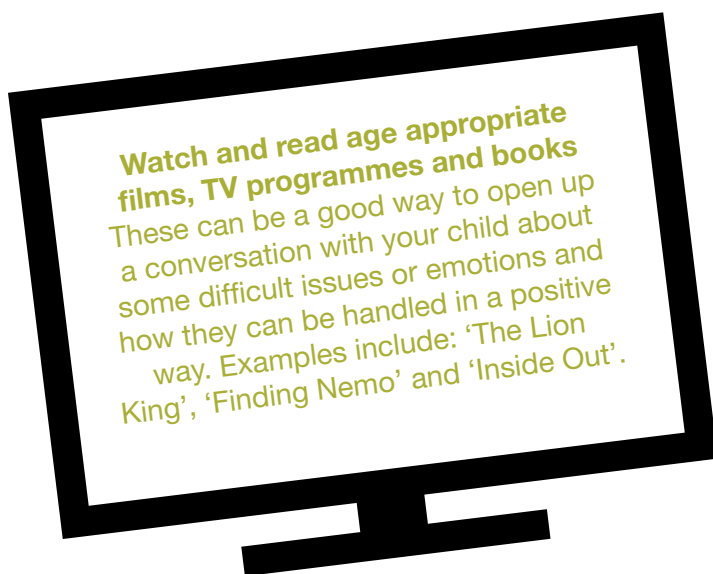


Play it, think it

Activities ideas...make time...make it fun

Stress bucket

- Draw out a big bucket shape,
- Discuss with your child anything that's worrying them at the moment. Write these on the bucket,
- Draw some holes on the bucket,
- Explain that the holes will help to empty out some of these worries from the bucket before it overflows,
- Have a chat with your child about things that you can both do to help them cope with their worries (e.g. spending more time talking together, doing physical activity, eating better, sleeping better and having more time to relax and have fun).



When to seek help

Of course you can seek advice from professionals at any time.

Feeling sad or down is part of typical human experience.

If these feelings continue over a long period of time and stop your child from functioning in day-to-day life then it may be worth getting some professional advice or support. There are a number of professionals that have a lot of experience in helping people with mental health issues:

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- GPs
 - Teachers
 - Health visitors
 - School nurses
 - School support workers
 - Social services
 - Voluntary agencies
 - Counsellor or child therapists
 - Child psychologists
 - Paediatricians
 - Educational psychologists
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)



Sources of advice and support for parents

Service	Available to...	How to access service...
Family Intervention Team (FIT)	Provides intensive early intervention support to families and children (0-18 years) working holistically to ensure the needs of the whole family are assessed and responded to, working towards mutually agreed targets. FIT also facilitates parenting workshops and parenting programmes.	Tel: 01344 464705 Email: FIT@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
The Family Information Service (FIS)	Provides a free and impartial information and signposting service on childcare and other services that support parents and carers of children and young people up to the age of 20 (25 with additional needs). The FIS also hosts information relating to the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND from birth to 25 years.	Website & online enquiry form: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/familyinformation Email: FIS@bracknell-forest.gov.uk Tel: 01344 353133
The Rowans & Sycamore Children's Centre The Oaks & Hollies Children's Centre The Willows & Maples Children's Centre The Alders & Chestnuts Children's Centre	Provide a wide range of support services and advice to parents and carers of young children. Family Outreach Workers are able to offer support and advice in the centre and in the home. Sessions run by health services are also available on all sites, for example, midwifery appointments, baby weigh in clinics, development checks, and speech and language drop-in.	www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/childrenscentres
Child Development Centre	A service for children aged 0-5 years with complex additional needs and their families. Support also available to Early Years Practitioners and other professionals.	Tel: 01344 354171
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (Berkshire Healthcare Trust)	Children aged 5-18 years old living in Bracknell Forest who are suffering significant difficulties due to mental illness or emotional and behavioural difficulties.	Tel: 0300 365 0300 www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/ServiceCatInfo.asp?id=46



Bracknell Forest Health Visitor Service	Practical support and health advice for families and young children up to the age of five years old.	Call Duty Line number: 07899 876568
Family Support Advisors Special Educational Need Coordinators (SENCOs) Family Support Workers	Sources of support and advice for parents that can be accessed through schools.	Via your child's school.
Bracknell Forest Information, Advice & Support Service	Impartial information, advice and support for parents, carers, children and young people who have or may have a Special Educational Need.	Confidential helpline: 01344 354011 Email: SEND.Support@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Behaviour Support Team	Support and advice to schools and parents for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This service is available at maintained schools.	Tel: 01344 354250 or contact your child's school.
Bracknell Forest Targeted Youth Services	Offers support and advice to young carers in Bracknell Forest. Children and young people are given the support and opportunity to meet others, make friends, share experiences and access a range of services according to individual need.	Tel: 01344 464733 Email: youth.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Common Assessment Framework (CAF)	Oversees the common assessment framework process in Bracknell Forest. The team also offers advice to parents and can link them to appropriate services.	Tel: 01344 354263 (Debbie Greatrex - office hours)
Autism Berkshire	Provide comprehensive advice and services for all ages of people with autism, their families and carers.	Tel: 01189 594 594
Kooth	Free online counselling for people aged 11 – 19. Providing access to online counsellors, live forums, information and advice.	Visit www.kooth.com
Youthline	Face to face confidential counselling service for people aged up to 25 at The Lodge, Bracknell, The Spot, Sandhurst and in five local secondary schools.	Tel: 01344 311200 Email: ask@youthlineuk.com



Useful resources:

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

Time to Change www.time-to-change.org.uk

Mind www.mind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness www.rethink.org

Depression Alliance www.depressionalliance.org

NHS Choices Live well www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/

Childline 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk

Royal College of Psychiatrists (useful recourses Including MindEd – free online education to help adults identify and understand children and young people with mental health problems) www.rcpsych.ac.uk/usefulresources.aspx



Other sources of information

The British Psychological Society www.bps.org.uk

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapists www.babcp.com

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy www.bacp.co.uk

Copies of this leaflet may be obtained in large print, Braille, on audio tape or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format, please telephone 01344 352000.

