

PARENT/CARER GUIDE TO:



MENTAL HEALTH



Maintaining good mental health is as important as physical health. As a parent or carer, supporting the wellbeing of your child while also caring for yourself is vital.

This guide provides practical advice for taking care of your child while also taking care of yourself.



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What is mental health?



Just like we can all look after our bodies, we can also all look after our minds.

Mental health includes all the feelings we have - good and bad, and is different for every person. Sometimes you might feel really happy and positive, and other times you might feel sad or worried.

How you feel can change all the time, and this is all part of your mental health.

HELPS US HAVE
GOOD
FRIENDSHIPS

IMPROVES
OUR ABILITY
TO LEARN

CAN IMPACT HOW
POSITIVELY WE SEE
OURSELVES AND THE
WORLD AROUND US

Good mental
health

HELPS US SET
GOALS FOR
OURSELVES
AND REACH
THEM

HELPS US BE ABLE TO
DO THE THINGS WE
ENJOY

How to spot the signs in your child



Children may not always express their emotions verbally, so pay attention to:

- Changes in behaviour (e.g., withdrawing, sudden outbursts, or extreme sadness).
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches with no medical cause.
- Difficulties at school, including declining grades or social struggles.
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns.

Read more here >>> www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/childrens-mental-health/

How to spot the signs in yourself




Everyone's mental health can change at different times and we will all experience ups and downs along the way. Common signs someone may be struggling include:

- **Mood changes:** Low mood, irritability, aggression, or hopelessness.
- **Behaviour changes:** Withdrawing, avoiding activities, lateness, neglecting personal care, or unusual social media behaviour.
- **Physical and mental changes:** Anxiety, poor focus, low energy, feeling overwhelmed.

Read more here >>> www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/

YOU AND YOUR CHILD

Show you love and care



Even when you feel overwhelmed, taking a moment to express your love and pride can go a long way. A kind word or a hug can provide much-needed reassurance. Recognise your child's accomplishments and strengths, while also encouraging them to explore new opportunities.


You don't have to be perfect

No one is perfect, even as parents, and you might not always know the right thing to say but creating a safe space for your child to talk is key. Let them know they won't face judgment or punishment for sharing their thoughts. Focus on listening, reflect their feelings to show understanding, and validate their emotions—for example, say, "It's okay to feel upset about that."

Foster healthy habits

- Establish routines: Predictable schedules provide stability.
- Promote physical activity: Exercise can reduce stress and improve mood.
- Encourage good sleep hygiene: Consistent bedtimes and limiting screen use before bed are key.
- Support balanced nutrition: A healthy diet can positively impact mood and energy levels.


Teach coping skills




Help them identify and name their emotions. Teach relaxation techniques like deep breathing or mindfulness exercises. Encourage creative outlets like drawing, writing, or music. You could tell them about websites like Childline and YoungMinds which has lots of advice and support available.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Don't struggle alone




It's important not to be afraid of seeking help from those closest to you. If you need some time to sort things out, don't hesitate to ask friends and family to look after your child for a bit or give you some support.




Take time for yourself

It's often said that you need to take some time out for yourself, but in reality, it can be hard to make that happen. However, even small self-care steps can make a significant difference. Consider a night spent in with a friend, or even incorporating a 10-minute walk into your day could help.



Be kind to yourself

If your child is having problems, don't be too hard on yourself or blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent.



Ask for help if you need it

Go to your GP if things are really getting on top of you. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. You can't help your child if you are not being supported yourself. Some people worry their parenting will be judged and their children will be taken away if they admit they are struggling to cope. This should only happen if a child is being abused or neglected and the role of professionals is to support you to look after your child as well as you can.

**SELF-CARE IS
MORE THAN
BUBBLE BATHS
& FACEMASKS**

having a
break from
social media

sleeping
well

asking for
help if you
need it

being
creative

volunteering

spending
time
outdoors

resting

being kind
& gentle to
yourself

moving your
body

spending time
with people who
are supportive &
caring

practicing
gratitude

Supporting mental health is a journey, not a destination. By nurturing your child's wellbeing and caring for yourself, you'll create a strong foundation for your family's overall mental health and resilience.

Here are some ideas of how to build a supportive environment:

- **Hold regular family check-ins to discuss feelings, challenges, and positive moments.**
- **Create a culture where seeking help is seen as a strength, not a weakness.**
- **Connect with other families for shared experiences and advice.**
- **Get involved in community activities or groups that promote mental health awareness.**
- **Work with your child's school to support mental health initiatives.**
- **Participate in events like Mental Health Awareness Month to reduce stigma.**



HELP & SUPPORT



P A R E N T S / C A R E R S

LOCAL HELP AND SUPPORT



NHS Wellbeing Suffolk | Mental Health, Wellbeing and Emotional Support



Suffolk Wellbeing in Education



Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust | Parent workshops



Suffolk Early Help | CYP Family Support Services



Anglia Care Trust | Support - Advice - Action



Suffolk Family Hubs | Relationship support for parents

NATIONAL HELP AND SUPPORT



parents.actionforchildren.org.uk

Emotional and practical care for children, young people and families in England. Includes a parenting hub, information for foster and adoptive parents, and local services for families.



annafreud.org/parents

Information for parents and carers about supporting a child or young person's mental health and wellbeing. Includes a directory of free mental health services in local areas.

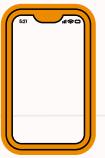


youngminds.org.uk/parent/find-help/



Mental health information and emotional support for young people, their parents and those who care for them. Offers a Parents Helpline 0808 802 5544, email service and webchat for support, signposting and advice.

FOR MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES ALWAYS CALL 999.



HELP & SUPPORT



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

LOCAL HELP AND SUPPORT

- Your doctor**
- thesource.me.uk - Information, advice and sources of support for young people in Suffolk
- NHS 111** - Helpline open to all ages

NATIONAL HELP AND SUPPORT

The Mix - confidential support for young people

themix.org.uk 0808 808 4994

Childline - counselling service

childline.org.uk 0800 1111

Anna Freud - children and young people's wellbeing resources

annafreud.org.uk/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing

Shout - 24/7 text message support service for young people

Text SHOUT to 85258

Kooth is a web based confidential support service available to young people.

www.kooth.com

YoungMinds - help finder

youngminds.org.uk/young-person/find-help/

APPS

- MeeToo
- Calm
- Combined Minds
- Smiling Mind
- Headspace
- Clear Fear



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FURTHER SUPPORT

