



Safeguarding newsletter

April 2024

The aim of the newsletter is to share, key related information, in an effort, to better improve communication between the Academy and you as parents / carers.

This newsletter shares some information for parents regarding various support sites to help your child with their mental health and exam advice



<https://www.kooth.com/>



<https://www.youngminds.org.uk>



<https://www.mind.org.uk/>



NHS
Birmingham and Solihull
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

SOLAR- 0121 301 2750

SOLAR CRISIS- 0121 301 5500-Out of hrs

Supporting children's mental health

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.

 **National Online Safety**
#WakeUpWednesday

1 LISTEN

This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.

2 ASK TWICE

The campaign from time to change is great. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.

Are you sure?

3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION

This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.

4 BE OPEN AND HONEST

Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss; 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.

6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY

Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I felt like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

7 EMPATHISE

'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.

8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE

Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.

9 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Be mindful of the language you use at home to describe and talk about mental health. Stigma often arises from misconceptions and a choice of language which is harmful. Using the word 'mental', 'man-up' or other such words in a derogatory way won't encourage your child to talk about their mental health for fear of being belittled.

10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'

Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.

Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



Sources of Information and Support

Your GP
Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>
<https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

Exam Support

During exam period

You might be on study leave or you might have to continue going to school. You might also be working a part-time job. The exam period can feel long and difficult, and you might feel under pressure.

You can look after yourself in different ways:

- **Make time for things you enjoy.** Find ways to release stress and celebrate progress. You could listen to music, draw, cook, play with a pet or go for a walk. You can try things alone or with friends.
- **Talk to others about how you feel.** Connect with other people, especially people who are going through the same thing. For more information, see our page on [talking about how you're feeling](#).
- **Try to find balance.** Take regular breaks and be realistic about what you can do in a day. Keep things in perspective and remember that exams won't last forever.
- **Take care of your physical health.** Make sure you get enough sleep, food, water and exercise. If you take regular medication, keep up with your routine.
- **Focus on yourself.** Try not to compare yourself to others. Think of things you like about yourself and what you're good at – this can help boost your [confidence](#).

• **Preparing for an exam**

- While you're preparing an exam, you could try lowering stress levels by:
- **Finding a study group.** If there's nothing at school, try starting one with friends or people in your class.
- **Making a revision timetable.** This helps organise your revision and your breaks. You can find useful tips on the [BBC Bitesize website](#).
- **Working in the best way for you.** Be creative or active if it helps, like drawing diagrams or making up songs. Try being open to different types of studying and revision.
- **Revising in the best place for you.** You might prefer the quiet or being around others. If you don't have a space to study at home, you could try at school, the library, a cafe, or a family member or friend's house.

• **On the day of your exam**

- To help cope with stress on the day of your exam, you could:
- **Prepare your items the night before.** Get everything you need ready to take with you, like pens and water for your exam.
- **Start your day the best you can.** Try to eat breakfast and make sure you have enough time to arrive at your exam without rushing.
- **Try to ground yourself with a breathing exercise.** If you feel overwhelmed in the exam, try to breathe in through your nose for 4 counts, hold it for 2 counts, and breathe out through your mouth for 7 counts. If you repeat this, it can slow your breath and help keep you calm.
- **Take your time.** Read the exam carefully and plan what you need to do before answering.
- **Remind yourself that it'll be over soon.** You've done your best and that's all you can do.