



Leicester, Leicestershire
and Rutland
Health and Wellbeing Partnership



Leicestershire Partnership
NHS Trust

A Guide for
Parents: How to
understand and
support your
child's mental
health



About this guide..

Growing up can be challenging for children and adolescents. They experience a variety of emotions, pressures and the stress that everyday life can bring.

As a parent, it can be difficult for you to know how to best support your child during these times.

We have created this leaflet, with the support of Parent Practitioners who work for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to provide advice on how to help your child navigate life's challenges and what to do if you are concerned about their mental health.



What's in this guide?

The following topics are covered:

- An explanation to mental health
- Mental health statistics
- Developing healthy habits
- Tips on talking about mental health
- The decider skills
- When to seek professional support
- Useful resources



What is mental health?

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

Emotional wellbeing is how we manage our emotions and cope with challenge.

Psychological wellbeing is about feeling happy or content, having a sense of meaning or purpose and being able to function day to day, for example to go to school or college.

Social wellbeing is being able to create and grow healthy relationships with others.

Our mental health can affect our thoughts, feelings and behaviour so it's important that we understand and look after our mental health as well as our physical health. Mental health is a complex matter as every individual is unique. Life can present challenging times, such as receiving undesirable exam results, experiencing a break-up or the loss of a loved one. Each person reacts differently to such events. If you have good mental health, you have a greater capacity to deal with these experiences than someone who struggles with their mental well-being.

Mental health is a universal aspect of human life but it varies from person to person and can change over time. We all encounter positive and negative experiences throughout our lives and we may react differently to these events based on our unique mental state.



1/4

of us will
experience
mental health
problems

2/3

young people said they had
experienced stigma and
discrimination when reaching
out for receiving support with
their mental health

50%

of all mental
health problems
start by the age
of 14

Healthy habits

Developing and maintaining healthy habits are essential for your child's physical and mental health. Consider trying some of the following tips:



Encourage healthy communication

Creating a safe and comfortable space for your child to share their thoughts and feelings is essential.

- Begin with open-ended questions such as "How was your day?" or "Is there anything on your mind?"
- Listen attentively without judgment and make sure they know that you're there to support them.



Be an approachable parent

- Let your child know that they can come to you with anything at any time.
- Listen to your child when they do talk to you.
- Share your own stories or experiences to encourage them to open up.
- Do not be afraid to give boundaries so children feel safe.



Connect with school resources

- Keep yourself up-to-date with the school's counseling services and available resources.
- If you have any concerns about your child's well-being, don't hesitate to contact their teacher or school pastoral team.



Encourage healthy habits

- Prioritise regular sleep. Encourage a minimum of 8 hours of sleep every night.
- Eat nutritious meals
- Encourage physical activity for at least 1 hour per day
- Emphasise the importance of self-care and taking breaks when necessary.
- Ensure phones and screens are put away during meal time and family activities



Validate their feelings

- Recognise their emotions and reassure them that it's perfectly normal to feel that way.
- Avoid negating their feelings but instead, show empathy by saying, "I understand that you're having a difficult time."
- Be understanding and patient, showing empathy for their concerns,



Monitor screen time

- Monitor their online activities and social media usage.
- Encourage offline activities that help balance screen time and promote face-to-face interactions.
- Discuss the benefits and risks of using online platforms
- You need to be at least 13 before you can join most social media platforms (as stipulated by social media companies themselves including Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Youtube and Facebook)

Talking about mental health with your young person

It can be difficult to determine if your child is experiencing issues relating to their mental health but there are signs to watch out for. Keep an eye out for the following:

- significant **changes in behaviour**
- ongoing **difficulty sleeping or getting to sleep**
- **withdrawing**, especially from social situations
- **not wanting to do things** they usually like
- **self-harm** or **neglecting** themselves
- Continuous **low mood**
- Frequent **tearfulness**
- Feeling **irritable** or **intolerant** of others

It's important to talk to your child about mental health. According to the [World Health Organisation](#) around 14% of 10-19-year-olds experience mental health conditions like anxiety, OCD and depression.

Keep in mind that every child is different. While these tips can certainly help guide your parenting, remember to trust your instincts and continue encouraging a supportive and communicative relationship with your child.

[Click here to view a conversation guide on talking to young people about mental health](#)

“I wish someone would just listen” -
Young Person

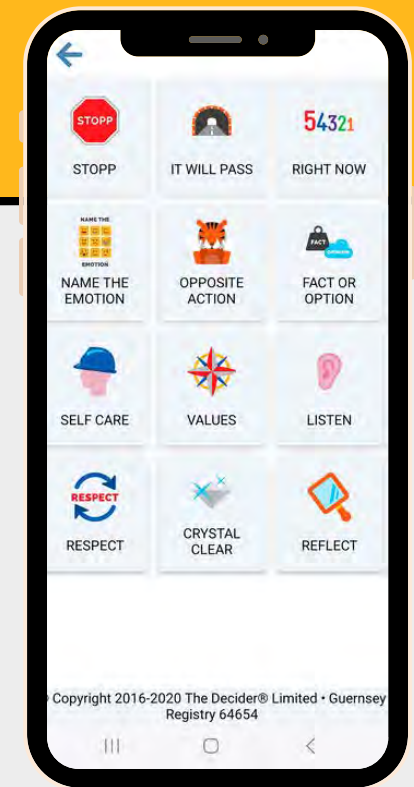
“I sometimes feel embarrassed and ashamed. I am worried my parents might think differently of me if I talk about my mental health” - Young Person



The Decider Skills use Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to teach children, young people and adults the skills to recognise their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours, enabling them to monitor and manage their own emotions and mental health. The Decider Skills are used within specialist mental health services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The Decider Skills has a free mobile app that's perfect for both young people and their parents and carers. It provides practical tips to help children regulate, distract and understand their emotions. The app also includes short video clips and instructional guides for families to follow.

www.thedecider.org.uk/



Should I seek support from a professional?

As a parent you know your child’s behaviour better than anyone. If you're concerned about changes in your child’s behaviour it might be worth considering what may have caused them. Try to think about:

- Where their behaviour changes occur? Are they at home, school, with friends?
- Has there been a significant change in their life that may be encouraging these behaviours?
- Have you tried to talk to your child to see what may be causing these changes in their behaviour?

Talk to your child about their behaviour and try to support them using some of the tips provided.

If you or your child would benefit from discussing this with a professional, It may be helpful to note some of these behaviours down. You and/or your child can talk through these notes with someone from your child’s school or your GP.



Useful resources

You can also share our poster!



Place2Be (a children's mental health charity that provides counselling and mental health support and training in UK schools) has a page dedicated to 'Supporting your child's mental health' with links to specialised support, such as bereavement and autism. www.place2be.org.uk/



Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust has partnered with the [Solihull Approach](http://www.solihullapproach.co.uk/) to offer free access to expertly designed online courses for parents, carers, grandparents and teens living in the region. www.inourplace.co.uk/free-online-courses/



PAPYRUS has a guide for parents and carers who are concerned that a young person might be experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Click here for more information on PAPYRUS. www.papyrus-uk.org/



Every Mind Matters has a page dedicated to 'Looking after a child or young person's mental health'. Click here for more information on Every Mind Matters. www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/



MindEd for Families has lots of useful resources, including support on 'Parenting The Child With Issues'. Click here for more information on MindEd for Families. www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk/



Young Minds is a charity which supports not only young people experiencing mental health difficulties but also their parents and teachers. Click here for more information on Young Minds. www.youngminds.org.uk/



Scan the QR code on the left for more advice about mental health support in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Hey, how are you feeling?...

There are lots of things you can do to keep yourself well and feeling good, like:

- Getting a good night's sleep
- Doing something you enjoy like playing games
- Spending time with friends and family
- Exercising and eating well to look after your body
- Learning a new skill or taking on a challenge
- Helping other people
- Spending time outside in nature

... I feel great! I am happy and healthy



... I'm okay but I sometimes feel a bit worried or sad



It's normal to feel this way. We all experience lots of emotions and these can change over time.

Try some of the things in the box above and talk to someone about how you're feeling. This could be your friends, a parent or carer or a teacher or adult at school.

If you're struggling, it's important to speak to someone. People want to help you. If you need it, you or your parents or carer can support you to get professional help. A good place to start is by talking to a mental health and wellbeing lead, a trusted adult at school or your GP.

You can also find free and safe support on these websites:

- Kooth: www.kooth.com
- Health for Teens: www.healthforteens.co.uk

... I am struggling and need some help

... I am so upset or overwhelmed that I need help now

If you need to speak to someone urgently, you or a parent or carer can call the Mental Health Central Access Point on **0808 800 3302** or **NHS 111**. The lines are open 24/7.

If there is an immediate or life-threatening emergency, call 999 or attend A&E. People are there and ready to help you now.