



Mental Health Awareness: Supporting Your Child's Mental Health

Here are some examples that can help you and your child navigate these topics within your home and community:

Building Healthy Habits and Routines:

- Assist your child in establishing and following daily routines. If appropriate, allow your child to be a part of building the routine.
- Support and monitor sleep routines, balanced diet, exercise, and activity level.
- Use specific verbal praise when you notice your child's efforts to engage in healthy habits (e.g., that's a very nice healthy food choice, thank you for sharing your thoughts/feelings with me).
- Clearly identify behavioral expectations, at the child's level, and a plan for meeting/not meeting these expectations.
- Encourage your child to be active in their school/community by joining a club, visiting a local park/museum, volunteering.
- Support your child's peer relationships by scheduling play dates or connecting virtually.
- Celebrate your child's accomplishments. Consider making it visual with an accomplishment wall.

Building Communication:

- Proactively schedule 1:1 time with your child(ren). Use this time to enjoy activities that interest your child together.
- Ask open-ended questions (e.g., what was the best part of your day? vs. did you have a good day?), avoiding judgement and criticism.
- Validate your child's feelings and provide empathy (e.g., you seem frustrated by that, that must be very hard for you).
- Make yourself available when your child comes to you or let them know you are available when they want to talk.
- Model good listening skills and communication by sharing your own thoughts and feelings, apologizing, practicing emotional regulation, and engaging in active problem-solving.
- Practice patience and measure progress even in small steps.

Explore and Identify Coping Skills:

- Engage in proactive teaching of identifying and labeling emotions (e.g., use videos or flash cards to help your child recognize emotions).
- Encourage your child to identify and use coping skills (e.g., reading, listening to music, breathing exercises, yoga).
- Teach and encourage your child to ask for help when they need it.
- Consider implementing a calming corner in your home (e.g., an area filled with cozy pillows, soft books or calming activities or toys).

When to Seek Help:

- If you notice a significant change in eating or sleeping habits, or overall personality.

- If your child has recurring physical illness with no medical rationale
- Despite efforts, your child is withdrawn or isolated
- Try a screening to help guide, if necessary (www.MHAscreening.org) or discuss your concerns with your child's pediatrician

Helpful Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html>

<http://www.kidsmentalhealth.org>

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/coping-skills-for-kids-4586871>

