



Children & Young People's
Mental Health Coalition



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK 1ST - 7TH FEBRUARY 2021

This year "Time to Talk" day falls within Children's Mental Health Week, so what better time to talk to the children or young people in your life, about their Mental Health and wellbeing.

We know this year has been incredibly hard on our young people and by normalising discussing our feelings as part of everyday life, they are more likely to share the big feelings they may find difficult to cope with, as and when they encounter them.

1 CHOOSE A SAFE SPACE

Think about where and when might be the most comfortable place and time to start the conversation. This might not be in the house or car for example, as it can feel very restrictive. The team at Bedazzle are big advocates for walking and talking and getting out into nature. Make sure you have ample time for the conversation - no one wants to feel rushed. If they are sat down, sit next to them so they feel supported.



2 TALKING TIPS

Keep your body language open and be non confrontational. Take what they say seriously as things which may seem trivial to you can be frightening or worrying for others. Avoid making comments that could be perceived as judgemental or dismissive - phrases like "pull yourself together" or "cheer up". Many young people won't talk for fear of stigma and this will only heighten the anxiety around this. Try and keep the chat positive and supportive and listen without interrupting.



3 USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK

How are you feeling at the moment?
How long have you felt like this?
What do you think you might help you to feel differently?
Depending on their age, you might be able to help them identify triggers that caused them to feel this way. Avoid 'why' questions. Encourage them to connect their thoughts and feelings and accept its okay not to always be okay.



4 MAKE A PLAN

Most young people will be sceptical about seeking professional help, but if you think it may be necessary reassure them recovery is possible and probable. Encourage them to do more of those things that bring joy and fewer of those things that bring pain or sadness. There are lots of websites and apps with some excellent information and resources but be sure to check them out for yourselves first.



Ultimately young people need to feel accepted and understood. They will prosper in an environment where they feel loved for who they are and that mistakes are part of their learning process. Try to remain calm and collected, even if your young person is very distressed or shares difficult experiences with you.



LOCKDOWN LINGO:

Some questions you might want to ask during lockdown

How do you feel about things keep changing?

What makes you feel safe and happy?

How do you plan to keep in touch with friends?

What are you most looking forward to this week?

What has been one positive thing about today?

If you could change anything in your life, what would it be?

What things would you like to do in the future?

What can I do to help?

3 SELF CARE STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE:

ZZZ

Many of us are struggling with normal sleep patterns and routines at the moment, but sleep is vital to our overall health and well-being. The blue light from our device screens inhibits the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone so try and establish routines that reduces exposure. Sunlight in the day, lavender, glow lights and music that promotes delta waves in the brain can all help.



Maintaining a balanced diet and keeping hydrated are also essential for our physical and mental health. The digestive tract is known as our second brain. Almost 80% of our serotonin is produced in the gut and this the hormone that helps stabilise our mood. Ensuring fresh fruit and vegetables to keep vitamin intake up will help. Some foods are also good at producing melatonin so can make for better night time snacks -bananas, kiwis and nuts are just a few.



Encouraging mindfulness, relaxation or regular brain breaks through the day can help our overall well-being. It allows us time to either connect on a deeper level with, or distract us from, our thoughts, as needed. Mindfulness is not something we should only do when we feel stressed, but practicing daily helps us to feel more in control of emotions.

"We have to nourish ourselves in order to flourish"

