

Supporting Children's Mental Health

What children say they want and need from schools.

1. We want mental health to be talked about more in school to remove the taboo around it- not just one-off assemblies or PSHE lessons.
2. We want you to acknowledge our mental health - not just mention it once in assembly. Sometimes we say we're stressed with homework and it seems like all our teachers care about is the deadline, not how we're feeling.
3. If you're talking about mental health, make it clear that mental health isn't a bad thing.
4. We want to know more about specific themes on mental health - men's mental health, teenage mental health etc.
5. Try not to make it sound so scary. Language like 'you have to tell someone' puts pressure on us, and can put us off - even if you don't mean to.
6. Make our assemblies or lessons on mental health more interactive - let us ask more questions, do a quiz, role play - then we'll want to engage more.
7. Give us opportunities to lead lessons on mental health - we might know more than you think.
8. If you're planning an assembly (on anything) keep it short, active, play music, involve us in it.
9. Stop making out like social media is responsible for all of our problems. We know there are challenges with social media, but when we use it carefully it can help us connect with friends and find advice and support when we're struggling.
10. If we're being bullied or having issues with friends, don't just focus on punishing the other person or fixing it. Excluding someone might punish them, but it doesn't help with the way we feel about what has happened. Make the time to talk about our feelings too, if we need to.

Hearing voices of children with additional needs

Adults may have to be explicit in telling children with additional needs.

- '_____, I am listening to you',
- '_____, I have listened to you',
- '_____, I've heard what you said, and I am going to do X',
- '_____, your views matter to me',
- '_____, I care about what you think',
- '_____, when you talk about how you feel, I can listen and help you.'

Or go one step further and reflect a key part so the child knows you've got it.

- 'I heard you say "xyz" did I get that right?'
- 'It seems like X was the most important thing you wanted me to hear, is that right?'



Children's Mental Health Week
5th-11th February 2024



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What children would like their families to know and what they want from them

1. We don't need to have 'one-off conversations about our mental health' - sometimes a chat on a journey or at bedtime is enough.
2. I need to know it's OK to talk to you about any and all of my feelings. Please hear what I have to say, without interrupting me.
3. Please listen to me carefully and acknowledge how I am feeling - it might seem silly to you but what I am going through is important to me.
4. Playing with pets can make me feel better. Same with playing football, basketball or whatever type of sport I am into.
5. Don't compare my experiences to your own when you were a child.
6. Sometimes I just need you to listen and hear what I'm saying - I don't always need answers.
7. Please don't worry about trying to fix things for me - I often just need to know you are there for me and understand what I am going through.
8. If you are open with me about your feelings, this can help me to be more open about mine.
9. Sometimes I don't want to talk. Please trust that I will come to you (or another grown-up or someone my own age) when I'm ready. Sometimes it's easier for me to talk to someone nearer my own age - my siblings, cousins, friends, teachers at school - because they 'get it'.
10. Sometimes a hug is all it takes to make me feel supported.

Conversation Starters

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAY	WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT TODAY?	WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRESS / WORRY IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW?
WHAT'S YOUR ONLINE LIFE LIKE?	WHO WOULD YOU TALK TO IF YOU WERE FEELING WORRIED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?	WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP YOU?



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