

FROM THE
GREEN COUCH

Mental Health Month

GROWING MINDS

Why mental health matters - And how parents can help

In today's fast-paced, always-connected world, children face more pressures than ever from schoolwork and social media to global events and personal expectations. Mental wellness is about more than preventing problems; it's about giving children the tools to manage stress, navigate emotions, and build confidence (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025).

**"PARENTS ARE THE
ANCHORS OF A
CHILD'S EMOTIONAL
WORLD." - JOHN
BOWLBY**

As parents, you play a crucial role in nurturing your child's emotional health. Small, consistent steps at home like open conversations, healthy routines, and mindful practices can help your child thrive, grow resilient, and feel safe in themselves (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Even small gestures, like sharing a few minutes of undistracted time, offering encouragement, or practising calm breathing together, send the powerful message: *"You are seen, heard, and supported."*



Parents: The Key to Mental Health

Parents are the first and most influential guides in a child's emotional life. The love, attention, and support children receive at home form the foundation of their mental wellness (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d.). As often attributed to Frederick Douglass, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults." Every interaction is an opportunity to model empathy, patience, and healthy coping strategies.

Even something small, such as listening without judgment, acknowledging feelings, and offering reassurance, teaches children that emotions are normal and manageable. As novelist P. D. James (1992) noted, "What a child doesn't receive, they can seldom later give." By investing in emotional health now, parents not only strengthen their child's resilience but also foster kindness, empathy, and confidence that will last a lifetime.

When children see their parents handle stress calmly, solve problems thoughtfully, and express emotions constructively, they learn by example (Siegel & Bryson, 2020). Modelling healthy habits like taking breaks when overwhelmed, practising gratitude, or discussing feelings openly helps children internalise these strategies and apply them in their own lives. This modelling creates a blueprint for emotional regulation that children carry into adolescence and adulthood.

Moreover, building strong mental wellness at home strengthens the parent-child bond. Consistent support and open communication foster trust, making it easier for children to share worries, seek guidance, and feel understood (Child Mind Institute, n.d.). A child who feels emotionally supported at home is more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience, and positive relationships outside the family. In essence, parents are not just caregivers - they are mentors, guides, and the most influential architects of their child's emotional world.

Practical Tips

Ages 5-8: Building Foundations for Emotional Resilience

At this stage, children are learning to identify, understand, and express emotions. Small daily habits create a strong foundation for lifelong mental wellness (APA, n.d.).

Practical Tips:

- **Name the Feeling:** Help your child label their emotions - "I see you're feeling frustrated." Naming feelings helps children understand and manage them.
- **Routine and Predictability:** Consistent meal times, bedtime, and daily schedules provide a sense of security and reduce anxiety.
- **Mindful Moments:** Introduce short mindfulness exercises, like "smell the flowers, blow out the candle" or simple deep breathing before bedtime.
- **Encourage Play:** Free play promotes problem-solving, creativity, and emotional regulation. Activities like building blocks, role play, or outdoor games help children express themselves safely (Ginsburg, 2007).
- **Model Emotional Expression:** Show your own feelings in healthy ways - let them see that it's okay to feel sad, frustrated, or excited, and how to manage those emotions calmly (Denham et al., 2012).
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise effort, kindness, and emotional honesty rather than only achievement. This builds self-esteem and resilience.



**MODELLING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING TO
YOUR CHILD HARBOURS RESILIENCE!**



Practical Tips

Ages 9–13: Navigating Social Pressures and Emotional Growth

Preteens are navigating more complex social dynamics, self-consciousness, and emerging independence. Emotional support at this stage helps them develop strong coping skills and confidence (APA, n.d.).

Practical Tips:

- **Open Conversations:** Ask open-ended questions like, “What was the best and hardest part of your day?” Encourage honest responses without judgment (Child Mind Institute, n.d.).
- **Screen Time Balance:** Limit recreational screen time and encourage offline hobbies such as reading, drawing, cooking, or outdoor activities. These activities reduce stress and promote creativity.
- **Problem-Solving Together:** Instead of immediately solving issues for them, guide your child to brainstorm solutions. This fosters independence and confidence in their decision-making.
- **Encourage Healthy Friendships:** Help your child recognize friends who uplift them and model empathy in social interactions. Discuss strategies for handling peer pressure.
- **Mind-Body Connection:** Encourage physical activity, yoga, or stretching to improve mood, energy, and focus. Physical movement is directly linked to emotional well-being.
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Avoid over-scheduling and pressure. Let your child know it’s okay to rest, make mistakes, and learn at their own pace (WHO, 2025).

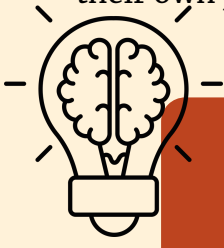
Practical Tips

Ages 13–18: Supporting Teens’ Independence and Emotional Health

Teenagers are developing identity, autonomy, and complex emotional understanding. Parental support remains crucial, even as teens seek independence (Siegel & Bryson, 2020).

Practical Tips:

- **Active Listening:** Give full attention when your teen speaks, validating their feelings without immediately offering advice. Phrases like “I hear you” or “That sounds tough” show empathy and support.
- **Normalise Mental Health Conversations:** Talk openly about stress, anxiety, and mental wellness to reduce stigma and encourage them to seek help if needed (APA, n.d.).
- **Encourage Routine:** Balanced sleep, nutrition, and physical activity have a significant impact on mood and focus.
- **Limit Negative Comparisons:** Discuss the impact of social media and encourage mindful consumption. Promote self-reflection over comparison.
- **Support Passions:** Encourage hobbies, clubs, or sports that provide purpose, self-expression, and confidence. Engaging in meaningful activities improves emotional resilience.
- **Check-in Privately:** Even brief daily check-ins like, “How are you really feeling today?” strengthen connection and give your teen space to share (Child Mind Institute, n.d.).
- **Teach Coping Skills:** Encourage journaling, meditation, or creative expression as safe ways to manage stress.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD’S MENTAL WELLNESS AT THIS STAGE IS ABOUT BALANCING GUIDANCE WITH INDEPENDENCE. YOUR PRESENCE, ATTENTION, AND UNDERSTANDING ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN ADVICE ALONE.





Warning signs

Is my daughter struggling?

Even the most resilient children can experience stress, anxiety, or emotional difficulties. Recognising early warning signs allows parents to provide support before challenges escalate (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], n.d.).

Changes in mood, such as frequent sadness, irritability, anger, or sudden emotional outbursts, can indicate that something is bothering your daughter. Withdrawal from friends, family, or activities she normally enjoys is another common signal. You might also notice changes in sleep or appetite, including difficulty falling asleep, nightmares, oversleeping, or shifts in eating patterns.

Declining school performance, loss of interest in schoolwork, or difficulty concentrating may also signal that she is struggling. Physical complaints like headaches or stomachaches with no clear medical cause, excessive worry, fear of failure, or perfectionist tendencies can also be signs of underlying stress (Center on the Developing Child, 2016). In some cases, risky or uncharacteristic behaviour, such as lying, secretive actions, self-harm, or sudden risky choices, may appear.

As a parent, the most important step is to approach your daughter with calm curiosity and openness. Talk with her about how she's feeling and listen actively, validating her emotions rather than minimising them. Encourage healthy coping strategies like journaling, mindfulness, exercise, or creative activities, and offer support without pressure or judgment (APA, n.d.). If you notice persistent or intensifying concerns, seeking professional guidance from a school counsellor, psychologist, or paediatrician can make a significant difference.

Paying attention early and providing a supportive, understanding environment can prevent struggles from becoming more serious and help your daughter build resilience for the future (Center on the Developing Child, 2016).

Supporting your child's mental wellness is an ongoing journey. Every small step – listening with patience, modelling healthy coping, celebrating effort over perfection, and spending quality time – makes a difference (APA, n.d.). Celebrate the strengths and resilience you see in your daughter, even in small moments. Encourage her to explore her passions, express her feelings, and approach life with curiosity and courage (Mind, n.d.). By fostering love, understanding, and consistency, you equip her with empathy and emotional tools to navigate life's ups and downs (WHO, 2025).

Celebrate the strengths and resilience you see in your daughter, even in small moments. Encourage her to explore her passions, express her feelings, and approach life with curiosity and courage. By fostering an environment of love, understanding, and consistency, you are equipping her with the confidence, empathy, and emotional tools to navigate life's ups and downs.

Together, as parents and caregivers, you are planting seeds of resilience, self-worth, and well-being that will grow and flourish for years to come. As research from the Center on the Developing Child (2016) reminds us, the experiences children share with caring adults lay the foundation for resilience and well-being. Every moment of care and attention matters; your guidance today helps your child thrive tomorrow.

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**SUPPORTING YOUR
DAUGHTER'S MENTAL
WELLNESS IS A
JOURNEY, NOT A
DESTINATION**

Click [here](#) to view the full reference list.

HOW TO REACH OUT



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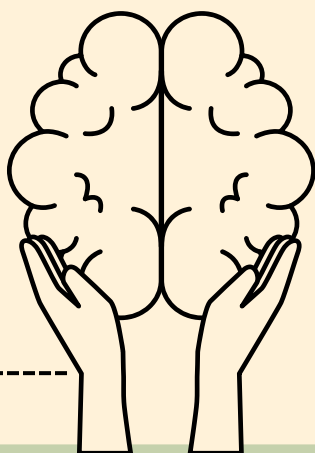
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A CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH
IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS
THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH
AND DESERVES THE SAME
QUALITY OF SUPPORT.

KATE MIDDLETON