

How to support young people's mental health



**The
Children's
Society**

What are young people worried about?

'Social media portrays people in a "perfect" way. It rarely shows people's imperfections, which causes young teens like myself to compare ourselves to an impossible life/appearance. I think it damages people's self-esteem and makes them question their self-worth.'

'Young people are 20% of our population and 100% of our future.'

'I'm worried about my exams and the results, along with the stress and anxiety they come with.'

'[Politicians] don't listen to younger people views. They think because we are "children" we don't know what we are talking about.'

Six top tips for communicating with children and young people

- 1 Spend unstructured time together.** It can be difficult when you're busy, but spending time doing nothing with your child, without multi-tasking, is really important.
- 2 Sit down together for a meal** at least a few times a week to chat. If you can't eat together, sit down and talk over a cup of tea.
- 3 Enter their world and ask questions about it.** See a film of their choice, browse the websites they are visiting, watch their favourite TV show with them. Be careful not to just dismiss everything they're consuming: get them to think about the messages behind what they are watching. Why do the people in adverts, or on TV reality shows, look the way they do? Does it reflect real life? How are people behaving on TV? Is that right?
- 4 Don't be deterred.** Sometimes young people don't want to talk to their parents/carers about what's bothering them, but you shouldn't always take no for an answer. Make sure you understand what's happening from their point of view and how it's making them feel. It can be helpful for parents/carers to then put things in perspective, but listen carefully before jumping in.
- 5 Don't belittle their worries.** If it's important in a child's life, then it's important.
- 6 Give it time.** Worrying or difficult behaviour can simply be a sign that they are adjusting to a change in their life or trying out new emotions, and it will often pass.

How to support young people's mental health

Children and young people can look after their own well-being by following the five simple ways we have developed with New Economics Foundation.

Connect: The first way to support your well-being is by connecting with the people around you – this could be by chatting with colleagues or meeting up with family and friends.

Be active: Research shows that people's mood can be improved by exercise. Even small changes in your activity levels can lead to improved well-being.

Take notice: It is important to acknowledge how we are feeling in the moment and what is going on around us.

Be creative and play: Making time for something artistic, music-related, sports or games related can improve your well-being.

Learn: There are significant benefits to well-being by engaging and learning. You can find out more about how to support young people's mental health by visiting childrenssociety.org.uk/resource-vault

Questions for reflection:

Are there areas in which you would like to improve your own well-being? What steps can you take to do that?

How can you help children and young people known to you to flourish in each area?

A prayer for children and young people

Lord Jesus, welcomer of children,
thank you for the children and young people in our lives,
their curiosity, energy and imagination.

Thank you for the clarity with which they see
injustice in the world.

May we learn from them how best to work together
for the kingdom of God.

We pray for a society where all young people will feel
safe and included.

We pray for the mental health
and wellbeing of all children and young people.

May they all feel loved, cherished and of value.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Supporting The Children's Society

Since 2009 children and young people have become increasingly unhappy. There are now almost a quarter of a million children in the UK who are unhappy with their lives, friends, schools or appearance. Yet these young people's voices are not being listened to.

We need to stop side-lining young people, and instead use their enthusiasm, energy and hope to change society.

It's time to show young people they matter. The Children's Society is here to support this country's young people. When they feel worthless, we let them know they matter. When they feel unheard, we show them that we're listening. When they feel there is no hope, we help them look forward to their futures once again. Join us in our pledge to support them and let them know **#IHearYouth**

Use this space to record your personal pledge to support children and young people:

You can also support our work by making a donation at **childrenssociety.org/donate**, joining our campaign to demand **the Government starts measuring young people's well-being at childrenssociety.org.uk/campaigns** or by taking advantage of our many volunteering opportunities at **childrenssociety.org.uk/volunteering**