

For further support+

If you have concerns about your child's mental health, don't panic. There is information, advice and support to help support your child and the rest of your family:

Information is available from lots of sources

These include the Parent's Lounge from YoungMinds (youngminds.org.uk), and Mind's new online space specifically for supporting children and young people and their parents or carers (mind.org.uk/youngpeople).

Get support:

If you feel your child needs further support, you can speak to your GP. Their knowledge and insight will help you as a parent to decide the best way to speak to, and support, your child.

Get advice:

If you're unsure about what to do next, getting some advice from a trusted source can be helpful and reassuring. Speak to others who know your child, such as teachers at school if possible or your local young people's service. They will have information about what other sources of support and guidance there are in your area.



mind.org.uk

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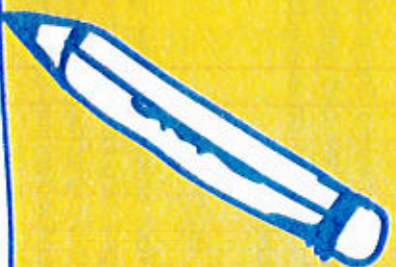
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Talking about mental health

How to talk to your child about
their mental health



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It's important that a child feels able to openly talk about their emotions, especially during difficult times. It can sometimes feel really hard to start a conversation about your child's mental health but there are some things that may help:

Do your research

Having an understanding of what mental health and wellbeing are will help you feel confident to start the conversation and answer questions they may have.

Create a safe space for them to open up

This should be somewhere they feel comfortable and you are unlikely to be distracted.

Listen

Let them know that this time is for them to talk and you are there for them.

Be open

Some people find it difficult to talk about mental health and wellbeing. Being open and gently encouraging conversation helps mental health to become an everyday topic that people are more comfortable to talk about.

Be honest

Your child may have questions about mental health and wellbeing, and you may not have all of the answers. Being honest about not knowing and exploring some of their questions together can help further your understanding as a family.



Give them your time

Your child may need some time to decide what to say and how to say it. Remind them that they can talk to you when they feel ready and in whatever way suits them best. This might be face to face, via text or by drawing or writing things down.

Reassure them

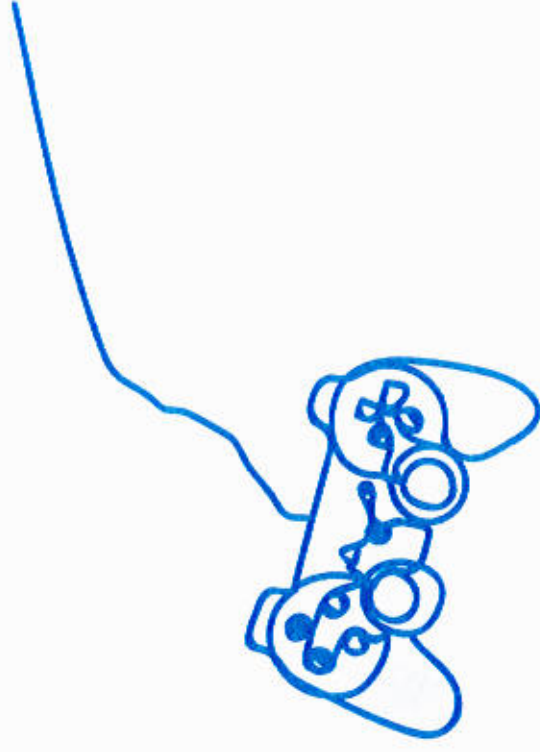
Let them know that you're always there to listen and support them. You could try following up your conversation with reassuring comments such as 'I love you and nothing can ever change that.'

Spend time together and have fun

Doing something fun and creative together, such as crafts, baking or walking, gives you a space where there's no pressure to talk but the opportunity is there if your child feels ready.

Ask open questions

Ask how their day has been or what they enjoy, so that they can express themselves and share as much as they want to.



How To Talk About Suicide With Youth

Talking about suicide can be very intimidating, or triggering, to children and adolescents. To learn more about suicide by age group, click the buttons for

Adults need to create a safe, nonjudgmental space that allows for complete honesty. The focus of the moment should be on listening, understanding and empathizing. Children and adolescents need to feel that adults can find them the help they need to manage intense feelings so that they do not have to keep feeling hopeless or withdrawn.

"If someone is thinking about suicide because of issues at home or a breakup, whatever the reason that they're having these thoughts to begin with, the conversation that you're having is not to try to solve the issue that got them here," Goldstein Grumet said.

While younger kids may need more general guidance on suicide prevention, older kids may need a more direct approach to understanding suicide. SocialWorkLicenseMap.com asked experts to share their strategies for approaching these conversations with youth at different age levels.

Conversation Recommendations for Elementary School Children (ages 5–10)

The goal of this age group is to understand the different emotions we experience and feel comfortable sharing them.

Help children identify their feelings. Children need to start to learn how to identify and express their emotions freely and build social and conflict resolution skills. Adults can step in to help them measure the weight of their feelings. For example, you could ask, "If you feel really mad, can you tell me about it? How mad? How does that feel in your body?" According to Goldstein Grumet, "Conversations like this are critical for them to have the foundation to do well later in life to navigate big feelings and recognize that they're not overwhelming to people around them."

Establish adults as a trusted place to turn. Remember that the idea of forever is less concrete for younger children. This age group may need a broader approach to discussing suicide prevention, Goldstein Grumet said. You can do this by using less direct language to help set up the foundation for understanding suicide. Ask questions such as, "Do you ever wish you could go to sleep and never wake up?" or "Would you ever do something to hurt your body?"

Gently address the broader concept. The goal of discussing suicide with children of this age group is not to be introspective and self-identify if they may be struggling. The focus should be more about looking out for others and being there for a friend.

Conversation Recommendations for Middle School Adolescents (ages 10–13)

The goal of this age group is to focus on understanding when to seek help.

Distinguish between a good and bad secret. Due to their maturity level, it can be difficult to tease out what information is worth keeping. For example, if a friend confides that they are thinking of suicide, middle school-aged kids tend to have a sense of fearfulness that they are betraying that friend by telling someone this secret. They may have difficulty distinguishing what is a secret worth keeping.

Underscore that telling somebody can protect their friends. Something that could get their suicidal friend significantly hurt should not be kept secret from adults. Kids can be supportive by saying, "I'm going to get you help because I love you and I care about you." Alternatively, they do not have to disclose to that friend that they intend to tell an adult. Making the safest choice is imperative.

Validate difficult but good choices. It is important to tell children in this age group that what they did was right. You can tell them: "I'm so proud of you. That must have been really hard, but you did the right thing." Death is far harder to get over than a friend being upset with a child for a day, a month or a year. They can repair their friendship if that friend is still alive.

Conversation Recommendations for High School Teens (ages 14–18)

The goal of this age group is to help them utilize their support systems when they're feeling bad.

Be more open and direct. High schoolers are likely to have already been exposed to the ideas of mental health and suicide, whether from their peers, school or the media. You can ask them questions like, "Have you had thoughts of suicide?" or "Are things so bad right now you wish you were dead?"

Don't cast judgment. It's hard to pinpoint a singular cause of suicidal thoughts; it is often multidimensional and includes underlying factors. Relationship breaks, moves or transfers to a new school can be risk factors, but it's not an adult's place to cast that kind of judgment on a young person who doesn't have the same life experiences as adults. It's about validating their experiences and feelings with an empathetic outlook.

Empathize. Understand that you're unable to fix that breakup or solve the fight with the friend, but you can listen closely and empathize with them. Say things like: "That sounds like it was really hard for you. That sounds like something that you really haven't experienced before, and it's giving you overwhelming feelings."

SUICIDE-PROOF YOUR HOME

THE FACTS

Almost **2,000 youths** aged 0-19 die by suicide every year.

Suicide is the **third leading cause of death** for 0-19 year-olds.

As many as **1 in 5 children and youth** at risk for suicide say there is a gun in their home.

A study of gun-owning parents who reported that their children had never handled their firearms at home, found that **22% of the children**, questioned separately, said that they had.

Studies of firearm suicide among youth have found that at least **82% used a gun belonging to a family member**.



LETHAL MEANS RESTRICTION

Most efforts to prevent suicide focus on why people take their lives; however, it is increasingly clear that "how" a person attempts—what type of **lethal means** they use—plays a key role in whether they live or die.

Approximately **85%** of firearm suicide attempts result in death, compared to **69%** for suffocation, **31%** for jumping, **2%** for overdoses and **1%** for cutting.

Keeping a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide nearly **five times**.

Guns are the **most commonly used** method in suicide deaths.

WHAT IS SUICIDE-PROOF YOUR HOME?

The **Suicide-Proof Your Home** Campaign educates parents about the importance of restricting access to lethal means, such as firearms and prescription medications, in reducing the risk of youth suicide.

The Campaign provides parents with practical steps they can take to **'suicide-proof'** their homes, such as disposing of or locking up firearms and medications.

To learn how to Suicide-Proof Your Home please visit: www.suicideproof.org or email suicideproof@cpyv.org.



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