

Youth Mental Health: Five Tips to Support Young Minds

Mental health plays an important role in the overall wellbeing of youth. Child behaviors and emotions can change frequently and rapidly, making it difficult for parents and teachers to detect mental, behavioral or emotional concerns right away. Studies find an estimated 70-80% of children with mental health disorders go without care.

How can you nurture the mental health of your child?

Consider the following strategies to support your child's mental wellbeing:

1. **Be intentional and attuned.** Beyond just paying attention to verbal and nonverbal cues, actively engage in open communication with your child. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions. Additionally, educate yourself about typical developmental stages and common mental health concerns in youth, so you can better identify when your child might need support.
2. **Foster closeness.** Building a strong emotional bond with your child involves not only empathy but also active listening and validation of their experiences. Spend quality time together engaging in activities they enjoy and show genuine interest in their hobbies and concerns. By demonstrating unconditional love and acceptance, you're fostering an environment where they feel valued and understood.
3. **Encourage connections.** In addition to nurturing relationships within the family, encourage your child to form connections with peers and mentors. Support their participation in extracurricular activities or community events where they can develop social skills and a sense

of belonging. Positive social interactions provide a buffer against stress and can enhance resilience in the face of challenges.

4. **Model good behavior.** As a parent or caregiver, your actions speak louder than words. Model healthy coping mechanisms for managing stress and emotions, such as practicing mindfulness, seeking support from loved ones, and engaging in hobbies or relaxation techniques. By demonstrating how to navigate difficult situations effectively, you're equipping your child with valuable tools for their own emotional wellbeing.
5. **Make healthy choices.** Emphasize the importance of self-care and overall wellness by prioritizing healthy habits as a family. Maintain a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limit sugary or processed foods. Encourage regular physical activity and outdoor play, as exercise is linked to improved mood and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Establish consistent bedtime routines to ensure adequate sleep, as insufficient rest can exacerbate mental health concerns.

Youth mental health concerns are real, common and treatable. By implementing these strategies, you're not only fostering a supportive environment for your child's mental health but also empowering them with the skills and resources needed to navigate life's challenges effectively.

While some problems are short-lived and don't need treatment, others are ongoing and may be very serious. If you are concerned about changes in behavior or other symptoms, consult your child's doctor. Remember, seeking professional help when needed is a sign of strength, and early intervention can make a significant difference in managing mental health concerns.

Visit MagellanHealthcare.com/about/bh-resources for more mental health information and resources.

Source

- [CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH – 2022 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report – NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)