

EVERY CONVERSATION MATTERS

Talking to your teen about mental health



One of the best things you can do for your child's mental well-being is to talk about mental health early and often. The more normal we make conversations about mental health and substance use, the easier these conversations will get. Here are some tips to help you get started.

1 Extend the invite

- 1 Acknowledge the changes you see in your teen and encourage them to talk to you. You can say something like, "Are you okay? There seems to be something bothering you. I'm here if you want to talk."

2 Choose a good setting

- 2 Determine a place or setting that works best. Sometimes it's easier to have difficult conversations while doing another activity like driving in the car or going for a walk. These settings also help set a time limit, creating an easy end to tough conversations.

3 Be genuine

- 3 Let them see the real you and let them know that you're willing to talk no matter how difficult it may be. Start the conversation by saying, "This is hard for me to talk about, so I understand if it's difficult for you too."

4 Don't use slang

- 4 Use language you're comfortable using. Using slang terms you don't normally use to connect with your teen is not an effective strategy.

5 Allow for quiet moments

- 5 Embrace moments of silence during conversations. This gives your teen a chance to formulate their thoughts and open up about how they're feeling.

6 Don't minimize emotions

- 6 Recognize and validate your teen's feelings. Acknowledge your teen by saying, "I can see how that can make you upset and that's ok to feel that way. I'm here to listen."