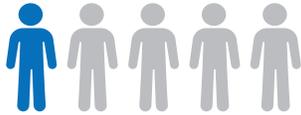




Mental Health in Children, Teens, and Adolescents

How Parents Can Help



Did you know that one in five children has a diagnosable mental health condition? Yet, less than a quarter of youth who need mental health care receive it. Don't let your child be one of them. Just as parents play a vital role in their children's physical health, they should prioritize their mental health, too.



17 percent of high school students considered suicide in the past year.



Suicide is the second-leading cause of death in youth ages 10 to 24.



23 percent of children in Virginia have a diagnosable mental health condition.



The suicide rate has increased 56 percent in youth ages 10 to 24 over the past decade.

Grow Resiliency

Be proactive in nurturing your child's mental health by creating structure and routine so they have a sense of control and consistency. Here are five tips:

1. Create healthy habits.

Make sure your child gets well-balanced meals, lots of water, exercise, and plenty of sleep. Coping with stress is easier if you're not hungry and tired.

2. Listen.

Spend quality time with your children, making face-to-face conversation a priority. Point out their strengths and abilities, and the importance of making appropriate choices and treating others with kindness and respect. Be a good listener to validate their feelings. Be honest and open if you have concerns.

3. Be media savvy.

Understand social media and establish boundaries for its use. Use parental control features on media devices to restrict access to inappropriate content. Also, limit screen time for yourself and your children so you'll have more time for personal interaction.

4. Model ways to deal with stress.

Encourage open and honest discussion about stress, both yours and theirs. Show your child how to handle stressful situations to convey, "We will get through this, and be okay." Model problem-solving and time management techniques in your daily life, and help children apply them to their own situations. Show them ways to reduce stress, such as exercise, helping others, and spending time outdoors.

5. Reach out.

Teach your children that if they ever feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or confused by a situation or something they see on TV or online, they should reach out to an adult they trust. Model that behavior yourself by asking for help when you, or your children, need it.



Be Aware of Symptoms

Life happens. It's natural to react to stressful situations with fear and anxiety. But, when does your child's response to stress need closer attention? If your child's anxiety and behavior are regularly having a negative impact at school, home, and in social circles, it's time to reach out.

Here are some red flags:

- Are they sleeping excessively, or experiencing insomnia?
- Have they experienced a dramatic weight loss?
- Do they express feelings of hopelessness or loss of self-esteem?
- Is their behavior disruptive on a regular basis?
- Are their grades dropping?
- Have they lost interest in attending class?
- Have they dropped out of their usual activities?
- Have they isolated themselves from friends and family?
- Are they showing a personality shift, excessive anger, paranoia, or secrecy?
- Is your child no longer willing to talk with you about what's going on?
- Do you suspect drug or alcohol abuse?
- Are you worried they could harm themselves or others?

What to do if your child is in a mental health crisis:

If your child is in danger of hurting themselves or others, and you are not sure what to do, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department immediately.

Another option is to call the 24-hour crisis line of the Community Services Board in your area:

- **Chesapeake:** (757) 548-7000
- **Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck:** (800) 542-2673
- **Norfolk:** (757) 664-7690
- **Portsmouth:** (757) 393-8990
- **Suffolk, Franklin, Southampton County, Isle of Wight County:** (757) 925-2484
- **Virginia Beach:** (757) 385-0888
- **Hampton and Newport News:** (757) 788-0011
- **Eastern Shore, Accomack County, Northampton County:** (757) 442-7707 or (800) 764-4460
- **James City and County, York County, Poquoson, Williamsburg:** (757) 378-5555



Ask for Help

First, schedule a visit with your child's pediatrician or primary care provider. This should be someone both you and your child have a relationship with and trust.

Pediatricians can refer children to CHKD for further mental health assessment and outpatient therapy.

Parents can also seek mental health services with a community mental health provider by contacting their insurance company for a list of providers in their network.

For more information about mental health services at CHKD, call 757-668-HOPE (4673) or visit [CHKD.org/MentalHealth](https://www.chkdc.org/MentalHealth).

