

TALKING TIPS

Finding Our Path Together

It is **normal** to feel a little nervous or uncomfortable about having a conversation with your teen about their mental health.



Some ideas to consider when talking to your teen...

- If your teen expresses a concern about their mental health, a common response is to want to "fix the problem." Know that your teen may or may not want you to "do" something in response to their concerns. However, you should **ALWAYS** contact your health provider or emergency/crisis services if you have serious concerns about your teen's mental health or physical safety.
- If you are unsure if your teen wants you to do something specific, **ask them!** They may already have some ideas about what they need. Alternatively, your teen may not be sure what they want or need, and that is ok too.
- **Listen to all your teen has to say before responding.** Ask questions, but first give them the opportunity to fully share their experiences and concerns without interruption.
- Try to **stay calm and focused**, even if what some of your teen is telling you is difficult for you to hear.
- After your teen is finished talking, **summarize what you heard them say in your own words and ask for feedback** to be sure you understood their concerns correctly. "I hear you saying that you've been feeling sad and lonely for about a month now, and you're not too sure what is causing it. Did I understand that right?"
- **Make decisions on "next steps" together** with your teen's input. Ask them what they want/need/are hoping for (e.g., professional counseling, support at school, etc.). Working together with your teen and provider on a plan will be more successful than making a plan on your own.
- If your teen hasn't said anything to you but you suspect they might be struggling with a mental health problem, it may be a good idea to "check-in" with them. Try to do this in a non-threatening way that communicates to your teen **that you care about their feelings and truly want to hear about their experiences.** You can normalize your teen's feelings by saying something like: "Things have been really stressful these past few months. How have you been feeling?"
- If unsure what to do next, you can **reach out to your teen's healthcare provider** to see what they recommend **or even consider talking to their school social worker** or an administrator to see about available resources.
- You can help normalize talking about mental health issues by **sharing your own struggles and strategies** that have helped you to cope and manage difficult feelings.



The Path 2 Purpose (P2P) study is a free, voluntary program focusing on the research of two different depression prevention programs for teens 13 - 19 who want to improve their mood and learn coping skills to manage difficult situations.



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