

Tips to Support your Teen's Emotional Well-Being

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Supporting your teen's emotional well-being is just as important as getting a regular checkup for their health. Remember, the more often you talk to your teen, even brief chats, makes it easier to have a conversation when things might not be going well. If you see your teen looking upset, sad, or worried, think about how you might be able to check in with them to see how they are doing. What would checking in look like for you? When during the day might you be able to have a talk that is private and not rushed? How might you open the conversation?

Build a strong relationship with your teen

Problems at school can impact your teen's desire to go to school, or to stay in school for the full day.

Consider how you can use everyday activities as a time to talk (preparing a meal, doing chores, walking to the school bus in the morning, or while driving). These brief, positive moments to connect help your teen know that you care and can make it more likely that they will talk to you if a problem or challenge occurs at school.

Notice your teen's attitude about school

Does your teen not want to go on certain days of the week? Do they bring up an aspect of school often and in a negative way? For example, do they talk about how they don't like a certain subject? Does your teen tend to always say "I don't feel well" on certain days of the week? All of these patterns could be indicators of something going on at school that is worth exploring through a conversation. It is important that our teens do not avoid the things they do not like, but learn skills and thought patterns that can make them feel better about engaging in new and/or challenging things.

Communicate to build your teen's resilience

Parents and caregivers can respond to their teen with these responses that support the development of a strong sense of self, healthy relationships with adults and peers, and resilience in the face of difficulty. Developing these skills can help your teen to cope with difficult situations. The relational practices for ordinary conversations are:

- **Playfulness**

Being playful with your teen involves finding light moments, showing deep interest in your teen's interests and concerns, and expressing joy in being together and sharing life. Playfulness communicates "We'll get through this together."

- **Acceptance**

Acceptance creates experiences of safety and discovery of inner thoughts and feelings of the teen. Acceptance often comes before curiosity and problem solving.

- **Curiosity**

Curiosity involves parents trying to deeply understand their teen rather than making assumptions or responding in anger. It involves asking questions that do not have a yes/no or right answer. Make an effort to understand before responding or disciplining.

- **Empathy**

Empathy involves compassion for your teen, recognizing that their experience can be difficult or overwhelming. As parents, we can empathize even if we think discipline is needed.