

Messages for
PARENTS | COACHES

**Our mental health is
as important as our
physical health**

It's Worth Talking About



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Make mental health as much a priority as physical health.

- ♥ Encourage healthy sleep, nutrition, and exercise habits.
- ♥ Encourage unscheduled time for kids to decide for themselves what they want to do either with your family, their peers or alone.
- ♥ Know the signs of mental health concerns – some of these include: persistent sadness, agitation or irritability; withdrawal from family and friends; loss of interest in things they used to love; changes in eating, sleeping or physical hygiene – and treat concerns the same way you would a physical health concern (ie. refer to a doctor or counsellor).
- ♥ Talk openly about mental health. Start the conversation by simply asking, “are you ok?” and really listening to the answer.
- ♥ Be open to exploring individuals who the youth can talk to about their concerns.

Tips for talking to youth about mental health:

- ♥ Talk openly and directly about mental health – it’s ok to talk openly and honestly.
- ♥ Listen without judgement and with an open mind.
- ♥ Communicate acceptance of their feelings – feelings are never wrong.
- ♥ Do not dismiss a young person’s stress – avoid language like, “when you’re older, you’ll realize...” and remember that what may seem like a short-term issue to an adult is often magnified in the limited life experience of a youth and truly is a crisis for them.
- ♥ Let them know that you care and want to help them in any way you can.
- ♥ Ask about suicide directly if you are concerned about it and take any mention of suicide seriously. If worried, consult a doctor, call a helpline, or if a life is in immediate danger call 911 or go to the closest emergency department.

The earlier a mental illness is treated, the better the chances for recovery – it’s worth talking about.

