

# How to Support Children's Mental Wellbeing

Supporting young people as they learn and grow can be complicated in the best of times. Add troubling global events and any personal struggles to the mix, and keeping the young people in your life healthy and happy can seem overwhelming.

Sadly, though, this isn't an issue that can't wait. With anxiety, depression, and suicide on the rise among youth, they need your support and care now.

The good news? You can make a difference. Sometimes children and teens just need a safe space to express their emotions or a reminder that someone cares.

Try these tips from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to keep your family and loved ones connected, supported, and feeling safe.

Up to 75% of mental health challenges emerge during adolescence.\*

One in five teens has had a serious mental health disorder at some point in their life.\*

## Check in.

Whether you're having a conversation at dinner or just a quick chat on the way to school, ask about how they're feeling and, in turn, share your feelings in an age-appropriate way. Asking questions and discussing emotions without dismissing them as silly or wrong lets the young person in your life know that you take their experiences seriously.

## Use your support team.

Sometimes a child who seems happy and relaxed at home acts differently in other situations or settings. Reach out to teachers, coaches, and other important adults in their life to ask how your kid seems to be doing. Make sure to go beyond grades or abilities and really ask how they are socially and emotionally. You may not realize it, but you have a team on your side, ready to help. All you have to do is ask.

## Talk about the big stuff.

Your children may have questions about world events, like mass violence and climate change, or about matters closer to home, like a divorce or a death in the family. Because these topics can be upsetting, young people might think they're off-limits or taboo.

That can lead to misunderstandings and bottled up emotions—neither of which are healthy. Initiate age-appropriate conversations about the big stuff, asking what they know already and what they might like to know. It's okay—and can even be helpful—to let them know that you also feel worried or have questions of your own. Remind them that you will always do everything you can to keep them safe. Your reassurance can help them feel calmer.

## Model healthy habits.

A lot of people are feeling stressed and anxious right now. It's important to remember that the young people in your life learn how to react in difficult situations by watching you. By finding healthy ways to cope with stress and express your emotions, you're modeling productive behaviors and setting an example that can serve them throughout their lives. Of course, treating yourself right is important for your own well-being, but it also teaches the next generation healthy habits.

*Find more tips and activities to keep your family and loved ones connected, supported, and feeling safe at [girlscouts.org/mentalwellness](https://girlscouts.org/mentalwellness).*

## Mental Health First Aid and Girl Scouts of the USA

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing and Girl Scouts of the USA are proud to work together to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings to Girl Scout staff and volunteers who work directly with young people.

This training gives adults the skills necessary to identify, understand, and respond to children and adolescents (ages 6–18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use challenge, and to help them connect to appropriate care.

*Check out the [Mental Health First Aid](#) blog to learn more. To help the young people in your life as a Youth Mental Health First Aider, visit [MHFA.org](https://MHFA.org).*

*For more detailed information on Girl Scouts & Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings, visit our [Girl Scouts Mental Wellness](#) page, or inquire with your local Girl Scout council.*

*\*Source: Mental Health First Aid USA. (2020). *teen Mental Health First Aid USA: A manual for young people in 10th–12th grade helping their friends*. Washington, DC: National Council for Mental Wellbeing.*