

# 06 HOW TO ENGAGE WITH PARENTS?

Although young people would like to, they often don't tell their parents that they are struggling because they are worried that:

- Their parents/carers won't be able to help;
- They may react badly;
- They don't want to add to their parents' problems or concerns;
- It may create stress or anxiety for their parents/carers.

It is therefore important that we support parents to feel comfortable and confident in how to listen to their children and respond in a useful way. We also want to equip parents with ideas on what supports good mental health and what help is available and how to access it when needed.

Here's how you could help us to engage with parents/carers:

- Signpost parents to the 'Just Talk' parents 'top tips' leaflet. You can find the leaflet online [www.justtalkherts.org/media/documents/toptipsforparents.pdf](http://www.justtalkherts.org/media/documents/toptipsforparents.pdf) or you can order printed copies of the leaflet by emailing: [PublicHealth@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:PublicHealth@hertfordshire.gov.uk)
- Arrange a parent workshop using the Just Talk presentation and any other resources that you think may be useful to them;
- Encourage parents to do the free mental health e-learning offered by MindEd [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
- Encourage parents to read the My Teen Brain resources in order to gain a better understanding of the changes to the brain that occur during teenage years that can influence the behaviour and experiences of young people: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/myteenbrain](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/myteenbrain)
- Make parents aware of the information available to them on [www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/parents-and-carers](http://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/parents-and-carers) which contains details of mental health support for children, and mental health training for parents. The Hertfordshire Parenting Directory is also useful, containing details of (all-age) parenting programmes and courses available across Hertfordshire: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/parentingsupport](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/parentingsupport)
- For parents looking after a child with mental illness, there is a useful guide to parenting and mental health on Mind's website: [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/parenting-with-a-mental-health-problem/#.XH\\_eeI27KIU](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/parenting-with-a-mental-health-problem/#.XH_eeI27KIU)
- Anyone can develop a mental illness. Make parents aware of support available to them should they find themselves struggling with their own mental health. We all have to look after our own mental health and will be better placed to support the mental health of others when we do. Mental health support for adults is available from [talkwellbeing.co.uk](http://talkwellbeing.co.uk) or Search 'the Wellbeing Team Hertfordshire'.
- You can also encourage your school or community group to share these details with parents.



## HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES

Boys most commonly use physical activity and sports, and technology and video games as a coping strategy. Girls most commonly use music or chatting to friends. There are lots of things that can help boost a young person's wellbeing as well as potentially help them to cope when things go wrong.

**Connect:** Spend time with family and friends. Enjoy doing things together and talking to each other.

**Be Active:** It keeps you physically healthy, and makes you feel good.

**Keep Learning:** Try something new. Try a new hobby, or learn about something just because it interests you.

**Take Notice:** Take a break to see how you feel. Relax and look around you or listen to music, take a few deep breaths.

**Give:** Do something for a friend or relation/adult. As well as making them feel good, it can make you feel good too!

## DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT OR CARER

In a recent Hertfordshire survey, we discovered that if teenage boys were worried about their mental health, almost half of them would seek support from their parent before anyone else.

However, often boys do worry about talking to their parents because they don't want to burden them or are worried they won't understand.

It can help your son know that you are available to them if you tell them that if they ever want to talk about anything, you are there.

You could also broaden your knowledge of mental health by completing the free MindEd e-learning: [www.minded.org.uk/families](http://www.minded.org.uk/families)



JUST TALK

WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH, JUST AS WE ALL HAVE PHYSICAL HEALTH.

[www.justtalkherts.org](http://www.justtalkherts.org)

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



The Hertfordshire campaign, 'Just Talk' has been developed with young people, and aims to make it easier for all of us to talk about our mental health, and seek help when it's needed. At the moment **70% of Herts boys and 72% of Herts girls think it's ok to talk about their mental health.**

## IF YOUR CHILD WANTS TO TALK

**Listen** – it's important to listen carefully and give your child your full attention. If you are in the middle of doing something else and can't give them your full attention then arrange a time to sit down together later.

We all get frustrated at times. Try not to express frustration or impatience, or rush in with solutions or judgments as this may prevent your child from opening up.

Remember that the teenage brain is still developing and works slightly differently to the adult brain – therefore what may seem like an over-reaction to an adult is a REAL challenge for the young person.

## IF YOUR CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO TALK

We can't force someone to talk, but phrases like *"I'm ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk"* and *"Let me know if/when you would like to talk"* can be helpful.

Use ordinary situations at home as opportunities to have a non-direct conversation to start with e.g. walking the dog together, doing the washing up, cooking dinner, etc.

Ask open questions such as *"How are things going?"* or *"What was your day like?"*

Make your child aware of local information sites that are available to them:

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/myteenbrain](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/myteenbrain)  
(for parents)

[www.healthforkids.co.uk](http://www.healthforkids.co.uk)  
(for primary school aged children)

[www.healthforteens.co.uk](http://www.healthforteens.co.uk)  
(for secondary school aged children)

[www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk](http://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk)  
(for all ages and parents)

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## SUPPORTING BOYS

Think about what language you use – phrases like **'Man up'** and **'Toughen up'** can really make it difficult for someone to talk about how they're feeling for fear of appearing weak. Mental health problems are not a weakness, and talking about them should be encouraged as a sign of strength.

Role model that it's OK to talk – By admitting ourselves that sometimes we struggle and need a little help from others, this shows our child that it's OK to reach out.

Signs that a boy is struggling can sometimes be exhibited differently to girls. **Warning signs for boys may include the following:**

*Irritability, anger, and sensitivity to criticism*

*Reckless or risk taking behaviour – e.g. drinking alcohol or dangerous sports*

*Physical pain – if someone is complaining of headaches or backaches with no obvious cause or sign of recovery, it could be a symptom of mental ill health*

