



SO, YOU'VE ASKED YOUR CHILD HOW THEY ARE, AND THEY TELL YOU THEY'RE NOT OK – WHAT NOW?

We know from our annual Hertfordshire Young People Health and Wellbeing Survey, that 3 in 5 young people would want to take to a parent or carer if they were struggling with their mental health.

Talking about how we are feeling is important, but sometimes we can be nervous of asking questions because we are worried that we could say the wrong thing or make things worse. This is a step-by-step guide to give you the confidence to know how to respond if your child tells you they're struggling.

1. ASK OPEN QUESTIONS LIKE:

“ What’s been going on lately? ”

“ You don’t seem your usual self, how are you doing/feeling? ”



2. LISTEN

We underestimate the power of simply listening to someone else when they're going through a rough time. You don't need to be an expert in mental health to be a good listener. Here are some tips:

- If you don't have time to talk at that moment, arrange a time when you do. It's better to do this than to leave your child feeling rushed.
- Listen actively. Pay attention, be present and allow your child time to speak.
- Be curious and ask questions. This can really help you to try to understand things from their perspective.

3. DON'T TRY TO FIX THE PROBLEM

Often our first instinct is to want to fix a person's problems. It hurts to see someone we love in pain, and we can feel awkward or helpless not knowing how to help. But you don't have to have all (or any) of the answers.

Instead of jumping into “fix it” mode right away, accept the conversation may be uncomfortable and allow them to speak about their difficulties and experiences.

4. ASK THEM WHAT THEY THINK MIGHT HELP THEM

They may not be able to think of anything, and that's ok. Some problems or feelings are very difficult.

5. LET THEM KNOW ABOUT SELF-HELP TOOLS AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

There are lots of things that research has shown can help to boost our wellbeing and/or cope with challenging times.

The Just Talk Herts website (justtalkherts.org) has a host of mental health and wellbeing resources, including:

- [Five Ways to Wellbeing E-learning](#), to learn about self-help techniques to boost wellbeing
- Sleep tips and tricks
- Just Talk journal
- You can also follow Just Talk on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at @JustTalkHerts – we share advice on how to look after your mental health and signpost onto further resources which can help.

Other useful sites:

- Anna Freud Centre - [Self Care, Anxiety, Depression, Coping Strategies | On My Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)
- www.healthforkids.co.uk and www.healthforteens.co.uk

There is also lots of support available, either through your child's school or through other agencies across Hertfordshire. A few are listed here, but you can find details of more on www.justtalkherts.org:

- [Services for Young People](#) offer a range of emotional wellbeing support as well as programmes and activities over the summer.
- Herts Mind Network offer messaging and telephone support- <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/services-for-young-people/>
- Chat Health text messaging support for secondary school aged young people 07480 635 050
- Kooth online support for 10-25 year olds: <https://www.kooth.com/>

6. IF YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CHILD,

you can talk to someone about your concerns – your GP, your child's school/ the school nursing service, or for more specialist support and mental health services, there is the SPA (single point of access): HPFT's freephone 24/7 helpline: 0800 6444 101

7. CHECK IN AGAIN.

Once your conversation has ended, follow up at a later point to see how they're doing.

8. REMEMBER TO LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING.

It is never possible to support someone else if our own wellbeing is suffering. If you need some support or want to access a range of free e-learning courses, you could try the new online platform [Togetherall](#). This is free to access and suitable for anyone aged 16+.

