

Meeting Kids Where They Are: Navigating Mental Health Conversations

Kids today talk more openly about mental health than in the past. Many feel safer sharing their feelings and asking for help. As the stigma around mental health fades, young people are becoming more honest about their struggles.

Parents play a key role in supporting this change. By staying aware of what their child is feeling, parents can create space for open and safe conversations about mental health.

Recognizing the signs

Kids go through many emotional ups and downs. Still, parents should watch for warning signs. Ongoing changes in behavior, sleep or schoolwork may signal a deeper issue. If a child withdraws, seems sad for a long time or acts unlike themselves, it is important to pay attention.

Combating misconceptions

Misunderstanding mental health can make it harder for kids to get help. Parents should learn the facts so they do not repeat harmful myths. When parents show acceptance, children feel more comfortable speaking openly about their feelings.

Starting the conversation

Talking about mental health may feel difficult, but it is important. Simple, everyday conversations about feelings can build trust. When kids know it is safe to share, they are more likely to ask for help when they need it.

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Use 'I' instead of
'you' statements
to help kids about
mental health

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Techniques for positive conversations

Parents can support healthy discussions by:

- Listening without interrupting
- Showing empathy
- Validating their child's feelings
- Using "I" statements to avoid blame

A calm, judgment-free space helps kids open up.

Navigating the online world

Much of a child's life happens online. Parents should be aware of the digital spaces their child uses. Talking about how online comments, posts or messages can affect mental health helps kids make safer choices. Open conversations also help kids know when to seek support.

Connecting with the right therapist

If a child shows signs of mental health struggles, it may be time to find a professional. Involving the child in choosing a therapist can help them feel more comfortable. A good match helps build trust and encourages progress.

Encouraging peer support

Friends can be an important source of support. Parents can help by encouraging healthy friendships. Teaching kids how to notice when a friend is struggling can also build a caring and supportive community.

#MentalHealthMatters

If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health issue, help is out there. Contact the Mental Health America 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741-741).

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