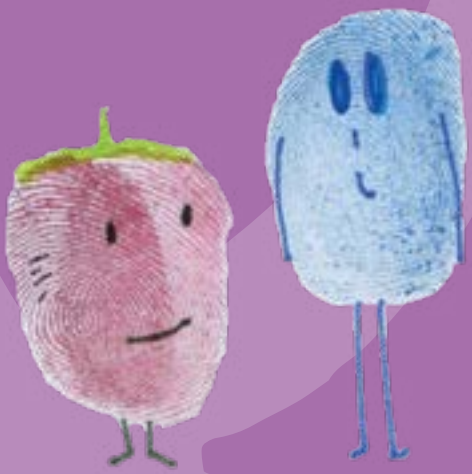
Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families



You're never too young to talk mental health



Tips for talking for parents and carers

An introduction from our Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cambridge



"As parents, we all want our children to have the best possible start in life. Encouraging children to understand and be open about their feelings can give them the skills to cope with the ups and downs that life will throw at them as they grow up.

It's important that our children understand that emotions are normal, and that they have the confidence to ask for help if they are struggling.

This is why I am proud to support the *You're never too young to talk mental health* campaign by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, which is being rolled out across primary schools this autumn.

The campaign's resources are excellent tools to support parents. They demonstrate how we can help children express their feelings, respond appropriately, and prevent small problems from snowballing into bigger ones."

What is mental health?

- **We all have mental health.** Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- **We all have small feelings every day:** These sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.
- **Sometimes we experience big feelings:** These feel strong and overwhelming for a long time. They stop us doing what we want to in our lives.



1. **Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life:** Anywhere is a good place to talk; in the car, walking the dog or cooking together. Model everyday talk about feelings such as by talking about a TV character's feelings.





2. **Give your full attention:** We all know it's horrible to be half listened to. Keep eye contact, focus on the child and ignore distractions.
3. **Check your body language:** Try to keep it open and relaxed and make sure you come down to the child's level.
4. **Take it seriously:** Don't downplay what the child is saying or tell them they're "just being silly". Resist the urge to reassure them that everything is fine.
5. **Ask open questions:** Such as "How did your day go today?" This will help to extend the conversation.



6. **Calmly stay with the feelings that arise:** It can be our automatic reaction to steer away from difficult emotions.
7. **Offer empathy rather than solutions:** Show that you accept what they are telling you but don't try to solve the problem.
8. **Remember we are all different:** Respect and value the child's feelings, even though they may be different to yours.
9. **Look for clues about feelings:** Listen to the child's words, tone of voice and body language.
10. **Some ways to start a conversation about feelings might be:**
"How are you feeling at the moment?"
"You don't seem your usual self. Do you want to talk about it?"
"Do you fancy a chat?"
"I'm happy to listen if you need a chat."



Talking Mental Health Animation



Talking Mental Health is an animation designed to help begin conversations about mental health in the classroom and beyond.

The animation and accompanying resources have been created by a team of animators, children, teachers and clinicians, and is being taught to year 5 and 6 children around the UK.

The animation and resources are freely downloadable from www.annafreud.org



Finding support

ChildLine: For 18s and under
0800 1111

NSPCC:
0808 800 5000

YoungMinds Parent Helpline:
0808 802 5544

Youth Wellbeing Directory:
youthwellbeing.org

About the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families has developed and delivered pioneering mental health care for over 60 years.

Our aim is to transform current mental health provision in the UK by improving the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of treatment.

We believe that every child and their family should be at the heart of the care they receive, working in partnership with professionals.



Our Patron: Her Royal Highness
The Duchess of Cambridge
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Anna Freud Centre
Kantor Centre of Excellence
4-8 Rodney Street
London
N1 9JH

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