

Child Mental Health Awareness

Factsheet



Mind's Report – Not making the grade

- 96% of young people said their mental health had affected their school work at some point
- 59% of school staff were aware of young people experiencing racism at school
- 48% of young people said they'd been disciplined at school for behaviour that was due to their mental health
- 78% of young people said that school had made their mental health worse

Spotting signs

Recognising the signs that a child may be struggling with their mental health can be difficult. Do not judge the person for their feelings, the most important thing you can do is to reassure them about how they are feeling.

Signs of depression

- Persistent low-mood or lack of motivation
- Not enjoying things they used to like doing
- Becoming withdrawn and spending less time with friends and family
- Experiencing low self-esteem or feeling like they are 'worthless'
- Feeling tearful or upset regularly
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits

Signs of anxiety

- Becoming socially withdrawn and avoiding spending times with friends or family
- Feeling nervous or 'on edge' a lot of the time
- Suffering panic attacks/ not wanting to go out
- Feeling tearful, upset or angry
- Trouble sleeping and changes in eating habits

Self harm

People who injure themselves have often suffered extremely traumatic or stressful life experiences and circumstances.

- Sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse
- Neglect and deprivation
- Loss through death or separation
- Parental illness or alcoholism
- Severe lack of communication particularly about feelings, problems and needs
- Chronic illness or disability

Factors – Child

Positive

- Secure attachment experience
- Good communication skills
- Having a belief in control
- A positive attitude
- Experienced of success and achievement
- Capacity to reflect

Negative

- Genetic influences
- Low IQ or learning disabilities
- Specific development delay
- Communication difficulties
- Difficult temperament
- Physical illness
- Academic failure
- Low self-esteem

Factors – Family

Positive

- Family harmony and stability
- Supporting parents
- Strong family values
- Affection
- Clear, consistent discipline
- Support for education

Negative

- Family disharmony or break up
- Inconsistent discipline style
- Parent's with mental illness or substance abuse
- Physical, sexual, neglect or emotional abuse
- Parental criminality
- Death and loss

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Causes

The link between any trauma and subsequent self-harm is close, especially if the person experiencing the traumatic event has felt unable to ask for or receive help.

Distressing situations create different kinds of feelings that are often very intense and confusing.

Childhood experiences linked to self harm

- Being subjected to very high expectations
- Bullying and rejection
- Racial harassment and oppression
- Fear and shame or oppression about sexuality

Helpful avoidance techniques

- Counting backwards can help bring the mind to attention
- Focusing on the immediate environment and thinking about something they can see, smell, hear, taste and touch
- Simple deep breathing techniques
- Keeping a mood journal, this can be used to track and praise and congratulate progress made over weeks or months

Practical avoidance techniques

- Pausing to think before taking action where possible
- Encourage at-risk people to write a list of the people who can help them and places they can turn to in times of need
- Get them to write down their emotions and feelings when they want to self-harm or even draw it in a picture

Helping a struggling child

- Let them know you're there for them and on their side
- Try talking to them over text or on the phone, if they don't feel able to talk in person
- Being patient and staying approachable and calm, even if their behaviour upsets you
- Recognising that their feelings are valid and letting them know it's okay for them to be honest about what it's like for them to feel this way
- Thinking of healthy ways to cope you could do together, like yoga, breathing exercises or mindfulness
- Encouraging them to talk to their GP, someone at their school or childline, especially if they're finding it hard to talk at home

Factors – School

Positive

- Positive school climate that enhances belonging and connectedness
- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying
- “Open Door” policy for children to raise problems
- A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health

Negative

- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships
- Deviant peer influences
- Peer pressure
- Poor pupil to teacher relationship

Factors – Community

Positive

- Wider support network
- Good housing
- High standard of living
- Opportunities for valued social roles
- Range of sport and leisure activities

Negative

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Mental health safety plans

- A mental health safety plan is a preventative tool designed to help support those who struggle with mental wellbeing.
- It may be difficult for someone to think clearly when they feel really low or overwhelmed. It may be difficult to ignore these feelings. Safety plans are best created when not in crisis.
- By having a safety plan, people can ensure there are strategies they can use to keep themselves safe.
- These can help them feel more in control when everything feels out of control. Think of the safety plan as their 'mental health first-aid kit'. It includes different things that will help them through a crisis.

Hopelink safety plan

- HOPELINK is PAPYRUS's digital platform that is helping callers of HOPELINEUK to revisit and update their suicide safety plans online.
- This unique two-way safety plan is simple to set up, secure and will help to save lives. It is also accessible to users 24/7, meaning that there will be support around the clock for anyone using the service.

Holding risk

Things are rarely resolved quickly and risk may need to be held over time.

- Do not do this alone
- Report and record
- Who holds the risk?
- How do we share this?

Self care

- Working with and supporting children and young people who struggle with their mental health can generate overwhelming emotions in us
- Make sure you know where you can get support
- Be kind to yourself and each other

Looking after yourself

- Working with a child or young person with mental health issues can be tough. It's important to make sure you look after your own mental wellbeing, as this will help you cope with difficulties.
- Try to recognise and acknowledge when you're feeling overwhelmed.
- Struggling with something or experiencing your own mental health issues does not make you a bad person or professional.
- It's understandable if we are worried or helpless during difficult times in our roles, feeling this way is nothing to be ashamed of it is quite natural.

General conversation starters

- If you could start today again, what would you do differently?
- Explain a bit about how you are feeling?
- What was the best and worst bit of your day?
- What would you like to talk about?

Serious conversation starters

- What was the biggest problem/ issue you had today?
- How can I support you through [issue]?
- Do you want to talk about what's going on?
- Is there anything that you need from me?
Space, time to talk, time to do something fun...

Fun conversation starters

- What's your favourite song at the moment? Would I like it?
- If your life was a movie which one would it be and why?
- If you were an animal which one would you be and why?
- What's your favourite thing right now and why?

Encouragers...

- You can talk to me, I'm here for you
- Even if I don't understand, know that I want to
- If you need to talk to someone else, that's okay too
- We are going to get through this together