

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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As October ushers in Mental Health Awareness Month, it's an ideal time to pause and reflect on the mental well-being of our children - and ourselves! With rising concerns around anxiety and stress among youth, understanding how to support them is crucial.

**Recognizing the Signs** Children may express their mental health struggles through changes in behavior, mood swings, withdrawal from activities, or difficulties in school. Being observant, approachable, and non-judgmental is key to early intervention.

**Open Communication** Encourage your child to talk about their feelings. Establishing a safe space where they can express themselves, without fear of judgment, helps build trust. Ask open-ended questions like:

“What made you smile today?”

“What made you feel happy or sad today?”

“What are you looking forward to tomorrow?” or “What could make tomorrow a better day?”

**Promoting Healthy Coping Strategies** Teach your child age-appropriate coping strategies, such as deep breathing, journaling, or engaging in creative activities/play. Physical activity, whether it's sports or going for a walk, can also be beneficial for mental health.

**Seeking Professional Help** If your child shows signs of ongoing distress, consider seeking the advice of a mental health professional. Schools, your local MFRC, or trusted persons within your support network can assist you in connecting with a counselor within your community.

**Join the Conversation** Our children build comfort with communicating and understanding their feelings by hearing us communicate and safely navigate our own feelings. The more we normalize the full human spectrum of emotions, including feelings that can be uncomfortable or difficult, the more we can break the stigma surrounding mental health.

By taking these steps, parents can play a vital role in nurturing their child's emotional health, helping them thrive in today's challenging environment.



## Taking Care of Your Feelings: A Fun Guide for Kids

### Hey Kids! It's Mental Health Awareness Month! Let's Talk About Feelings!

October is here, and that means it's Mental Health Awareness Month! This month, we're focusing on how to take care of our feelings and make sure we feel our best. Here are some fun ways to help you and your friends stay happy!

**What Are Feelings?** Feelings are like little signals from inside us. Sometimes we feel happy, excited, or silly! Other times, we might feel sad, angry, or scared. That's totally okay! What's important is that we learn how to deal with all our feelings.

**Talking It Out** If you're feeling a certain way, try talking about it! You can chat with a friend, a teacher, or your parents. Sharing how you feel can help you feel better and find solutions together.

### Fun Ways to Feel Good

- **Draw or Color:** Grab some crayons and create a picture that shows how you feel. It can be bright and happy or dark and moody—whatever you need!
- **Dance It Out:** Put on your favorite song and dance like nobody's watching. It's a great way to shake off bad feelings!
- **Nature Time:** Go outside, take a walk, or play in the park. Nature can help us feel calm and happy.

**Be a Friend** If you notice a friend isn't feeling their best, ask them if they want to talk or play. Sometimes just knowing someone cares can help!

**Remember!** Taking care of your feelings is super important, just like taking care of your body. This October, let's all be mindful of how we feel and support each other!