

The Good Mental Health Handbook

A guide for parents and carers



Being the parent/carer of a child who is struggling with their mental health can be utterly heart-breaking and extremely challenging. No one likes to see someone they love in so much pain.

The impact can be far reaching, effecting family dynamics, our ability to work, changing relationships with friends and impacting our own mental and physical wellbeing.

Our worlds can become very small as we focus our time and energy on helping our child, fighting for the right support, and trying to find any strategies or helpful advice we can.

Frustratingly, there is not one answer or solution. Our children and our families are all individual, needing individual approaches and intervention.

The Good Mental Health Handbook has been developed by Hampshire CAMHS and parents/carers. Within its pages it contains information, short videos, and workshops to support our children's mental health challenges.

YOU CAN ACCESS THE ENTIRE HANDBOOK ON OUR SCHOOL WEBSITE

The handbook also contains information on parental wellbeing. Remember the airplane analogy: *In an emergency, we are told to put our own mask on first, so that we are able to help others.*

It can feel like yet another 'thing' we must do and finding the time or energy to care for ourselves can feel impossible. However, even learning how to breathe in tricky moments helps to bring control. Managing our own emotional regulation not only helps us to cope but our children also begin to recognise how effective such strategies can be.

The guide gives instant access to information, short videos and workshops. Parents and Carers want strategies, ideas, suggestions, helpful hints, top tips, a guide or anything to try to help their child—a toolkit of information that they can look through when they have the time and energy.

The Good Mental Health Handbook is that toolkit.

<https://www.marchwood-jun.hants.sch.uk/page/?title=Support&pid=76>



MJS Supporting Families BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement and loss of a loved one (such as a family member, friend or pet) can be devastating. A child or young person may also feel a sense of loss when an important relationship ends (such as relationship break up or friendship break down).

Bereavement or loss, can be hard to understand, process and adjust to. The child or young person may experience many thoughts and feelings including, sadness, worry, anger or confusion. If the person they have lost has been unwell, they may experience other feelings such as relief.

Some children and young people may not experience any strong feelings at all. There is no right or wrong way to feel think or behave. Everyone processes grief differently. Some days they may feel more able to cope than other days.

What it might look like if a child or young person is struggling with bereavement or loss

- A range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Difficulties accepting the loss.
- A sense of guilt, regret or responsibility.
- Difficulties concentrating and poor motivation. You may notice or they may report it being harder to do school or home work.
- Preferring to be by themselves - not wanting to speak to or spend time with other people OR not wanting to be by themselves and wanting to be close to people they feel comfortable with.
- Having worries that bad things might happen to them or other people they love and care about.
- Having thoughts or urges about wanting to end their life to be with the loved one they have lost.
- Constant thoughts about what has happened to the loved one they have lost.
- Disinterest and loss of enjoyment in hobbies and interests.
- Difficulty sleeping (nightmares, difficulties getting to or staying asleep, early morning waking).
- For some children and young people they may wet the bed at night (this is often a sign of unhappiness and stress).
- Loss of appetite or comfort eating.

Things that might help someone struggling with bereavement or loss

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is usual to feel a range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all. Some people find anniversaries and certain days (such as birthdays) harder to deal with so thinking together about how to manage particularly tough days or dates can be helpful.
- Try to keep normal routines going as much as possible.
- Encourage your child to keep doing activities they enjoy and spend time with friends and family. Let them know that it is okay to feel happy, to laugh or to have fun. This does not mean that they don't care about the person they have lost.
- If they are finding it hard to talk about how they feel, they might find it easier to write down how they are feeling rather than talk.
- Create a memory box full of pictures and items which remind them of good times they had with the person they have lost.
- Grieving takes a lot of energy. Make sure they eat, drink and rest regularly. Physical activity and getting outside for fresh air daily can help.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**
- There is more information on the Hampshire CAMHS website: hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/young-people/bereavement-loss/
Short link: bit.ly/3MyYW2Z
- Simon Says Bereavement Support (Hampshire-based): simonsays.org.uk
- Winston's Wish Bereavement Support: winstonswish.org
- Hope Again Bereavement Support: hopeagain.org.uk
- Grief Encounter Bereavement Support: griefencounter.org.uk
(Helpline: **0808 802 011**, weekdays 9am-9pm)
- Survivors of Those Bereaved by Suicide: uksobs.org

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: bit.ly/3lBwUp7



A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: bit.ly/2H6uDU1



A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: bit.ly/3UxEbbJ



A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: bit.ly/3fcoINN



A short film on how to use de-escalation techniques for a young person in distress: bit.ly/47Y3Kcs



A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals: bit.ly/3DGOion



A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: bit.ly/3UyD3Vk



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: bit.ly/3xILd3D

