

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 FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Family Breakdown

Families come in all kinds of combinations but it can be a really upsetting, confusing and stressful time when relationships between family members break down. If there are disagreements or arguments, this can make home life really tough which can impact on how a child/young person feels, how they cope at school/college, and even whether they want to take part in activities or spend time with family and friends.

Lots of children and young people worry about their parents/carers and siblings during a separation, or when there are arguments. It can also be hard if parents separate and one of them meets a new partner. Some children and young people may have to move house or live with new people.

Some children and young people may worry about how often they might see their family, or worry about how the family might cope. It is not uncommon that they worry if their parents have enough money. It's not uncommon for them to worry about whether parents separating is their fault.

When families experience a separation or a big change, it can take a while for all family members to understand, process and adjust to these changes. There is no right or wrong way to feel, think or behave. Everyone processes change differently. Some days a child/young person may feel more able to cope than other days. It is important to be aware that some family members may struggle more than others with the changes.

What it might look like if a child or young person is struggling with family conflict or breakdown

- A range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Difficulties accepting the changes (if there has been a breakdown).
- A sense of guilt, regret or responsibility.
- Having low self-esteem and lacking in confidence. Feeling not good enough or not as good as anyone else.
- Having physical (body) feelings such as a racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy and faint or sweaty hands.
- Having lots of "what if" thoughts, such as, "what if something bad happens?" which can result in them feeling too overwhelmed to engage in activities such as going to school.
- Feeling angry towards other people (this might mean they behave in an angry way by being irritable, shouting or being physically aggressive).
- Difficulties concentrating and struggling with motivation. You may notice or they may report they're not doing as well in their work at school.
- They may not feel like hanging out with family, their friends or doing sociable things.
- They might not enjoy their hobbies and interests as much as they once did.
- Problems with sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep and nightmares).
- For some children/young people they may wet the bed at night (this is often a sign of unhappiness and stress).
- They may have thoughts about harming themselves or ending their life.

Things that might help a child or young person who is struggling with family conflict or breakdown

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is usual to feel a range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Your child may find certain days (such as birthdays and family orientated times/significant celebrations/festivals) 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.
- 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.
- Finding ways to manage anxiety and stress can be very helpful.
- 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**

Strategies and resources to try

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



Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: bit.ly/3Bzt1KD



A workshop on getting good sleep: bit.ly/45vAmc9



A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: bit.ly/3EiWc6v



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): bit.ly/2NyIRjG



Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video: bit.ly/3R2EdsB



Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: bit.ly/44wXoxU

