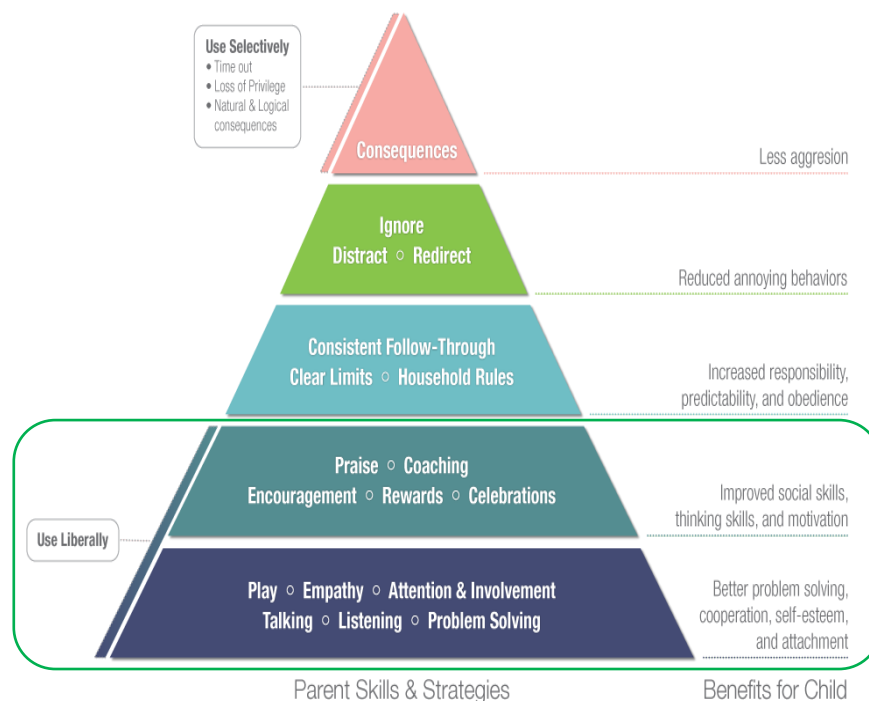




How to Talk
About
Mental Health
with Your Child

Why focus on communication?

The base of all family function is positive interactions! This might look like engaged playtime, teaching our children new skills, family celebrations, etc. The skills you have in making those positive movements happen, lay the foundations of the parent-child relationship and make all aspects of parenting, even discipline and consequences, easier and more effective. One way to visualise this is the 'parenting pyramid':



The green box highlights the bottom layers of the pyramid, which the workshop focused on. While the top layers of the pyramid focus on things like rules, consequences and selective ignoring, the bottom layers focus on ways in which communicate with our child to increase cooperation and positive connection.

Communicating is a skill that adults use all the time and that children have to learn. Often, when children do not know how to effectively communicate how they feel, they may become distressed or display challenging behaviour. This can be hard, as when children are upset it becomes even harder to communicate with them effectively!

Research has shown us that there are certain tips and tricks we can use to communicate more effectively with a child who is in a moment of high emotion. Below you will find step by step instructions on how to do this!

Before reading the guides, here are some key things to remember:

Being good enough- Parenting and looking after children is a lot of work. We are all human, and the goal should never be perfection. Instead of putting ourselves under pressure to get it right all the time, we can instead aim to be good enough. Being good enough is about being kind to ourselves both when we feel we're doing well, and the times where things are trickier.

Keep at it!- Part of being good enough is being persistent. We will all have days where we make mistakes, forget things or are stressed. Being kind to ourselves is important by itself, but it also makes it easier for us to have another go when things don't go how we wanted.

Reach out- There are a lot of amazing resources for parents and carers; you will find a list of websites and links at the end of this handouts under 'signposting and further support'. Reaching out can also look like speaking to a trusted friend or family member or getting in touch with your child's school or the local Mental Health Support Team to explore what support is on offer.

Tips for having a conversation about mental health:

Before you begin:

To have a helpful conversation, it's important to ask ourselves:

- Is this the right moment?
- Is this a suitable place?
- How am I feeling?



Helpful phrases:

Phrases such as the following, might provide a useful starting point if you are having conversation about someone else's MH.

Fundamentally, it is about giving that person time. They may simply not wish to engage with the subject straight away, or they might initially react in a negative or

dismissive way. Give them time and this may change, even if it's not right away. And take opportunities to talk when these present.

- How are you at the moment?
- Is everything ok?
- I've noticed you haven't seemed yourself lately...
- I've noticed that we haven't spoken for a while...

To remember:

Changes in people's behaviour, mood, or how they interact

Changes in their motivation levels, work output, and focus

Struggling to make decisions, get organised, and problem solve – and this signifies a **change**

Appearing tired, anxious, withdrawn, or losing interest in activities they **previously enjoyed**

During the conversation:

- ✓ **Actively listen**

Try to leave any questions or comments you may have until the person has finished so you don't interrupt them. Once a person knows they are being given the space and time to talk, they will. Body language is important for this!

- ✓ **Check your understanding**

You can do this by paraphrasing what the person has said back to them. You can also reflect back actual words they have used to them, as this can encourage them to open up more.

- ✓ **Acknowledge**
- ✓ **Ask what they need**

Take the pressure off yourself to have all the answers and empower them to find their own solutions with your support. ‘What helps you when you feel this way?’ ‘What support do you need from me?’ ‘How can I help?’

- ✓ Offer support rather than solutions



Helpful phrases:

“How long have you been feeling like this for?”

“You said... can you tell me more about that?”

“Thank you for sharing this with me”

“What helps you when you’re feeling this way?”

“What support do you need?”

“Shall we speak with ... together?”

Closing a conversation:

- ✓ Acknowledge and empathise

Praise the person who has spoken to you for having the courage to open up about how they are feeling and what is going on for them. You could say “Thank you for talking to me about this”, “I am glad that you have decided to share”

Such comments could ensure the person feels safe and possibly comfortable enough to talk about their MH again.

- ✓ Summarise the conversation (and any agreed upon actions)

And anything you have both agreed to do. For example: “You have told me that you are going to speak to your GP about how you are feeling, and I will text you by the end of the day with the details of how to access counselling sessions.”

It is important to **set boundaries** and be realistic about what you can do to support the person you are talking to. Your support is really valuable, but it’s up to whoever you’re talking to to seek support for themselves. Remember that small, simple things can help, and that just being there for them is probably helping a lot.

- ✓ Be prepared to end the conversation yourself

Sometimes conversations will come to a natural end. However, if this does not happen give the person a gentle indication that the conversation needs to come to an end. You could say something like: "It's been good to talk, we've covered a lot and we will have to wrap up soon because I have a meeting." Or whatever you feel is appropriate.

✓ **Look after yourself**

Supporting someone else can be challenging. Making sure that you look after your own wellbeing can mean that you have the energy, time and distance to help someone else.

✓ **Plan ahead**

When leaving or having an end to convo make sure you make a plan/arrange a time to check in again/make sure they know that you are doing something about issue if needs to be followed up.

MyMindTV

Want to watch videos related to some of the topics covered today? Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow Mind have developed a video site where you can find useful content on mental health and emotional wellbeing topics.

Below are links to some suggested videos.

We all have mental health



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/KTMKulQ82D4v?programme=ba843811-50be-4bcb-9048-d2bb089550aa&redirect=4FE8761D-BCB5-BA8D-08ED-72550DDCE4C4>

The zones of regulation



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/KTMKulQ82D4v?programme=5744be22-9999-455e-9d2d-19b61933095d&redirect=7CB8A87A-B55B-3FC7-19AD-EE8ADCA2F280>

54321 grounding technique



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/LFaQGSQRizLv?programme=b883d45c-88ca-40ca-8f8b-d4bbbed4a6990&redirect=C1D43834-238F-1E88-7E2E-8864FE792C3E>

Providing emotional support to your child



<https://my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/EAdk JW4aKVUo?programme=41a3f16e-e1c0-4517-a6ee-ba31acf8a9e0&redirect=ADD19986-2BAB-10F4-4B7E-2C6F17781B3E>

Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Support In Primary Schools

What support can we provide?

- 1:1 support for parents/carers of children who are feeling anxious or showing challenging behaviour
- Whole class workshops for children supporting emotion regulation
- Drop-in service for parents/carers
- Psychoeducation workshops for parents and carers

Aims of 1:1 support for parents/carers

- Education Mental Health Practitioner's (EMHP's) provide guided self-help for parents/carers. Guided self-help aims to **empower** parents/carers to develop the **tools and skills** necessary to help tackle the difficulties their child is experiencing as a family
- EMHPs **work together** with parents/carers to develop **coping strategies** to manage their child's distressing thoughts and **increase resilience** to future problems
- Parents/carers will play an active part; reading materials before each session, **practice strategies** at home and **problem-solve** with the EMHPs support
- If you're interested in a referral to the MHST for 1:1 parenting support, please speak to a member of staff in your child's school

Drop-in telephone service

- We are providing drop-in telephone sessions to help parents and carers with concerns around their child's mental wellbeing
- Each phone call lasts for up to 20 minutes – please note this is not a counselling service
- Language Line Telephone Interpreting Services are available
- Please use the link or QR code below to book your drop in call or speak to a member of staff

<https://hfehmind.jotform.com/210523186902955>

