

## **Four things you can do to support your teen's mental**

*Show your teenager love and care, while looking after yourself.*

Whether you and your teen are getting along well or having challenges, it is important to show that you love and support them, that you can help them navigate tough times and that you are always there for them. Here are four things to keep in mind when having that 'how-are-you-doing?' conversation with your teen and to show that you are always there for them.

### **1. Encourage them to share their feelings**

- Look for ways to check in with your teen. Ask them how their day has been and what they have been doing. It could be by inviting them to join you in a task, such as preparing dinner, so you can use the time to chat about their day.
- Remind them that you are there for them, no matter what, and that you want to hear how they are feeling and what they are thinking. A few simple words of encouragement can help them feel comfortable sharing their feelings with you.
- It is important to acknowledge and understand emotions they might be experiencing, even if it feels uncomfortable. When they open up to you,

you can respond with “I understand”, “it sounds like a difficult situation” or “that makes sense”.

- It can be easy to notice the things your teen is doing that you do not like. But also try to notice and praise them for something they are doing well — even something simple like cleaning up after themselves.

## **2. Take the time to support them**

- Work together on setting up new routines and achievable daily goals. You could fit in home chores around school work or set a target like getting homework done before dinner.
- Adolescence means independence! Try to give your teen the appropriate time and space to be on their own. Needing space is a normal part of growing up.
- Find a few ways you can support and encourage your teen to take breaks (from schoolwork, housework, or other activities they may be working on) to do things they enjoy. If your teen feels frustrated, work with them to brainstorm some solutions to problems. Try not to take over and tell them what to do.

## **3. Work through conflict together**

- Listen to your teen’s views and try to sort out conflict calmly. Remember: everyone gets stressed!
- Never discuss an issue while you are angry. Walk away, take a breath, and calm down —you can talk with your teen about it later.

- Avoid power struggles. With the world feeling unpredictable and options looking limited right now, teens might be struggling to be in control. As difficult as it can be in the moment, empathize with their desire to assert control in a scary time, rather than attempting to fight back or overpower it.
- Be honest and transparent with your teen: you can let them know that you are experiencing extra stress as well. Showing them how you deal with your own difficult feelings can help them know their feelings are okay.
- When there is conflict, take some time to reflect on how you and your teen can resolve it. You can discuss these reflections with your teen, so they see how you are processing ideas.

#### **4. Care for yourself**

Caregivers have a lot to deal with. You also need care and support for yourself.

Showing self-care is also a good way of modelling the practice to your teen.

- Don't wait to ask others for help if you are feeling overwhelmed. It is normal and okay to feel this way. Find a family member or someone you can talk to.
- Make time for your own relationships. Try to find a few people that you can share feelings and experiences with. Set aside some time with them each day, to check in on how you are feeling.
- Make time in your day to do the things that help you cope with and manage stress. Whether your day is busy or slow, we know that making time to look after yourself is essential for your wellbeing. Doing the things

you like or simply taking a few minutes off from your day can help you feel relaxed and re-energized.

- Try different positive coping strategies that work for you. Some ideas include exercising, talking with friends, making to-do lists or planning ahead, maintaining routines and structures, reflecting on what you are grateful for or proud of, and doing things you enjoy like music, art, dancing and keeping a journal.

*Unicef-Messages in this guide developed by the Inter-agency Standing Committee  
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