

# PARENT TOOL KIT NEWSLETTER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



## Parents and Caregivers

As a parent or caregiver, you want the best for your children or other dependents. You may be concerned or have questions about certain behaviors they exhibit and how to ensure they get help.

**Our Mental Health is part of our Physical Health.** The way we take care of ourselves can make us feel better, or worse. In other words, the way we treat ourselves impacts our health. The best way to have healthy kids is to have healthy adults.



## OVERVIEW FOR THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Mental Health is how we think, feel and act
- Green Light skills
- Tips on how to talk about Mental Health
- Conversation starters for those tough Substance Use conversations

Pay attention for the third newsletter in this series. That newsletter will talk about the importance of properly disposing of unused, unwanted and expired medications, as well as sharps needles.

# How are you?

## MENTAL HEALTH IS HOW WE: THINK, FEEL, ACT

When we ask someone **"HOW ARE YOU?"** and truly mean it, we are asking about their mental health.

In addition to **"HOW ARE YOU?"**, there are many ways to ask someone about the mental health.

Can we talk about how you're doing?

What are you doing to de-stress?

Tell me about your life these days.

What is your support system like?

How's your head?

Who are you talking to about your feelings these days?

I know you're going through some stuff. I am here for you.

What are you thinking about these days?

You don't seem quite like yourself lately, can you tell me what is bothering you?

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# Tips on how to have a conversation about Mental Health

- Be present to actively **LISTEN**
- **SHOW THEM THAT YOU ARE PAYING ATTENTION** by leaning into the conversation, making eye contact, and nodding your heads
- Avoid interrupting
- Prepare for responses that might be hard to hear, because you care about this person
- **THANK THEM** for sharing about their lives
- Let them know that what they are feeling is okay and **THERE ARE THINGS THAT THEY CAN DO TO COPE AND GET HELP**
- **ASK THEM PERMISSION** to share your own advice, help, or ideas
- Prepare for responses that might be hard to hear, because you care about this person
- Give examples of how you cope and **ASK THEM WHAT THEY'RE DOING TO COPE**

## GREEN LIGHT SKILLS

Skills to use **EVERYDAY** to promote a strong, stable foundation of mental health



Breathe



Take care of your body through fuel, movement, and rest



Connect: with other people, with what is most important to you, and to something larger than yourself

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

Be aware of how you feel and what's going on around you



Do something you enjoy



Take medication rescribed



Set healthy boundaries



Be thoughtful about the substances you put in your body



Ask for help when you need it

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Could you benefit from some moments of Mindfulness - if so check out this link through the YMCA of La Crosse and be guided through some Mindfulness activities with the Amazing Sarah Johnson (LPC).

STEADY HEADS - OPEN HEARTS

[HTTPS://WWW.LAXYMCA.ORG/MENTAL-HEALTH-RESOURCES/](https://www.laxymca.org/mental-health-resources/)

Also check out the Dinner Table Resilience - Tools to build Resilience TIPS, TOPICS, SKILLS, AND STRATEGIES THAT WE CAN USE AT OUR OWN TABLES TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

[HTTPS://BETTERTOGETHERLACROSSE.ORG/RESILIENCE-COPY/](https://bettogetherlacrosse.org/resilience-copy/)



## ***Signals to watch for with Mental Health***

**It is important to be aware of warning signs that your child may be struggling. You can play a critical role in knowing when your child may need help.**

**Consult with a school counselor, school nurse, mental health provider, or another health care professional if your child shows one or more of the following behaviors:**

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Seriously trying to harm or kill himself or herself, or making plans to do so
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Getting in many fights or wanting to hurt others
- Showing severe out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make himself or herself lose weight
- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Experiencing extreme difficulty controlling behavior, putting himself or herself in physical danger or causing problems in school
- Using drugs or alcohol repeatedly
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality

## **Get Help for Your Child**

Seek immediate assistance if you think your child is in danger of harming themselves or others. You can call a crisis line or the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If your child is in need of community mental health services you can find help in your area. <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help/immediate-help>

It's never too late to start talking with your teen about the risks of underage drinking and other substance use. As teens get older, they make more decisions on their own, and also face more temptation and peer pressure. Though it may not seem like it, teens really do hear your concerns. It's important you show that you care and continue having conversations with them about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs, and why they shouldn't use them.

## Steps to think about when having conversations with youth about drug or alcohol use:

- **Be Prepared.**
- **Stay Calm.**
- **Keep an open mind.**
- **Use open-ended questions - this will allow for more engaging conversation.**
- **Use Active listening - you listen without interrupting - no matter what.**
- **Use "I" messages to keep the flow going - "When you don't come home on time, I worry that something terrible has happened. What I need is for you to call me as soon as you know you're going to be late so that I know you are okay."**

Statements that could be used to talk to youth about peer pressure:

- "It's going to be a ton of fun, and we want you to have a great time."
- "There could be some pressure to drink or use other drugs, a lot of people feel that this is just what high school students do."
- "Many don't use which means it won't make you weird to choose not to drink or use drugs."
- "You'll have a lot of decisions to make about what you want to do in high school, and you might even make some mistakes."
- "Just know that you can talk to us about anything, anytime - even if you DO make a mistake or feel stuck in a situation that you need help to get out of."

Statements that could be used to talk to youth about misusing prescription medication:

- Emphasize the point that prescription painkillers can be dangerous due to their highly addictive nature and that he needs to closely follow the doctor's specific instructions about his dosage.
- "Taking more than prescribed is dangerous because not only can one become addicted, but they can face short-term effects like vomiting and respiratory depression or long-term effects like building up a tolerance where the medicine doesn't help anymore - which can lead many abusers to overdose."
- Be aware that there is also a chance that your child might be sharing their medicine with friends.

Statements that could be used to talk to your child if you suspect they may be using substances:

- "I've noticed a few changes in you lately, and I'm a bit worried that you aren't all that happy...what's going on in your life at the moment?"
- "I haven't heard you talking much about school at the moment...how's that going?"
- "How are your friends doing? ...I haven't seen them in a while"
- "I've notice that you are more quiet and sleepy lately, everything o.k.?"
- "I am worried about you, you have been distant lately. I miss having our great conversations. Is there anything you would like to talk about?"
- "I am here for you, is there anything you want to talk about?"

**"Conversations are one of the most powerful tools parents can use to connect with - and protect - their kids."**

**~~Parents have a significant influence in their children's decisions to experiment with alcohol and other drugs~~**



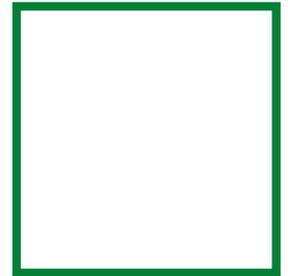
<https://www.health.harvard.edu>

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# PARENT TOOLKIT NEWSLETTER - VOL 2

**COULEE RECOVERY CENTER**  
**(COULEE COUNCIL ON ADDICTION)**

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***TO:***