



# LOOKING AFTER YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH **SPOT THE SIGNS**

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Information and resources for parents and carers

For a parent/carer it can be really difficult to know how to start a conversation about mental health with your child or young person. We wanted to share some tips to help you do this, as well as some key things to look out for if you are concerned about your child's mental health or behaviour.

## 5 TOP TIPS FOR DEALING WITH WORRYING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

- 1.** You may have noticed changes in your child's behaviour since the pandemic. Don't forget, this could be a normal reaction to an abnormal situation and it doesn't necessarily mean they need specialist mental health support. Try asking them about it. Some common things to watch for include excessive worry or sadness, ongoing unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration.
- 2.** Monitor your child's exposure to stories and information about the pandemic, and potentially conflicting messages that they might be seeing.
- 3.** Listen to your child and accept their feelings and concerns. Encourage them to acknowledge their feelings, ask about their worry and reassure them that the feelings are likely to pass. Remind them of a time when they have overcome something emotional in the past.
- 4.** Help your child find things they can enjoy which can distract them from their worry thoughts for a while.
- 5.** Remind your child that life will continue after Covid-19. Whilst it may be uncertain now, the best they can do is take each day as it comes and try and fill each day with something constructive. Help your child remember how far we have come already.



## SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

If your child/young person is experiencing difficulties with their mental health you might notice some changes in their behaviour, such as:

- not attending school
- significant changes to their sleep or eating pattern
- no longer doing the things that they used to enjoy and were motivated to engage in before
- becoming increasingly isolated, spending more time in their room and withdrawing from peers
- not looking after their personal care needs or has changed their normal pattern of self-care (showering less or not changing their clothes)
- expressing unusual symptoms, such as reporting they can hear or see things that others cannot
- beginning or increasing of self-harm behaviours
- actively expressing a wish to end their life or that they are considering how they might end their life



## USEFUL NUMBERS AND RESOURCES

- **YoungMinds Parent Helpline:** 0808 802 5544  
(free to call, Monday-Friday, 9.30am-4pm)
- **Samaritans:** 116 123 (free to call, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week)
- **YoungMinds Crisis Messenger:**  
text YM to 85258 (24 days a day, 7 days a week)
- [e-wellbeing.co.uk](https://www.e-wellbeing.co.uk): a digital service for young people in Sussex
- [sussexcamhs.nhs.uk](https://www.sussexcamhs.nhs.uk): mental health and emotional wellbeing information
- [nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others): tools to manage and improve mental health
- [youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk): UK's mental health charity for children and young people
- [harmless.org.uk](https://www.harmless.org.uk): support for issues related to self-harm and suicide
- [mindedforfamilies.org.uk](https://www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk): a free mental health learning resource
- Our Mental Health Space, Sussex Partnership CAMHS  
YouTube channel: [bit.ly/3zTipoe](https://bit.ly/3zTipoe)
- YoungMinds YouTube channel: [youtube.com/user/youngmindscharity](https://youtube.com/user/youngmindscharity)



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

- Try and talk to your young person to find out what is going on for them
- Contact Sussex Mental Healthline – Tel: 0800 0309 500  
(free to call, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- Discuss your concerns with your child's school so that you can share information and support your child together
- Consider discussing your concerns with your child's GP
- If you are concerned for the immediate safety of your child take them to your local A&E department. In extreme situations it may be necessary for you to contact the police or ambulance service