Mental health is as important as physical health

Learn the difference: stress, distress, crisis

Nurturing Healthy Minds

Taking care of our mental health is just as important as our physical health. Developing coping skills, practicing mindfulness, and knowing when and where to get help are essential in nurturing our mental well-being.

We encourage parents and caregivers to have open communication with their children about their emotional well-being and be aware of signs their child may be struggling and the available resources and tools to help them.

Decoding Stress: Is It Normal or Something More?

It can be challenging to gauge the extent of the mental health stress your child may be experiencing. Let's work together to distinguish between typical everyday stress and emotions, and the signs of distress or a crisis.

Stress: Unsettling feelings in response to challenges that require your attention, i.e. *"I am feeling really stressed out because I have a big project due tomorrow."*

Distress: Excessively challenging feelings OR acutely intense feelings in the moment, *i.e. "No one at school likes me. They bully me. I will never fit in or have friends." Or "I'm so angry right now I could hit someone."*

Crisis: Intensely difficult, sometimes unexpected, emotions or situations where coping is challenging. A crisis could result in disruption of effective functioning or a possible/actual threat to self or others, *i.e. "I give up. I see no purpose or point. I don't care anymore. I just want the pain to stop."*

When it's everyday stress...

For regular feelings of stress and strong emotions, there are tools parents and caregivers can teach children at home.

Journal writing: Encourage journal writing to express thoughts. Be available to listen or read when they are ready.

Daily exercise: Exercise releases endorphins which help us feel more relaxed.

Challenge negative thoughts together: Continue to have open communication.

Enjoy the little things: We can encourage our children to find things that help bring them joy every day, like listening to a podcast, playing a sport, or cooking a favorite meal.

When it's something more...

Learn more about how to spot signs of growing challenges in your child's mental health and find resources for additional help at **nurturinghealthyminds.education.uiowa.edu.**

If you suspect your child is an immediate risk for suicide, dial or text 988 to speak with the suicide and crisis lifeline 24/7.

Together, let's reframe the conversation on children's mental health. Visit **nurturinghealthyminds.education.uiowa.edu** or scan the QR code to learn more.

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I BELIEVE IN ME